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# **NATIVISM IN THE UNITED STATES AND PRESIDENT TRUMP'S ANTI-IMMIGRATION POLICY**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Trump’s Anti-immigration Rhetoric and Its Accuracy.....	3
The Origin of Anti-immigration Sentiment in the United States.....	6
Periods of Nativism .....	9
The First Surge of U.S. Nativism: The Know-Nothing Movement.....	11
The First Regulation Based on Race: The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).....	14
The Culmination of Nativism: The National Origins Quota Act (1924).....	16
The Watershed of Immigration History: The Immigration and Nationality Act.....	21
The Aftermath of the INA .....	27
Flexible “Us” and “Them”.....	31
Conclusion .....	34
Lessons for Japan.....	37
Tables.....	42
Bibliography .....	43

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Persons Obtaining Lawful Permanent Resident Status: Fiscal Years 1820 to 2017 .....	<b>42</b>
Table 2. Foreign-Born Population and Foreign-Born Share in the US.....	<b>42</b>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FAIR	Federation for American Immigration Reform
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act
IRL	Immigration Restriction League
JFK	John F. Kennedy
LBJ	Lyndon B. Johnson
NPR	National Public Radio
WASP	White Anglo-Saxon Protestant

## Introduction

As symbolized by *A Nation of Immigrants* (1959), a book by John F. Kennedy (JFK), the United States has historically been regarded as a country that was composed of immigrants and has also been more tolerant of immigrants compared to other countries. The United States is also believed to be a country that has overcome, even if not perfectly, discrimination and embraced multiculturalism, as encapsulated by the civil rights movement. The Statue of Liberty is perhaps the most famous symbol of accepting people who have fled from persecution, based on the concept of liberty, regardless of their nationality or race. Those images have been deeply imprinted globally, with common expressions reflecting our acceptance, like “melting pot,” “salad bowl,” and “a nation of immigrants.”

Given this history, in the 2016 presidential election campaign, it seemed extreme for candidate Donald Trump to condemn undocumented immigrants from Latin America and Muslims as if they were national enemies.<sup>1</sup> Trump’s stunning victory and his behavior in office, however, seemed to be in direct contrast to the supposed American values described above. He has been steadily implementing harsh policies in line with his remarks, but there is a clear contradiction because Trump himself is a descendant of immigrants. What is the source of this contradiction that some American citizens hold, when they themselves – descendants of immigrants – accept Trump’s anti-immigrant policy?

Some researchers have argued that there are many similarities between past and present in terms of xenophobia and “nativism.” Nativism is defined by historian John Higham as “intense

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<sup>1</sup> The New York Times, “Transcript of Donald Trump’s Immigration Speech,” *The New York Times*, September 1, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/us/politics/transcript-trump-immigration-speech.html>; Washington Post, “Full Text: Donald Trump Announces a Presidential Bid,” Washington Post, accessed October 28, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/>.

opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., ‘un-American’) connections.”<sup>2</sup> If Trump’s policy is not a new phenomenon, how has it developed over the course of history? When did it begin? To answer these questions, this research will examine the history of nativism, which underlies Trump’s policy, and attempt to place his policy in historical context.

Understanding the history of immigration conflicts and anti-immigration sentiment in the United States can lead to a deeper understanding of contemporary immigration dilemmas worldwide because that discriminatory sentiment against immigrants and its rhetoric could be applied in a universal context. Furthermore, it may be applicable in a Japanese context – Japan is facing an increasing number of guest workers provoking reactions similar to those in the United States in both the political and social spheres.

Last year, a bill to allow more than 300,000 foreign guest workers to enter Japan over the next five years was passed in the Japanese Diet. The Japanese government was careful never to use the word “immigrants” and continues to insist that guest workers are merely temporary residents, that is, different from permanent immigrants.<sup>3</sup> Japan is geographically independent of other countries and historically isolated from the Asian continent, so it is understandable that Japanese politicians are afraid of a strong social aversion to a more liberal immigration policy. With a decreasing population in Japan, the debate on immigration policy will become intensified in the near future. Therefore, as a Japanese journalist, I focus in this study on finding a suitable

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<sup>2</sup> Julia G. Young, “Making America 1920 Again? Nativism and US Immigration, Past and Present,” *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 5, No. 1 (March 2017): 217–35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241700500111>; Young; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 4, [http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.ACLS\\_batch:MIU010000000000000003603128](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.ACLS_batch:MIU010000000000000003603128).

<sup>3</sup> Satoshi Sugiyama, “Japan’s Denial of Immigration Reality Echoes Germany’s Experience with ‘Guest Workers,’” *The Japan Times Online*, December 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/12/31/national/japans-denial-immigration-reality-echoes-germanys-experience-guest-workers/>.

recommendation for Japan's immigration policy and how to handle the anti-immigration sentiment that might prevail in the future.

### **Trump's Anti-immigration Rhetoric and Its Accuracy**

Before presenting historical research, this study will investigate Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric to compare it to historical context. Theoretically, nativism could be divided into at least four categories: "racialized nativism," "cultural nativism," "symbolic nativism," and "economic nativism."<sup>4</sup> Such a theoretical classification is not the goal of this work, however, so this writer will describe it more simply. The targets of Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric can be divided into three categories: crime and terror, job competition and cost, cultural difference, and assimilation.

First, Trump emphasized that undocumented immigrants are simply dangerous. As is generally well-known, Trump announced his candidacy on June 16, 2015, with a description of Mexican immigrants as follows: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."<sup>5</sup> Then in Phoenix, on September 1, 2016, Trump repeatedly referred to crime committed by undocumented immigrants. Trump referred to five actual murder cases, then introduced 10 bereaved family members, who gave brief speeches. Crime was the central topic of the speech, the one that took the most speaking time. Trump also

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<sup>4</sup> Hans-Georg Betz, "Nativism Across Time and Space," *Swiss Political Science Review* 23, No. 4 (2017): 335–53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12260>.

<sup>5</sup> Washington Post, "Full Text: Donald Trump Announces a Presidential Bid."

criticized radical Islamic immigrants as “terrorists” and justified proposing a ban against their entry into the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Second, he also spent a great deal of time talking about negative economic impacts caused by immigrants. He argued that immigrants limit job opportunities and contribute to lower wages for native-born Americans. Also, he emphasized that they rely on public welfare and, thus, increase related U.S.-government expenditures. Therefore, he explained, “most illegal immigrants are lower-skilled workers with less education, who compete directly against vulnerable American workers, and that these illegal workers draw much more out from the system than they can ever possibly pay back.”<sup>7</sup>

Last, Trump focused on the cultural assimilation of immigrants. He opposed immigrants who do not assimilate into U.S. culture and values. When he mentioned radical Islam, he criticized not only their terrorist intent, but also their values: He pointed out that the 2016 terrorism incident at a night club in Orlando, Florida, aimed at gay and lesbian citizens by terrorists, was a reaction to the customer’s sexual orientation, asserting that this event proved that some of radical Islam’s creeds were incompatible with Western values. He insisted that “It’s not just a national security issue. It is a quality of life issue.” Moreover, he stated that “we should not let anyone into this country who doesn’t support our communities.” With these statements, Trump justified his proposal for a ban on immigration to the United States from certain Muslim countries.

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<sup>6</sup> “Transcript: Donald Trump’s National Security Speech,” POLITICO, accessed October 30, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/transcript-donald-trump-national-security-speech-224273>.

<sup>7</sup> The New York Times, “Transcript of Donald Trump’s Immigration Speech.” *The New York Times*, 1 Sept. 2016. *NYTimes.com*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/us/politics/transcript-trump-immigration-speech.html>.

All three aspects of Trump’s rhetoric aimed to provoke audience reaction, to encourage support for anti-immigration regulation based on responses to a perceived threat. This was a standard and typical way to stir up xenophobia, and it helped persuade the general public to support an anti-immigration policy. At the same time, however, Trump did not forget to highlight a positive aspect of immigration. He applauded past immigrants who had assimilated into the United States as enriching the country.<sup>8</sup>

Some countered that Trump unintentionally cited many facts incorrectly, or just lied. Thus far, research has revealed some twisted facts and semi-truths. Let us examine some here. According to scholars Joshua Woods and C. Damien Arthur, numerous studies seem to show that crime rates among immigrants are not as high as those among native-born Americans (They cited at least 20 research studies from 1915 to 2012.) Other research shows that the places where immigrants settled experienced decreasing numbers of homicides and other violent crimes at the neighborhood level, despite being in different regions.<sup>9</sup> According to criminologist John MacDonald and sociologist Robert Sampson, “America is neither less safe because of immigration nor is it worse off economically. In fact, in the past two decades, the areas where immigrants have settled experienced not only declining crime rates, but also revivals of their communities.”<sup>10</sup> With an increasing number of studies about crime among immigrants, most researchers have consistently argued this basic idea: “Contrary to public opinion, it is now well-established in the scholarly literature that, in fact, immigrants commit less crime, particularly less

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<sup>8</sup> The New York Times, “Transcript of Donald Trump’s Immigration Speech.” *The New York Times*, 1 Sept. 2016. *NYTimes.com*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/us/politics/transcript-trump-immigration-speech.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Joshua Woods and C. Damien Arthur, *Debating Immigration in the Age of Terrorism, Polarization, and Trump* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 7–9.

<sup>10</sup> John Macdonald and Robert Sampson, “Don’t Shut the Golden Door,” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, 2012.

violent crime, than the native-born and that their presence in communities is not associated with higher crime rates.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite the fact that scientific evidence exists, Trump leveraged misleading rhetoric against undocumented Mexican immigrants to underscore immigrants’ harmfulness and the risk caused by economic competition between native workers and immigrants. More surprisingly, sometimes Trump argued that the statistical data were wrong. He said the following: “...real unemployment is anywhere from 18 to 20 percent. Don’t believe the 5.6. Don’t believe it.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in his rhetoric, he sometimes denied the statistics. What we can see here is that his rhetoric is deliberately not based on the data and facts. In other words, he believes he does not need evidence for his claims. Instead what he presents is a narrative designed to provoke people into believing their livelihoods are actually threatened by immigrants. This implies that nativism is based on racial prejudices and sentiment rather than facts.

Trump’s anti-immigration rhetoric sounds extreme to present-day contemporaries, but looking back on history, it is not necessarily extraordinary. If so, when did this anti-immigration sentiment begin in the United States? When and how did it spread? How have such policies developed over time?

### **The Origin of Anti-Immigration Sentiment in the United States**

Anti-immigration sentiment, xenophobia, and nativism are not uniquely recent American phenomena. There are other recent examples of anti-immigrant political parties in European countries. Germany, France, Italy, and Spain all have anti-immigration right-wing parties, and

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<sup>11</sup> Charis Elizabeth Kubrin, Ramiro Martinez, and Marjorie Sue Zatz, *Punishing Immigrants: Policy, Politics, and Injustice*, New Perspectives in Crime, Deviance, and Law Series (New York: University Press, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Washington Post, “Full Text.”

their membership is growing.<sup>13</sup> Europe is not alone. In Japan, anti-Korean and anti-Chinese sentiment has prevailed throughout history; even today, aggressive anti-Korean demonstrations are a social problem that has been addressed by the government. Thus, it may be said that xenophobic sentiment is probably universal. The defining characteristic of the United States, however, is that all of its population except for Native Americans are immigrants or descendants of immigrants.

By studying U.S. history, we can trace the origin of Trumpism and his anti-immigration policy and rhetoric. As economist and social worker Edith Abbot explains, anti-immigration sentiment, or xenophobia itself, has existed since the period of British colonization in America. Abbot starts a report on crime by foreigners with this statement: “The theory that immigration is responsible for crime, that the most recent ‘wave of immigration,’ whatever the nationality, is less desirable than the old ones, that all newcomers should be regarded with an attitude of suspicion, is the theory that is almost as old as the colonies planted by Englishmen on the New England coast.”<sup>14</sup>

Immigrants were used to fulfill economic needs, but they were also the targets of scorn because of their easily defined cultural, religious, and language differences. As scholars Joshua Woods and C. Damien Arthur point out, the Founding Fathers are usually regarded as being tolerant of immigrants in general. Even they described the threat of immigrants at some point, however. Alexander Hamilton asserted that Roman hegemony was undermined by granting

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<sup>13</sup> “「反移民」右翼、欧州を席卷 寛容な姿勢のスペインでも: 朝日新聞デジタル,” [“*anti-immigrants*” right-wings prevailed in Europe, even in tolerant Spain: he Asahi Shimbun digital] 朝日新聞デジタル, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASLD35TP7LD3UHBI01K.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Abbott, Edith, *Report on Crime and the Foreign Born*, Open Collections Program at Harvard University. Emigration and Immigration (Washington: GPO, 1931), 23, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:864189>.

citizenship to immigrants,<sup>15</sup> and he also remarked, “Foreign influence is truly the Grecian horse to a republic. We cannot be too careful to exclude its entrance.”<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, 228 years later, Trump also accused immigrants of being a Trojan horse in a rally speech. Thus, his rhetoric is not so different from these 18<sup>th</sup> century opinions. Moreover, Benjamin Franklin, who signed the Declaration of Independence, which pronounced that “all men are created equal,” mocked Germans as stupid in a letter to a friend and depicted Germans as not only reluctant to learn English, but also unwilling to assimilate into U.S. culture.<sup>17</sup>

The first legitimization of immigration in U.S. history was in 1790, just 14 years after U.S. independence. The first Naturalization Act states that only “free white persons” have the right to obtain citizenship after residing in the United States for two years.<sup>18</sup> This was a fundamental and significant concept that articulated who deserved to become an American, and who was not worthy. Thus, the United States codified itself as a white person’s country at the time of its founding. In other words, since 1790, racialism has been officially embedded in the United States. This “free white persons” concept is deeply impressed in nativist sentiments and it serves to bolster the belief that white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) are at the core of U.S. race and culture.

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<sup>15</sup> Woods, Joshua and C. Damien Arthur, *Debating Immigration in the Age of Terrorism, Polarization, and Trump*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist on the New Constitution: Written in 1788 / by Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Madison, and Mr. Jay ; with an Appendix, Containing the Letters of Pacificus and Helvidius on the Proclamation of Neutrality of 1793 ; Also, the Original Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution of the United States* (Hallowell [Me.]: Glazier, Masters & Smith, 1842), 427.

<sup>17</sup> Woods and Arthur, *Debating Immigration in the Age of Terrorism, Polarization, and Trump*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> “Major U.S. Immigration Laws, 1790 - Present,” migrationpolicy.org, March 1, 2013, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/timeline-1790>.

Moreover, political scientist Samuel Huntington asserts that American core identity originated from Anglo-Protestant settlers who created colonies on the American continent. He pointedly notes that the prominent element of the settlers' culture included "the Christian religion, Protestant values and moralism, a work ethic, the English language, British traditions of law, justice, and the limits of government power, and a legacy of European art" and adds that the settlers improved the American Creed with "[their] principles of liberty, equality, individualism, representative government, and private property."<sup>19</sup> Huntington criticizes the claim that "all Americans except the Indians are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants,"<sup>20</sup> as a partial truth, but a false total truth. Furthermore, he argues that immigrants assimilated and contributed to modify the American identity, but had not participated in creating the origin of the identity.<sup>21</sup> Historian John Higham also emphasizes that racial nationalism in the United States traditionally describes "self-government" as the principal achievement of the Anglo-Saxons, who are capable of having freedom in the future.<sup>22</sup> This is why WASPs are regarded as the core of U.S. culture by many nativists.

## **Periods of Nativism**

If anti-immigration sentiment has existed since the era of colonization, why has immigration become politicized only during certain periods of U.S. history? There are several reasons that nativism prevailed in U.S. society. For example, external threats like both World

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<sup>19</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 40–41.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Neelly Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 88.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 40–41.

<sup>22</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 137.

War I and World War II stimulated nativism to extraordinary levels and led to discriminatory policies, such as the internment of Japanese-Americans.

One fundamental factor, however, is the ratio of foreign-born populations. According to U.S. census and immigration statistics, the number of persons who obtained legal permanent resident status fluctuated upward throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> (Table 1). Along with the rising number of legal permanent residents, foreign-born populations ballooned from 2.2 million in 1850 to 13.5 million in 1910. In this period, the ratio of foreign-born populations also jumped from 9.7 percent to 14.7 percent (Table 2). As the ratio of foreign-born populations rose, anti-immigration backlash also intensified and led to the passage of racially divisive laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the National Origins Quota Act (1924).<sup>23</sup> After the 1924 Act was passed by Congress, foreign-born populations and their share decreased continuously, and later hit their lowest level in 1970 at 9.6 million (4.7 percent) just after the United States relaxed restrictions on immigration again in 1965. Then, to put this into context, when Trump won the presidential election in 2016, the figures were 43.7 million (13.7 percent). Interestingly, this ratio is almost as same as in 1920 (13.2 percent).

As data and history illustrate, when the percentage of the foreign-born population fluctuated upward and remained high, internal conflict emerged between native-born Americans and immigrants. At such times, policymakers and their followers leveraged xenophobia and nativism by exaggerating the immigrant threat to get voters' attention. In turn, restrictive proposals were passed by Congress. This implies a correlation between the ratio of foreign-born populations and the spread of anti-immigrant sentiment in U.S. society. Furthermore, it helps illustrate the anti-immigration movement as a backlash in response to the increasing number of

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<sup>23</sup> "Major U.S. Immigration Laws, 1790 - Present."

resident foreigners. Therefore, this study will focus on some salient periods in which the number of immigrants grew and fell in order to depict the development of nativism.

### **The First Surge of U.S. Nativism: The Know-Nothing Movement**

After mass immigration from Europe and Asia countries to the United States began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, U.S. anti-immigration hostility gradually increased. In terms of nativism in the United States, that era was the first substantial rising tide against the Irish, who were the first target of deportation policies in U.S. immigration history.<sup>24</sup>

American fear of foreigners emerged against an influx in the number of foreign indigents in the 1820s just after the United States had started to count numbers of immigrants for the first time. Such xenophobia spread and, in particular, grew in East Coast cities where many immigrants arrived by ship. Some Americans believed that hostile countries intentionally sent indigents to the United States as an invasive tactic. Subsequently, through the 1830s and 1840s, nativism prevailed in United States, especially in eastern cities.<sup>25</sup> From this era, historians usually describe xenophobia as nativism.<sup>26</sup>

That is to say that Irish immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were the first major impoverished group from Europe to enter the United States.<sup>27</sup> Their poverty served to provoke anti-immigrant sentiment among Americans. For example, in 1840, *The Princeton Review* argued, “Our country

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<sup>24</sup> Hidetaka Hirota, “The Irish Were the First Targets of Deportation Policy in the US,” *The Irish Times*, accessed October 18, 2019, <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/abroad/the-irish-were-the-first-targets-of-deportation-policy-in-the-us-1.3011951>.

<sup>25</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Higham, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration* (Columbia University Press, 13), 26.

has been made the Botany Bay and the Poor House of other nations,”<sup>28</sup> and also warned of the danger of immigrants: “The number of imported thieves, highway robbers, counterfeiters, and murderers, is terrific.”<sup>29</sup> The writer considered the surge of immigrants as a deliberate European invasion because he believed that European governments did not want to endure the social cost of indigents. On this basis, historian Donna R. Gabaccia describes this era as when “we encounter for the first time the xenophobic rhetoric portraying immigrants as criminals or invaders that will feature in many future efforts to curb immigration.” As she pointed out, the description of immigrants by *The Princeton Review* resembles Trump’s 2015 assertion that, “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. . . . They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with them. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.”<sup>30</sup>

From 1820 to 1850, the Irish were the largest group of immigrants into the United States,<sup>31</sup> and they were predominantly Catholics. In this period, the most important cause of contention against immigration was religion, so the influx of numerous Catholic indigents from Ireland (and others from Germany also) strained the relationship between native-born Americans and the Irish. Because nativists believed that Catholic immigrants were first loyal to the Pope, they were

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<sup>28</sup> Donna R. Gabaccia, *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective*, America in the World (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 62–63, [http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.PMUSE\\_batch:20170204muse43237](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.PMUSE_batch:20170204muse43237).

<sup>29</sup> Gabaccia, 62–63.

<sup>30</sup> Gabaccia, 63.

<sup>31</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 24.

regarded as being incompatible with democracy and Protestantism.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, nativists insisted that they were minions of the Pope, aiming to conquer the United States.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, historian James M. McPherson describes the causes of nativism in that era as follows: “Immigration during the first five years of the 1850s reached a level five times greater than a decade earlier. Crime and welfare costs soared. Cincinnati’s crime rate, for example, tripled between 1846 and 1853 and its murder rate increased sevenfold. Boston’s expenditures for poor relief rose threefold during the same period.”<sup>34</sup>

An organized anti-immigration and anti-Catholic movement, which aimed to legitimize restrictions on immigrants, also emerged after mass immigration started along with the re-emergence of the prevalence of nativism. The first successful political movement started in New York in the 1830s with the establishment of anti-foreign parties. At first, their organization name was the Native American Party, but soon after they renamed themselves the American Party known as the Know-Nothing (because members of the group swore that they would answer questions about the group with “I know nothing”). Higham describes the core of their ideology as follows: “The grand work of the American Party,” proclaimed one of the Know-Nothing journals in 1855, “is the principle of nationality ... we must do something to protect and vindicate it. If we do not, it will be destroyed.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Schrag, *Not Fit for Our Society: Nativism and Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 30.

<sup>33</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, Oxford History of the United States ; Vol. 6 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 131.

<sup>35</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 4.

This movement culminated in the 1850s as “one of the largest populist mobilizations” in U.S. history.<sup>36</sup> As a result, the Know-Nothing Party elected governors in Delaware and Massachusetts and also all the top state offices as well as a majority in their legislatures.<sup>37</sup> Even if the Irish spoke English and they were racially “white,” they were persecuted by the prototype of U.S. nativism because of their religion and poverty.

### **The First Regulation Based on Race; The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)**

West Coast cities had a different immigration experience, known as the anti-Chinese movement. After gold was discovered in California in 1848, many Chinese immigrants entered the United States to work in the gold mines, and later in the construction of the transcontinental railroad. The basic reasons for the discrimination against Chinese in that era are similar to the assertions of Trump’s anti-immigration policies. Specifically, protecting American “values” and “preventing American wages from declining” are the most similar.

The Gold Rush induced some Chinese to emigrate to the United States in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In that era, while mainly male Chinese workers embarked for the United States, Chinese women also were forced by merchants to move to the United States to become prostitutes. As a result, in 1870, 61 percent of the Chinese women in California were counted as prostitutes. Because of this, some Americans portrayed the Chinese as immoral and used that as justification against their right to naturalize.<sup>38</sup> The first restrictive federal immigration law was enacted in 1875, aiming to prevent Asian women who had been contracted for “lewd and

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<sup>36</sup> Betz, “Nativism Across Time and Space.”

<sup>37</sup> Schrag, *Not Fit for Our Society*, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 30–31.

immoral purposes” from entering the United States. Similar restrictions had existed in some states from long before that as well.<sup>39</sup>

Chinese laborers who did not hesitate to work during strikes were referred to as strikebreakers and were persecuted by white men’s unions. That attitude led to the massacre of 28 Chinese laborers in 1885 at a mine in Rock Spring, Wyoming, by whites.<sup>40</sup> In addition, Chinese workers worked for relatively low wages, so white workers could not compete with them and blamed them for declining wages.<sup>41</sup> Eventually, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. This was the first attempt to regulate immigrants based on race. This law was enacted to prevent Chinese laborers from entering the United States for 10 years; subsequently, additional exclusion laws were enacted until 1943.<sup>42</sup>

People who condemned the Chinese were not necessarily native-born Americans themselves. For example, the leader of the California Workingmen’s Party who led the assault on the Chinese was Irish. Within the Catholic community, however, the Irish dominated, while Germans, French Canadians, Italians, and Poles fought against this Irish domination. These conflicts clearly show that some immigrant groups disliked others.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Julian Lim and Maddalena Marinari, “Laws for a Nation of Nativists and Immigrants,” *Modern American History* 2, Bo. 1 (2019): 49–52, <https://doi.org/10.1017/mah.2018.36>.

<sup>40</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Crawford, James, “Cycles of Nativism in U.S. History,” The National Immigration Forum, 2001, [http://www.f-duban.fr/Sitaduban/Ressources\\_civ.\\_US/Dossiers/Nativism/Nativism.html](http://www.f-duban.fr/Sitaduban/Ressources_civ._US/Dossiers/Nativism/Nativism.html).

<sup>42</sup> “Major U.S. Immigration Laws, 1790 - Present.”

<sup>43</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 97–98.

## **The Culmination of Nativism: The National Origins Quota Act (1924)**

The series of nativist movements that followed the Know-Nothing Movement reached its peak in the early 1920s with two “quota” regulations. It could be said that the tension of anti-immigration sentiment generally increased from the founding of the United States to the 1920s along with the rising ratio of the foreign-born population.

From 1890 to 1920, the Irish, the predominant proportion of immigrants to the United States, were replaced by Italians, Austro-Hungarians, and other Southern and Eastern Europeans including Jews. With these substantial changes in the composition of immigration, many American citizens came to feel that new immigrants from Southern and Eastern European countries took a longer time to assimilate. They started to help new immigrants learn English, U.S. culture, and U.S. values because they believed that all people, regardless of national origin, race, or religion, could adopt American creeds and values. This movement was called “Americanization,” and some nativists supported it.<sup>44</sup>

Conservatives supported this movement as a way to prevent foreign cultures from spreading and to create a homogeneous American culture. Eventually in 1916, in response to the demands for assisting the Americanization movement, the federal government established the bureaus of Naturalization and Education, which distributed textbooks on citizenship.<sup>45</sup> Although the Americanization movement seemed to accept immigrants rather than exclude them, it has to be noted that it originated from the nativist concept, which was aimed at preventing foreign cultures from prevailing across the United States. The purpose was to fashion immigrants into

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<sup>44</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 97–98.

<sup>45</sup> Jared A. Goldstein, “Unfit for the Constitution: Nativism and the Constitution, from the Founding Fathers to Donald Trump,” *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law* 20, No. 3 (2018): 509–11.

members of a predominant WASP culture.<sup>46</sup> For various reasons, however, the Americanization campaign was considered a failure. One of the reasons was that the oppressive styles of the teachers toward the immigrants provoked a backlash.<sup>47</sup>

While many supporters of Americanization considered the campaign to have been a failure, the eugenics movement helped accelerate the racial aspect of American nativism from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Eugenicists argued that racial and ethnic heredity, rather than environmental differences, causes human inequalities, and many Americans supported this belief. Therefore, numerous nativists believed in the supremacy of the Northern European races and the inferiority of Southern and Eastern Europeans.<sup>48</sup>

American elites contributed to strengthening racial nativism in this period. In 1894, three Harvard graduates established the Immigration Restriction League (IRL), whose constitution declared that they advocate for the "... further exclusion of elements undesirable for citizenship or injurious to our national character."<sup>49</sup> The League argued that the new immigrants (predominantly Southern and Eastern Europeans) harmed the economy and brought with them crime and mental insanity in their ranks. Furthermore, the League claimed that the new immigrants were not capable of adapting to the concepts of self-government and individual liberty.<sup>50</sup> One IRL brochure published in 1896 said, "...the immigration of recent years is largely

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<sup>46</sup> Goldstein, 513.

<sup>47</sup> Nowrasteh, Alex, "The Failure of the Americanization Movement."

<sup>48</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 103-4.

<sup>49</sup> Immigration Restriction League, *Constitution of the Immigration Restriction League*, Open Collections Program at Harvard University. Emigration and Immigration (Boston, Mass.? Immigration Restriction League, 189AD), <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:949025>.

<sup>50</sup> Goldstein, "Unfit for the Constitution," 515.

composed of elements unfitted to absorb democratic ideas of government, or take part in the duties and responsibilities of citizenship under such a form of government.”<sup>51</sup>

The leaders of the IRL upheld eugenics-related concepts. Prescott Hall, one of the founders of the League, asserted that the new immigrants could never assimilate because the Americanization program could not change racial character. Hall emphasized, “You cannot change the leopard’s spots, and you cannot change bad stock to good.”<sup>52</sup>

As the example of the IRL shows, there was American nativist support for the idea of eugenics. The IRL alleged that “...poor hereditary, rather than environmental, factors produced unalterable human inequality,” and believed that Italians, Jews, Greeks, and others were inferior people. These nativists wanted to exclude Southern and Eastern Europeans from “white persons,” and warned that they were afraid of losing the “intellectual superiority of the Nordic group” by intermarriage.<sup>53</sup> Ellison Smith, chair of the Senate Immigration Committee in 1917, argued for the necessity of preserving a “pure homogeneous American people” and keeping racially inferior people out of the United States.<sup>54</sup> His argument was clearly based on racialism, and he believed that American people should be homogeneous.

Consequently, instead of promoting the Americanization movement, many nativists endeavored to legitimize restrictions on immigrants. The First World War also stimulated nativism to an extreme degree. Just before the American declaration of war in 1917, Congress

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<sup>51</sup> Immigration Restriction League, *Twenty Reasons Why Immigration Should Be Further Restricted Now*, Publications of the Immigration Restriction League ; No. 4 (Boston, Mass.: Immigration Restriction League, 1894), <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:1117009>.

<sup>52</sup> Prescott F. (Prescott Farnsworth) Hall, *The Future of American Ideals*, Publications of the Immigration Restriction League ; No. 58 (New York: North American Review PubCo, 1912), <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:1117529>.

<sup>53</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 103–4.

<sup>54</sup> Gabaccia, *Foreign Relations*, 141.

passed a bill requiring a literacy test for immigrants to help exclude mainly Southern and Eastern Europeans. This bill also banned most Asians from immigrating into the United States.<sup>55</sup> Subsequently, in 1919, in reaction to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the Red Scare swept the United States. The House Committee on Immigration argued that they could prevent revolutionists and Bolsheviks from entering the United States only by keeping everybody out, not just Russian Communists.<sup>56</sup>

In 1921, the Emergency Quota Act was passed by Congress; this was the first attempt to regulate immigration by setting an admission “quota” based on nationality. This law limited the annual number of immigrants allowed to migrate to the United States to up to 3 percent of the 1910 census for each nationality. This act restricted the number of European immigrants to approximately 358,000 in total, as against the more than 800,000 newcomers who had arrived in the United States in 1921.<sup>57</sup> Since it was the first attempt to rigidly limit the number of immigrants from European countries, historian John Higham asserts that this law was “the most important turning-point in American immigration policy.”<sup>58</sup>

Nativists, however, continued their efforts to limit “undesirable and inferior” immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe more strictly. In 1924, the National Origins Quota Act (Johnson-Reed Act) was enacted. This law created a new “quota” that restricted the total annual number of immigrants to a maximum of 2 percent of the 1890 census for each nationality. The proportion of the population who came from Eastern and Southern European countries in the 1890 census was substantially lower than the 1910 census, so this quota was criticized for

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<sup>55</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 98–100.

<sup>56</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 306.

<sup>57</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 104.

<sup>58</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 311.

discriminating against those target countries.<sup>59</sup> In fact, discrimination against those countries was the main purpose of the proponents, and this law had a decisive impact on the proportion of those immigrants' nationalities. For example, Greeks were allocated 3,038 people annually under the 1921 Act, but under the 1924 Act, their quota was cut to only 38. This law allowed only a total of 153,714 of European immigrants, and they were predominantly Northern Europeans.<sup>60</sup>

When Congressman Albert Johnson, sponsor of the 1924 Act, drafted the proposal, he worried about criticism of the new bill with regard to the discriminatory aspect. Even though racial nativism was relatively prevalent in American society, Johnson was reluctant to express "the Nordic supremacy" ideology blatantly behind the bill. He needed a softer rhetoric to comfort the democratic conscience.<sup>61</sup>

Johnson's unofficial adviser Captain John B. Trevor introduced softer rhetoric that helped describe the purpose of the bill as preserving the racial status quo, or racial balance, fairly. He asserted that the proportion of Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the United States was around 12 percent of the population at that time, but if the law calculated the quota based on the 1910 census, those countries would be allocated approximately 44 percent of the total quota. Meanwhile, if it calculated quota based on the 1890 census, this would become about 15 percent. Therefore, he claimed the new law would be fairer than the previous one.<sup>62</sup> Higham depicted this Act concisely as "to freeze the existing balance of ethnic strains in the total American population."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> "Major U.S. Immigration Laws, 1790 - Present."

<sup>60</sup> Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans - A History of Immigration*, 105.

<sup>61</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 319.

<sup>62</sup> Higham, 320–21.

<sup>63</sup> Higham, 318.

The second “quota” act had a significant impact, one large enough to shift the public mood. The number of immigrants, in practice, declined steeply until the 1970s, and nativists were satisfied with the result. Consequently, the nativist movement subsided gradually, except during World War II.

An important exception in those two laws were immigrants from the Western Hemisphere, mostly meaning the American continent. Thus, it paved the way for rising immigration (both legal and undocumented) from Mexico, and it was also the beginning of mass deportations.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Watershed of Immigration History: The Immigration and Nationality Act (1965)**

It is scarcely surprising that wars change societies fundamentally, and World War II was one of the most outstanding examples of this. After World War II, the National Origins Quota Act faced backlash, both internally and externally. The backlash finally led to the enactment of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) in 1965, which repealed the national quota system, while establishing total caps on immigrants from both the Western and Eastern Hemispheres.

The tide gradually turned even during World War II. Wartime industries and the armed forces needed human resources across the United States regardless of race and ethnicity. African-Americans moved to the north to seek employment where the right to vote was available. In 1941, they threatened a “March on Washington” to eradicate segregation in government departments and the armed forces. In response to this strong demand, President Franklin D. Roosevelt eventually banned certain forms of discrimination and such segregation in the defense

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<sup>64</sup> Schrag, *Not Fit for Our Society*, 126–27.

industries by Executive Order #8808.<sup>65</sup> It was the first presidential attempt since Reconstruction to eliminate discrimination.<sup>66</sup>

Eliminating racism even partially was not only due to the practical needs of the demands for human resources in wartime. World War II emphasized the ideologically liberal American identity and paved the way for combating racism and fostering the civil rights movement.<sup>67</sup> Jared A. Goldstein, professor of law at Roger Williams University, notes that “amid the fight against European fascism, American leaders began to describe national identity in universalistic terms, as based solely on a creed of liberty and equality, which they declared had nothing to do with race, ethnicity and national origin.”<sup>68</sup>

In fact, in 1943 Roosevelt applauded the creation of a combat team of Japanese-Americans as follows: “Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed of liberty and democracy.”<sup>69</sup> Moreover, in the same year, the Chinese Exclusion Act was finally revoked by the Magnuson Act, which allowed Chinese immigrants to be naturalized as U.S. citizens.<sup>70</sup> This provision and others similar to it contradicted the nativism behind the National Origins Quota Act. However, the tide for liberalizing immigration was accelerated after World War II ended.

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<sup>65</sup> “Birth of the Civil Rights Movement, 1941-1954 - Civil Rights (U.S. National Park Service),” accessed January 16, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/civilrights/birth-of-civil-rights.htm>.

<sup>66</sup> “Turning Point: World War II,” Virginia Museum of History & Culture, April 10, 2013, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/turning-point>.

<sup>67</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?* 136.

<sup>68</sup> Goldstein, “Unfit for the Constitution,” 529.

<sup>69</sup> “PRAISES ARMY PLAN FOR JAPANESE UNIT,” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, 1943.

<sup>70</sup> “Major U.S. Immigration Laws, 1790 - Present.”

During the Cold War, American leaders such as Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower needed to identify themselves to the world as champions of global democracy in order to convince foreign nations to support the United States rather than the Soviet Union. Restrictive immigration laws based on racism were inconvenient obstacles that contradicted the American creed and did not help the Cold War effort. When Truman vetoed the INA of 1952, which kept the national origin quota system, he condemned the system because it was based on nativist beliefs that conflicted with the nation's principles:

The idea behind this discriminatory policy was, to put it baldly, that Americans with English or Irish names were better people and better citizens than Americans with Italian or Greek or Polish names. It was thought that people of West European origin made better citizens than Rumanians or Yugoslavs or Ukrainians or Hungarians or Balts or Austrians. Such a concept is utterly unworthy of our traditions and our ideals. It violates the great political doctrine of the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal." It denies the humanitarian creed inscribed beneath the Statue of Liberty proclaiming to all nations, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."<sup>71</sup>

With this statement, Truman endorsed almost the same idea as the contemporary myth of a nation of immigrants. That veto, however, was overridden by Congress. Finally, neither Truman nor Eisenhower could abolish the national origin quota system, which blatantly discriminated against Eastern and Southern Europeans, Asians, and others because, at that stage, defenders of restriction were still a majority in Congress.<sup>72</sup>

Following this, JFK, the author of *A Nation of Immigrants*, became president in 1961 and, thus, pro-immigration momentum was accelerated. His successor Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ)

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<sup>71</sup> "Veto of Bill To Revise the Laws Relating to Immigration, Naturalization, and Nationality | Harry S. Truman," accessed January 22, 2020, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/182/veto-bill-revise-laws-relating-immigration-naturalization-and-nationality>.

<sup>72</sup> Daniel Tichenor, "The Historical Presidency: Lyndon Johnson's Ambivalent Reform: The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 46, No. 3 (2016): 693, <https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12300>.

succeeded in abolishing national origin quota system by enacting the INA in 1965. Historian Mae Ngai attributes the success of the 1965 congressional reform to both domestic and international factors.

First, many second-generation European immigrants who were persecuted during World War II attained political power in the industrial North. Second, reformers affiliated themselves with the civil rights movement and organized labor. Moreover, in terms of foreign relations, the national origin quota system, which was based on racism, was an obstacle to maintaining good relationships with Cold War allies (including Italy, Greece, Japan, and China), which were allocated a tiny number of quotas.<sup>73</sup> Political scientist Daniel Tichenor points out that “numerous White House advisers and State Department officials told LBJ that national origins quotas hurt American credibility abroad as much as Jim Crowism did. ‘The President eventually recognized that existing immigration law and, in particular, national origins quotas, created many decades before on racist grounds, was inconsistent with civil rights and racial justice,’ recalls Valenti (LBJ’s own close adviser, Jack Valenti).”<sup>74</sup>

Ngai also points out the following important point:

Finally, immigration reformers successfully deployed a narrative of belonging to make their claim to equal membership in the nation. Indeed, they invented the trope that America is a nation of immigrants, which yoked their claims to a long history of immigration and inclusion that they read from the Pilgrims and other colonials to the hardy Midwestern pioneers of the nineteenth century and their own forebears in the early twentieth century. This was a spectacularly successful expression of American nationalism (which conveniently erased conquest, slavery, and colonialism from national history).

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<sup>73</sup> Mae M. Ngai, “Hart-Celler at Fifty: Lessons for Immigration Reform in Our Time,” *Labor* 12, No. 3 (2015): 19–22, <https://doi.org/10.1215/15476715-2920327>.

<sup>74</sup> Tichenor, “The Historical Presidency,” 695.

American nationalism worked to promote immigration with a narrative of “a nation of immigrants” in the 1960s. This could be a phenomenon peculiar to the United States, because most Americans and their ancestors came from other nations. American nationalism has always been ambivalent between nativism and “a nation of immigrants,” and although a multicultural society itself had existed from the beginning of U.S. independence, this law was a watershed to spread the concept of multiculturalism and diversity in the United States.<sup>75</sup> This multiculturalism reconstructed the identity of Americans, and reduced the preponderance of WASP citizens.

The concept of “a nation of immigrants” became widely popular in terms of the American identity only after 1965.<sup>76</sup> As Ngai points out, the concept linked this myth to the Pilgrims, pioneers, and ancestors of Americans, and had a strong impact on American nationalism. This myth and multiculturalism are deeply rooted in the American psyche. This is further underscored by the loud voices against immigration policies pushed by Trump.

This myth was accepted not only because of social momentum, but also based on other factors. As explained at the outset, in the 1960s, the demographic proportion of foreigners had dropped to historically very small proportions, and there was a growing demand for industries to accept immigrants. The INA, which reduced the relative numbers of Latin Americans and Mexicans, led to an increase in undocumented immigrants. It cannot be overlooked that this was the major starting point of the current problem of undocumented immigration.

Although the nativists strongly resisted repealing the National Origins Quota Act, the INA was enacted with the support of some nativists. Why did nativists in Congress give in to allow the bill to finally pass? The main reason was that the INA bill been modified from the original

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<sup>75</sup> Ben Railton, “The Roots of Multicultural Diversity in Revolutionary America,” Scholars Strategy Network, accessed December 13, 2019, <https://scholars.org/brief/roots-multicultural-diversity-revolutionary-america>.

<sup>76</sup> Lim and Marinari, “Laws for a Nation of Nativists and Immigrants.”

proposal and it seemed to be acceptable to them because of some concessions that proposed maintaining the racial balance in the United States.

First, the sponsors of the bill modified it to restrict the total annual number of immigrants from the Western Hemisphere to 120,000. This was the first significant regulation pertaining to Latin American immigrants. In addition, the Bracero Program, which allowed Mexicans to enter into the United States as temporary guest workers, expired in 1964. The combination of the enactment of the INA and the expiration of the Bracero Program was considered stringent enough to decrease the number of Latin American immigrants. This was counterproductive, however, and instead led to an increase in undocumented Mexican immigrants entering the United States.<sup>77</sup>

Second, the more important concession of the bill was prioritizing family reunification over the job skills of immigrants. Nativists expected Northern and Western Europeans, who make up the majority of the current population, would attract more families than other minorities such as Asians and Latin Americans would.

Based on these factors, nativists supported the INA. In other words, they did not intend to accept racial demographic change. As we know, however, the enactment of the INA has led to a substantial transformation of the racial demographics of the United States.

LBJ himself, in his speech beneath the Statue of Liberty inaugurating the INA, declared the following:

This bill that we will sign today is not a revolutionary bill...It does not affect the lives of millions. It will not reshape the structure of our daily lives.... Yet it is still one of the most important acts of this Congress and of this administration. For it

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<sup>77</sup> Tichenor, "The Historical Presidency," 702.

does repair a very deep and painful flaw in the fabric of American justice. It corrects a cruel and enduring wrong in the conduct of the American nation.<sup>78</sup>

In addition, Sen. Edward Kennedy also assured the Senate: “The bill will not flood our cities with immigrants. It will not upset the ethnic mix of our society. It will not relax the standards of admission. It will not cause American workers to lose their jobs.”<sup>79</sup>

It was, arguably, a revolutionary bill. The ethnic composition of the United States has changed dramatically since 1965, with increasing numbers of Hispanics and Asians. Thus, the INA was a prominent turning point that even its supporters did not intend to create. Theodore White, the author of a Pulitzer Prize-winning book on the presidential campaign of JFK, critically states that the bill was “revolutionary and probably the most thoughtless of the many acts of the Great Society.”<sup>80</sup>

This “thoughtless” misunderstanding was very important because it suggests that Americans, especially nativists who compromised to support the bill, did not necessarily support mass immigration from Asia and Latin America and the transformation of the demographic balance.

### **The Aftermath of the INA**

The social changes caused by the INA, which was passed by Congress with this incorrect prediction and misleading explanation, were the sources of the repulsion that is directly connected to Trump. In fact, American nativism did not disappear in the 1960s, and nativists were feeling very strong opposition to the INA. Some of them deemed that year as a year of

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<sup>78</sup> Jerry Kammer, “The Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965,” CIS.org, accessed January 17, 2020, <https://cis.org/Report/HartCeller-Immigration-Act-1965>.

<sup>79</sup> United States Congress Senate Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Immigration: Hearings, Eighty-Ninth Congress, First Session* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 3.

<sup>80</sup> Theodore H. (Theodore Harold) White, *America in Search of Itself: The Making of the President, 1956-1980*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 363.

national betrayal by opening the door for Latin Americans and Asians who hurt American values, and also a watershed year that destroyed national culture.<sup>81</sup>

Although nativism did not have political influence for a period, nativists did not stop striving to strengthen their influence. Furthermore, due to the change in the demographics of immigration (i.e., the increase in the total number of immigrants and the increase in undocumented immigrants) as well as the change in diplomatic circumstances (i.e., the end of the Cold War and the September 11 attacks), nativism has gradually regained its strength. Trump's victory was the culmination of this phenomenon. The anti-immigration ambivalence, which had been obscured from the 1960s, was explicitly disclosed in public again.

In 1979, the anti-immigration organization called Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), which attempted to spread propaganda about harsh restrictions on immigration policy, was established. FAIR officially proclaimed that immigration should not be restricted based on race and ethnicity, but they also argued that Asians and Latin Americans undermine American culture.<sup>82</sup> One of the most prominent critics of immigration is Peter Brimelow, who praised the Know-Nothing Movement of the 1850s. He claimed that mass immigration from Asia and Latin America was caused by ruling elites who were eager to change American core values. Also, he believed that the Constitution was written by men of white ethnicity and it was for themselves and their white descendants. This sort of blatant racial nativism, however, was marginalized from acceptable public discourse until 1992, when Patrick Buchanan launched his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination and again in 1996,<sup>83</sup> when he did not

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<sup>81</sup> Goldstein, "Unfit for the Constitution," 493.

<sup>82</sup> Goldstein, 537.

<sup>83</sup> Goldstein, 541.

hesitate to articulate explicit racial (white) nativism and discussed how to reserve the country exclusively for white people.

“Who speaks for the Euro-Americans, who founded the USA?” he asked. “Is it not time to take America back?”<sup>84</sup> He also described 1965 as a turning point in the beginning of the loss of white identity in the United States. On the one hand, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, American elites espoused racial nativism supported by eugenics and there was no significant opposition to them. On the other hand, Buchanan denounced elites (especially liberal ones) as if they were harming the core of American ethnicity, and politically tried to place himself on the side of working-class whites.<sup>85</sup>

As the IRL shows, nativism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was espoused and promoted by highly educated elites such as Harvard alumni, senators, and Ivy League scientists. Buchanan, however, who invoked IRL ideology, enthusiastically criticized elites as having betrayed WASP predominance, and this is the profound difference between the 1920s and the post-1960s. Buchanan and his advisers, as they stood on behalf of working-class whites, raged against both liberal elites and poor immigrants. Through his presidential campaigns, Buchanan finally brought nativism back into the mainstream of U.S. political debate.<sup>86</sup>

From the 1960s on, the gap of national identity between American elites and the public has been growing. American political leaders and government elites began to promote racial diversity and multiculturalism, while they weakened the Eurocentric national identity. Many Americans in academia, the media, and business seemed to have followed this trend. Landmark

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<sup>84</sup> Goldstein, 541.

<sup>85</sup> Goldstein, 543.

<sup>86</sup> Goldstein, 542–44.

media firms such as *The Wall Street Journal* believed that it was crucial to liberalize immigration for globalization and economic growth, while business elites welcomed cheaper labor from other countries. Liberal politicians supported immigration for humanitarian reasons, and restrictions on immigration were criticized as racist, which was “politically incorrect.”<sup>87</sup>

Huntington, however, argues that, according to the polls and referenda, a majority of Americans oppose these trends.<sup>88</sup> He notes that, “Although Americans like to think of their country as a nation of immigrants, it seems probable that at no time in American history has a majority of Americans favored the expansion of immigration.”<sup>89</sup> According to him, in 19 polls from 1945 to 2002, the proportion of the public favoring increased immigration never exceeded 14 percent, while the proportion who wanted to restrict immigration was never less than 33 percent. In fact, many in the media were not in favor of nor predicted Trump’s victory in 2016. They blamed Trump’s discriminatory proposals as un-American and unconstitutional.<sup>90</sup> Trump won, however. Thus, one could argue that Trump’s discriminatory proposals are not un-American.

In 2016, Trump’s presidential campaign espoused many nativist themes as Buchanan’s did in the 1990s. Trump’s policies are based on the development of nativism in U.S. history. As history shows, Trump and his nativist rhetoric did not appear suddenly in his presidential campaign. On the contrary, the Trump phenomenon is in the forefront of the U.S. nativism, which has developed over the course of history.

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<sup>87</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?* 330.

<sup>88</sup> Huntington, 142–43.

<sup>89</sup> Huntington, 329.

<sup>90</sup> Lauren Gambino, “Trump’s ‘Deeply Un-American’ Stance on Immigration Prompts Legal Concerns,” *The Guardian*, August 17, 2016, sec. US news, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/17/trump-immigration-plan-us-constitution>.

## Flexible “Us” and “Them”

Thus far, we have seen how nativism has historically evolved and how it is connected to Trump. Now, let us examine the reasons behind Trump’s demonization of Muslims and Latin Americans.

Throughout history, the targets of discrimination have changed many times: from the Irish and the Germans to the Chinese, the Italians and the Jews, then the Japanese around World War II, and now undocumented Latin Americans and Muslims. There are two main reasons behind the shift of targets.

First, immigrants traditionally assimilated into U.S. culture to some extent over a period of generations, and they came to be regarded as authentic Americans. Second, the self-identity of Americans (who seem to be “us” and “them”) itself has also been changing over time, with the 1960s as the watershed.

U.S. history has already vindicated the idea that immigrants, who have been regarded as undesirable and deemed not capable of assimilation into the United States, actually do contribute to society by participating in the workforce and creating new cultural traditions. Generation by generation, their descendants tend to speak English more than their ancestors’ tongues.<sup>91</sup> Ultimately, they come to believe themselves to be authentic Americans, and interestingly, some of them oppose the next influx of immigrants as they think they are not worthy of entering the United States, because new immigrants are different from their ancestors.

For example, former Congressman Tom Tancredo, whose grandfather was an Italian immigrant, insisted on the necessity of tough immigration restrictions in an interview held in

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<sup>91</sup> Richard Alba et al., “Only English by the Third Generation? Loss and Preservation of the Mother Tongue among the Grandchildren of Contemporary Immigrants,” *Demography* 39, No. 3 (2002): 467–84, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.2002.0023>.

2006. At the time, undocumented Mexican and Latin American immigrants were seen as a social challenge. He critically stated that undocumented immigrants were coming into America only for economic opportunity, and he asserted, "... fewer people are coming into the country with the desire to assimilate, to separate themselves from the culture, the language, the political affiliations they have and reconnect to something new." He asserted that earlier immigrants also came for economic opportunity, but they were willing to be assimilated. "My grandparents would talk about that all the time," he added.<sup>92</sup>

Historian Peter Schrag cites Tancredo as an emblematic icon of the contradiction of nativism in his book *Not Fit For Our Society*. According to Schrag, when Tancredo enumerated the traits of Mexican immigrants, it was mostly the same characterization used to refer to Italians, Jews, and Slavs a century ago. Schrag notes that "Tancredo forgot that his grandfather belonged to a generation widely regarded by the WASP establishment and many other Americans of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when he arrived, as genetically and culturally unassimilable – ill-educated, crime-prone, diseased."<sup>93</sup> This phenomenon often results in the establishment of restrictionism in the United States.

As noted previously, anti-immigration rhetoric is often characterized by critics in relation to economic competition, issues related to crime, and cultural assimilation. Although the cause of anti-immigration sentiment always appears similar, the supportive concept has changed in the history of U.S. nativism from "Catholic loyalty" to "eugenics," and more recently "illegality" and "radical Islam" The theories have changed, but the conclusion is always consistent:

"Immigrants must go."

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<sup>92</sup> "Tancredo: Tough Immigration Reform Essential to Maintain U.S. Identity," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed November 26, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/interview/tancredo-tough-immigration-reform-essential-maintain-us-identity>.

<sup>93</sup> Schrag, *Not Fit for Our Society*, 3.

This implies that the theory and rhetoric for anti-immigration nativism are flexible. Nativists often aim their hatred at competitors who came after them, so the ways of justifying their viewpoint are very flexible. Even if research studies and findings contradict their assertions, nativists tend not to change their beliefs, as Trump has shown. Policymakers who want to pander to voters, as the Know-Nothing Movement showed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have exaggerated the downside of immigrants to provoke public fear and gain to votes to support their positions. It follows that rational persuasion does not necessarily mitigate anti-immigration sentiment.

When the ratio of the foreign-born population exceeds a certain line, nativist activity becomes more vigorous and pervasive. Nativists have exaggerated the threat of immigrants, and their rhetoric could apply to any group except the WASP American core. The way the targets change depends on the racial or religious composition of immigrants at the time. Goldstein argued that nativists have justified excluding undesirable foreigners based on race and religion, because those people are hostile to the U. S. Constitution. Catholicism was incompatible with the Constitution, Chinese were too foreign, and finally Jews, Italians, Poles, Asians, and Latin Americans would destroy constitutional government.<sup>94</sup>

In addition, external factors, such as the relationship with foreign countries and political circumstances, have affected immigration policy. For example, during World War II, Japanese-Americans were forcibly interned in camps; simultaneously, the Chinese Exclusion Act was abolished in 1943. While both Japanese and Chinese were subjects of discrimination before World War II, once the war began in 1941, immigrants and their descendants from the enemy country were discriminated against, while those from allied nations were conveniently exempted from discriminatory restrictions.

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<sup>94</sup> Goldstein, "Unfit for the Constitution," 558.

## Conclusion

On the night of February 10, 2020, hundreds of Trump supporters who could not enter one of his rallies sprang up on a snowy sidewalk in central Manchester, New Hampshire. Trump was eloquently talking about immigration policy. A man from New Hampshire who came to see the rally said his grandfather was an Italian immigrant and explained why he supports Trump's policy. "People think Trump is somehow against immigration. He's not. We're just against illegal immigration. Follow the rules, make the application, get in line, and come to America, we welcome you. We don't care where you come from." He, like other supporters, criticized the "illegality" of immigrants.

Trump supporters welcomed his approach against illegality because they believe that their ancestors from Europe entered the United States legally. According to historian Hidetaka Hirota, however, these contemporary Americans misunderstand immigration history in the United States. In the 19th century, although state laws prohibited poor immigrants from entering the country, many indigents from Europe ultimately came in without the required bonds simply because the number of immigrants was too large for border officers to manage. Hirota adds that, due to the lack of capacity of law enforcement, foreigners who were supposed to be deported eventually got amnesty and assimilated into the United States. Hirota concludes by saying "The contrast touted today between past European lawfulness and present Latin 'illegality' is artificial and based on partial, mistaken interpretations of U.S. immigration history."<sup>95</sup>

Although historians have noted historical doubts about how legally immigrants had entered the United States, criticism against "illegality" is a powerful rallying cry, one strong enough to be backed by Trump supporters. That's why immigration control is so important.

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<sup>95</sup> Hidetaka Hirota, "Perspective | The Danger of Vilifying Poor Immigrants," Washington Post, accessed October 28, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/08/13/danger-vilifying-poor-immigrants/>.

Trump also emphasized this point in his speech as follows: “We want them to come in legally. We are fully taking care of our own citizens first, including millions of African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans who are entitled to a government that protects their families and their communities.”

As we have seen, the dilemma of American immigration has existed almost consistently since the beginning of the nation’s history. There has always been a contradiction between the ideal (a nation of immigrants) and reality (nativist restrictions). That ambivalence makes this theme hard to understand. Why do the people of a nation of immigrants seem to support Trump’s policies? It is clear that, to some extent, some Americans have always tried to shut immigrants out of the United States, and that nativism has never disappeared from the country.

Nativism consistently gained influence in the United States from the colonial era to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The culmination of nativism in the United States was the 1920s. The combined effects of the internal and external environment, such as the World Wars, the Cold War, the declining number of immigrants, and the Civil Rights Movement, however, have made the United States ostensibly an immigrant-friendly country since the 1960s. The myth of a nation of immigrants born around this time became the premise of American political correctness, but it was not necessarily accepted by all Americans, and nativism was not dead. A new wave of mass immigration has led to the spread of nativism again, and this is related to the harsh policies shared by Trump and his supporters.

Also, Latin Americans and Muslims, who are currently targeted, are not essentially targeted because of their unique characteristics. In fact, the subject of discrimination can be anyone who dominates the proportion of immigrants at the time. I believe there is no significant

difference between the rhetoric that Muslims are targeted by Trump and Catholics were targeted by the Know-Nothing Movement in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

As history has shown, the rise and fall of nativism has also been correlated with the proportion of foreigners. Although both external circumstances and internal political movements have major impacts on national policy strategy, to maintain stable immigration and mitigate anti-immigration sentiment, it is also important to keep the foreign-born ratio under a certain range. Over the course of U.S. history, the rapid expansion of immigrants has led to social conflict, so the number of immigrants should be under control to mitigate anti-immigration sentiment.

Predominant categories of immigrants, like the Catholic-Irish in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, have always been criticized when the proportion of foreign-born residents increased. And as the target changes, the self-identity of the “American” itself changes also. Previous targets eventually become nativists. Due to the assimilation of immigrants and their descendants, the self-defined and self-accepted definition of American also changed. As Samuel Huntington points out, however, immigrants assimilated in the United States because of their relatively a small numbers. When they are a majority in a particular area, they tend to keep their culture and language, and this creates divisions inside the country.

The rhetoric of discrimination is also flexible. As Trump’s statements clearly show, the justifications for criticizing immigrants (blame for taking jobs from native-born Americans, bringing crime, etc.) have not changed much since the time when nativism took root. Even some nativists take care to eliminate blatant racially discriminatory assertions to resolve inconsistencies with the Constitution. Therefore, nativists justify excluding target immigrants not

because they are a different race, ethnicity, and/or religion, but because their race, ethnicity and/or religion are incompatible with the Constitution (the American Creed) itself.<sup>96</sup>

One significant difference between the present and the past is the existence of huge protests against nativism in public. In a National Public Radio (NPR) interview in 2017, Asian-American historian Erica Lee said that there are nationwide grassroots efforts and legal challenges against Trump’s immigration policies: “There were no protests in support of Chinese immigrants [during the exclusion era in the United States].”<sup>97</sup> The American people are certainly polarized. But the situation is better than in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 19<sup>th</sup> century when most Americans supported discriminatory policies.

## **Lessons for Japan**

“There is no other nation but (Japan) where a single race has spoken a single language at a single location and maintained a single dynasty with a single emperor for over 2,000 years. It is a great nation.”<sup>98</sup>

As Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso said at meeting with his supporters in January 2020, many Japanese still believe the narrative of Japanese racial homogeneity. After Aso’s remark was criticized for contradicting government policy, which supports the indigenous Ainu people, he apologized for causing “misunderstanding.” In fact, Japan has been geographically separated from other countries, so it is understandable that many Japanese believe

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<sup>96</sup> Goldstein, “Unfit for the Constitution,” 556–59.

<sup>97</sup> “As Chinese Exclusion Act Turns 135, Experts Point To Parallels Today,” NPR.org, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/05/05/527091890/the-135-year-bridge-between-the-chinese-exclusion-act-and-a-proposed-travel-ban>.

<sup>98</sup> “Aso Apologizes If ‘Single-Race Nation’ Remark Misunderstood: The Asahi Shimbun,” The Asahi Shimbun, accessed February 3, 2020, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ202001140019.html>.

Japanese racial homogeneity to be a major ingredient of their national identity. People who believe in such homogeneity, however, tend not to support immigration, and they, in fact, espouse nativism.

For economic reasons, Japan has decided to accept temporary foreign guest workers. The Japanese government has allowed foreigners working temporarily, while set a great hurdle to prolong the working period. Also applauded racial homogeneity before his supporters; likewise, the government has to reassure its conservative political bases, which tend to be staunchly anti-immigration. In other words, the government has tried to secure cheap labor from overseas, while persuading their conservative political bases to accept this. To solve these contradictory demands, the government tried to recruit vulnerable foreign labor without any consistent efforts to incorporate them into Japanese society. Such obvious discriminatory attitudes, however, are highly controversial, and could encourage racial nativism in Japan, leading to social divisions.

Historically, however, the Japanese government has adopted different rhetoric on national racial identity. The Empire of Japan actually asserted that the Okinawans, Ainu, Taiwanese, and Koreans came from the same ethnic group as the Japanese. The Empire explained, however, that those minorities had not yet been elevated to the point where they could be treated like the Japanese, so they had to distinguish them from the Japanese. The Empire added that they needed time to educate them to be treated equally to the Japanese. This excuse justified discrimination against Taiwanese and Koreans.<sup>99</sup> The days when they were treated equally, however, never came to the Empire. Such arbitrary rhetoric did not just end the strong discriminatory sense of the Japanese, it also created backlash from the targets. Discrimination against minorities creates

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<sup>99</sup> Eiji Oguma, *“Nihonjin” no kyōkai: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, Chōsen, shokuminchi shihai kara fukki undō made*, 初版., Shohan. (Tōkyō: Shin’yōsha, 1998).

domestic fragmentation and social unrest, and, in the opinion of this writer, it should be removed as such.

Arguably, Japan has historically absorbed and merged with other cultures and races such as the Okinawans and the Ainu. Moreover, as a result of Japanese rule over the Korean peninsula and Taiwan and the subsequent demise of the Empire, many Koreans, Taiwanese, and Chinese gradually became naturalized Japanese and gradually merged with the Japanese population. Of course, naturalization differs from cultural assimilation. Moreover, it does not mean that discriminatory sentiment has disappeared against those foreigners and there are still numerous long-term Korean residents of Japan who live there with Korean nationality struggling against discrimination. At least, one could argue that Japan, however, is not as homogeneous as Aso and his supporters believe.

This historical fact implies that Japan is not such a unique case in terms of cultural or racial assimilation. Thus, some experiences with immigration in the United States could apply as precedents for the Japanese immigration story. The xenophobia and nativism in the United States also prevail in Japan when immigrants enter Japan just as they did in the United States, but the targets of nativism have assimilated into Japan over generations. The Japanese might need time to be convinced to accept permanent mass immigration, but once this does take place, immigrants will be indispensable for a prosperous economy and society in Japan.

The “guest worker” provision could be a temporary solution, but it is not a fundamental solution given the aging demographic transition of Japan. Declining and aging populations are Japan’s fundamental problem. Increasing the number of naturalized immigrants and increasing the Japanese population would have significant economic and social benefits. The Japanese government might need time to convince people of the necessity of immigrants, but if the

governments and bureaucrats really want to create an effective solution, they should not hesitate to use the word “immigrant” and start to accept them as a potential member of Japanese society. The earlier Japan begins to openly accept permanent immigrants, the more smoothly the nation will be able to accommodate them without an extreme backlash.

Both American and Japanese history shows that it is clear that naturalized foreign minorities are capable of assimilation and integration over generations. People who were said to be non-assimilable have become Americans, for example. This historical fact should be shared with more Japanese as an example. In fact, the Empire of Japan promoted the narrative of Japanese diversity.<sup>100</sup> Narratives can easily be rewritten for political reasons. Although Japan does not necessarily need to become a multicultural nation like the United States, language education programs for immigrants will be needed to mitigate cultural conflicts.

Assimilation of immigrants will change the definition and identity of the people who absorb the immigrants. Many conservatives in Japan may be afraid of this transition, but if Japanese before the Meiji Restoration are compared with Japanese today, it can be said that “Japanese pure blood” is just an illusion. Since the Meiji era, Okinawans, Ainu, Taiwanese, Koreans and other ethnic groups and their descendants have assimilated into Japan in large numbers. The boundaries and racial identity of the “Japanese” are already vague. Let’s make it clear that Japan is not a special or unique country in this sense. If the Japanese really want to maintain the myth of “pure blood,” we have to accept that this comes with economic decline and abandoning the nation’s position as an economic superpower, but that choice is not visible in political debate. Thus, we have to tackle immigration policy. It is the view of this writer that, for the Japanese to accept immigrants, is necessary to abandon the myth of homogeneity and to

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<sup>100</sup> Oguma, 420–25.

revise their own discriminatory policies. In addition, the Japanese need to clarify the economic necessity and the advantages of accepting immigrants as Japanese.

In the interests of stability, it is important to control the number of immigrants and help those who do enter through sufficient and supportive policies. The rapid increase of immigrants and foreign-born populations, however, tend to exacerbate nativism and xenophobia as U.S. history indicates. We have to learn from U.S. precedents how to create a new role for Japan – one that can absorb immigrants and assimilate them on a controllable scale.

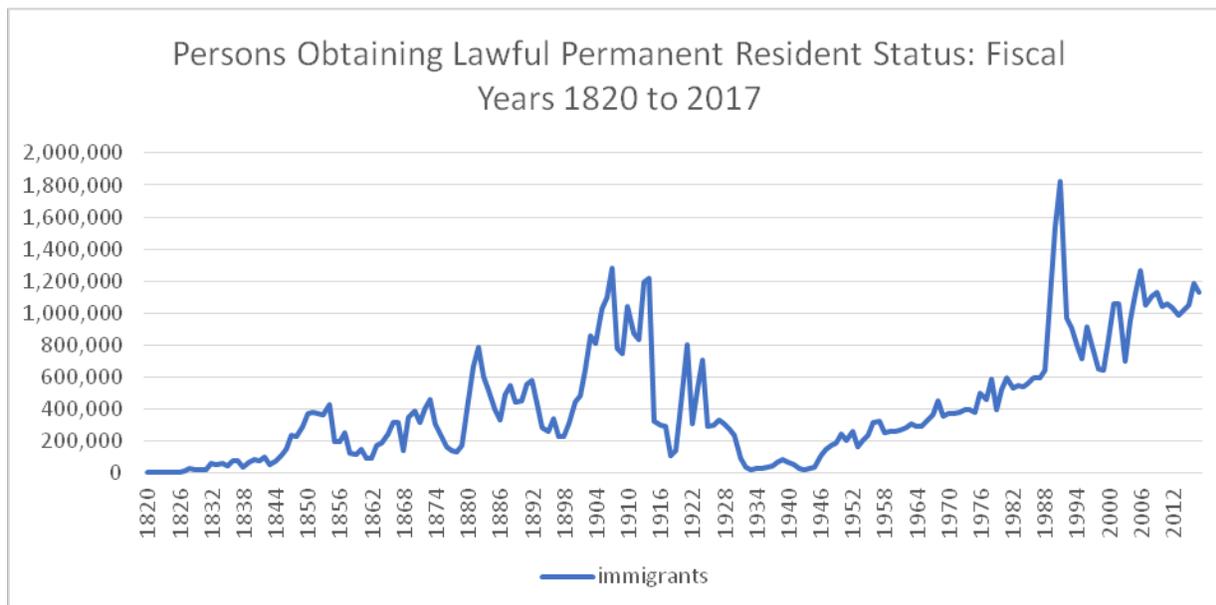
Historian Julia G. Young emphasizes the importance of information about the cost of nativism to counteract the rising tide of nativism. She argues that the costs of nativism, including the loss of foreign tourists and international students, are steep. She also points out the prominence of scholarly contributions by Jewish World War II refugees. She notes that “In addition...[scholars and] journalists must do more to educate the public on the costs of nativism and to address the fears that underlie nativist beliefs.”<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, nativists who are overconfident and bigoted will not accept any rational explanations or data. As a journalist, however, I believe that what we should do is help properly convey that nativism will have a negative impact on Japanese society, and inform the Japanese how arbitrary the Japanese homogeneity myth is.

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<sup>101</sup> Young, “Making America 1920 Again?”

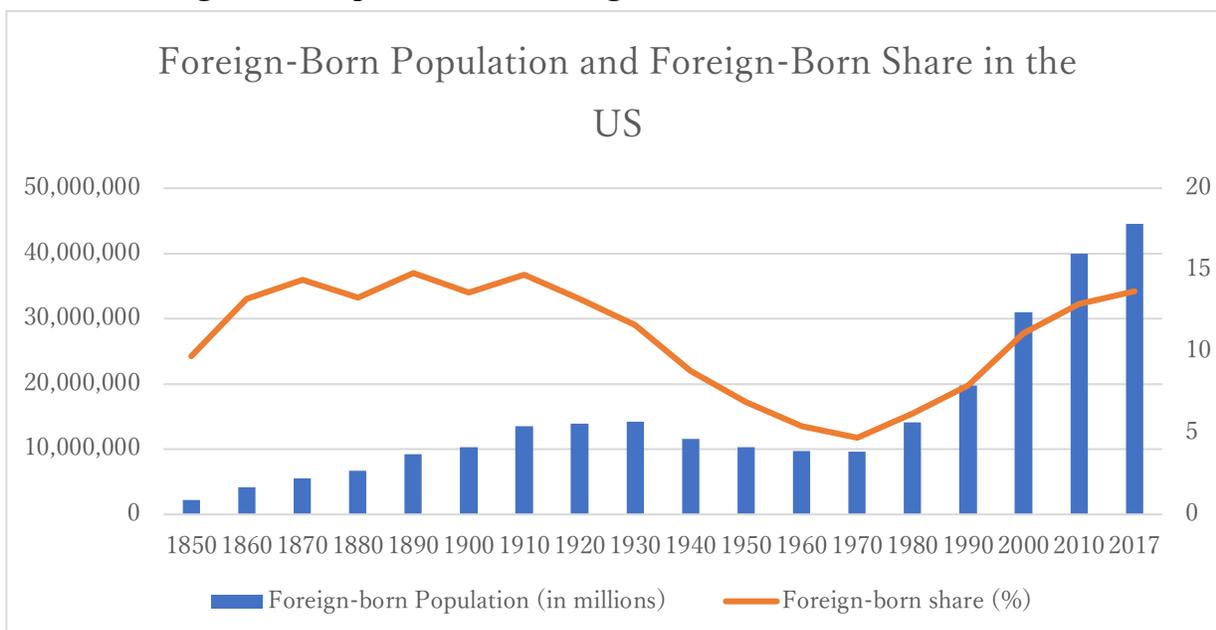
## Tables

**Table 1. Persons Obtaining Lawful Permanent Resident Status: Fiscal Years 1820 to 2017**



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2017*.

**Table 2. Foreign-Born Population and Foreign-Born Share in the US**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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