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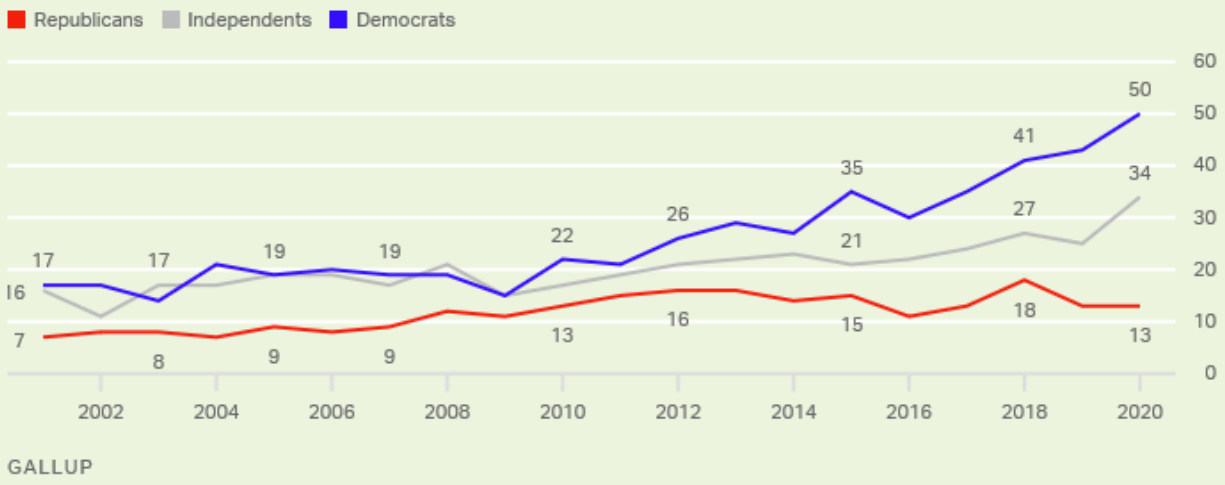
Week 14: Philosophy of Immigration

- I. From Politics to Philosophy to Policy
 - A. While most people think in left-right terms, sophisticated thinkers usually base their policy views on some deeper philosophy.
 - B. What are the leading philosophies on which thinkers rely?
 1. Utilitarianism
 2. Egalitarianism
 3. Libertarianism
 4. Cost-benefit analysis (“wealth-maximization”)
 5. Meritocracy
 6. Christianity
 7. Kantianism
 8. Citizenism
 - C. Given the social science we’ve explored, what do each of these philosophies imply about optimal immigration policy?
- II. Utilitarianism and Immigration
 - A. Core idea: “Maximize the sum total of human happiness.”
 - B. Given the enormous expected effects of open borders on GWP combined with especially large gains for the global poor, the utilitarian case is very strong indeed.
 - C. What is the utilitarian perspective on immigration’s other effects?
 1. Fiscal
 2. Cultural
 3. Political
 4. Transition costs?
 - D. Best utilitarian case for any alternative immigration policy?
- III. Egalitarianism and Immigration
 - A. Core idea: “Maximize the welfare of the worst-off group.” (Rawls’ maximin principle).
 - B. Given the enormous expected effects of open borders on GWP combined with especially large gains for the global poor, the egalitarian case is again very strong.
 - C. What is the egalitarian perspective on immigration’s other effects?
 1. Fiscal
 2. Cultural
 3. Political
 4. Transition costs?
 - D. Best egalitarian case for any alternative immigration policy?
- IV. Libertarianism and Immigration
 - A. Core idea: “Respect rights to life and private property.”
 1. Unless the consequences are really bad?

- B. Since open borders merely allows people to hire, rent, and sell to others regardless of their nationality, the libertarian position seems clear-cut.
 - 1. Nations as collective property of their citizens? If so, you have a “libertarian” case for whatever government does.
 - C. What is the libertarian perspective on immigration’s other effects?
 - 1. Economic
 - 2. Fiscal
 - 3. Cultural
 - 4. Political
 - 5. Transition costs?
 - D. Best libertarian case for any alternative immigration policy?
- V. Cost-Benefit Analysis and Immigration
- A. Core idea: “Maximize the dollar value of social resources.”
 - 1. How is this different from utilitarianism? The relevant metric is willingness to pay, not human well-being.
 - 2. As always, willingness to pay depends on ability to pay.
 - B. Given the enormous expected effects of open borders on GWP, the cost-benefit case for open borders is very strong.
 - 1. But not as strong as the utilitarian case, because cost-benefit analysis assigns no extra value to pro-poor distributional effects.
 - C. What is the cost-benefit perspective on immigration’s other effects?
 - 1. Fiscal
 - 2. Cultural
 - 3. Political
 - 4. Transition costs?
 - D. Best cost-benefit case for any alternative immigration policy?
- VI. Meritocracy and Immigration
- A. Core idea: “Rewards based solely on personal merit.”
 - B. Since immigration restrictions mandate discrimination based on citizenship, they seem to directly violate meritocratic principles.
 - 1. The slogan is, “The best *person* for the job,” not “The best *American* for the job.”
 - C. What is the meritocratic perspective on immigration’s other effects?
 - 1. Economic
 - 2. Fiscal
 - 3. Cultural
 - 4. Political
 - 5. Transition costs?
 - D. Best meritocratic case for any alternative immigration policy?
- VII. Christianity and Immigration
- A. Core idea: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - B. Who is “your neighbor”? The parable of the Good Samaritan strongly affirms, “All humanity.”
 - C. Given the enormous expected effects of open borders on GWP combined with especially large gains for the global poor, the Christian case is again very strong.

- D. What is the Christian perspective on immigration's other effects?
 1. Fiscal
 2. Cultural
 3. Political
 4. Transition costs?
- E. Best Christian case for any alternative immigration policy?
- VIII. Kantianism and Immigration
 - A. Core idea: "Always treat others as an end in themselves, never as a mere means."
 - B. The misguided lynch mob example: Punishing the innocent is wrong, consequences aside.
 - C. Don't immigration restrictions punish people for the "crime" of "choosing the wrong parents"?
 1. Collective property and its implications
 2. Fundamental human rights versus democracy
 - D. What is the Kantian perspective on immigration's other effects?
 1. Economic
 2. Fiscal
 3. Cultural
 4. Political
 5. Transition costs?
 - E. Best Kantian case for any alternative immigration policy?
- IX. Citizenism and Immigration
 - A. Core idea: "Maximize the well-being of current citizens and their descendants."
 - B. Given the enormous expected effects of open borders on GWP, why would citizenists oppose it?
 - C. Best answer: We want *even more* than we get under open borders.
 - D. How to get even more? Keyhole solutions: Admit foreigners, but with higher taxes, lower benefits, and no political say.
 - E. What is the citizenist perspective on immigration's other effects?
 1. Fiscal
 2. Cultural
 3. Political
 4. Transition costs?
 - F. Best citizenist case for any alternative immigration policy?
- X. Liberalism, Conservatism, and Immigration
 - A. Opposition to immigration used to be bipartisan. Even in the early 2000s, both parties overwhelmingly opposed liberalization, with just a 10 percentage-point gap.

Preference for Increase in Immigration Rises Most Sharply Among Democrats



- B. Since then, however, an enormous partisan gap has opened up. Both parties are more supportive of liberalization, but Democratic support has skyrocketed.
- C. What explains the change? Appeals to “fundamental philosophy” don’t make much sense, because until recently Democrats, too, overwhelmingly opposed liberalization.
- D. Only a Trump effect? Maybe, but the trend looks like a straight line since 2010.
- E. Do Democrats just want more Democratic voters? This seems like an implausible master plan for politicians who seek to win the next election.
 - 1. Furthermore, why wouldn’t Republicans strive to win over the growing foreign-born demographic?
- F. What about simply appealing to rising polarization? (Somewhat plausible, but this fails to explain why Republicans are slowly moving in the same direction).
 - 1. Alternative story: Generational replacement, combined with more cosmopolitan youth.
- G. The case for immigration is easy to make on both liberal and conservative grounds.
 - 1. Liberal: equality, poverty alleviation, anti-discrimination
 - 2. Conservative: free markets, meritocracy, opportunity
- H. The same goes for the case against:
 - 1. Liberal: protecting American workers, preventing worker exploitation, anti-business
 - 2. Conservative: protecting American culture, preventing the dilution of American values, America First
- I. What is the long-run political future of immigration? Public opinion suggests that liberalization is the future, though Trump’s policies, coronavirus, plus status quo bias cut the other way.
- XI. The Precautionary Principle

- A. The Precautionary Principle: Disallow important changes unless you have *near-certainty* that the overall consequences will be good.
- B. This Principle has broad appeal. Liberals have used it to oppose fracking; conservatives have used it to oppose Syrian refugees.
- C. However, almost no one applies the Principle consistently. Most big social changes do *not* provoke appeals to the Precautionary Principle.
 - 1. Television
 - 2. Working moms
 - 3. Internet dating
- D. Deep point: In a changing world, stasis is potentially deadly, too.
- E. Still, the Precautionary Principle is plausibly the best argument against radical liberalization of immigration.
- F. Key idea:
 - 1. High-quality people are the main ingredient of a successful society.
 - 2. If your society is already successful, immigration endangers it by tampering with its main ingredient.
 - 3. Why take even a slight risk?
 - 4. 1950's West German slogan: "No experiments!"
- G. Rebuttal:
 - 1. Expected benefits of liberalization are high enough to provide an enormous margin of error.
 - 2. People routinely accept low-probability chances of dire harm, because the benefits of doing so are immense.
 - 3. Refusing immigration is risky too. E.g. What if an immigrant would have cured cancer?
 - 4. You have a right to extreme caution with your own life, but what if the price of your extreme caution is many trillions of dollars for others?
- H. Most radical policy changes have ended disastrously – communism mostly infamously. If the lesson that:
 - 1. Radical change is bad? Or...
 - 2. Scrupulously review the evidence before you proceed?
- I. Let us not overlook radical policy changes that seem to have worked well:
 - 1. Abolition of slavery
 - 2. Religious toleration
 - 3. Freedom of speech
 - 4. End of communism
 - 5. End of Jim Crow