WHITESHIFT
Populism, Immigration, and the Future of White Majorities

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The Rise of Trump: Ethno-Traditional Nationalism in an Age of Immigration

The period after the passage of Hart–Celler turned a new page in American demographic history. Legal immigration to the United States in 1965 was about 300,000. This figure began to rise steeply, augmented by a growing flow of undocumented immigrants, largely from Mexico. In the 1970s, the country admitted 450,000 legal immigrants per year, rising to about 750,000 in the 1980s and over a million since the 1990s. The number of undocumented immigrants living in the country also increased, from around half a million in 1965 to over 12 million by 2008, despite a one-off amnesty for 1.8 million people as part of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986. A significant minority – up to half – of the legal inflow also consists of unauthorized immigrants being granted permanent residence.

Between 1960 and 2010, the non-Hispanic white share of the American population declined from 85 to 63 per cent. Hispanics, just 3 per cent of the US population in 1960, comprised 16.3 per cent by 2010, well ahead of the country’s traditional black minority, at 12.3 per cent. The engine behind the change was a sharp increase in numbers combined with a major shift in the source of American immigration from over 80 per cent Canadian and European in 1965 to approximately 80 per cent Asian, Latin American and African by the 1990s.

Fertility and immigration rates by ethnic group can certainly affect the future composition of the population, but much can be foretold by running today’s age structure forward in time in projections software. In 1996, the US Census Bureau predicted that minorities would form a majority of the under-five population by 2020. They were too conservative: 2011 was the year minority births eclipsed those of whites. Subsequently they overcorrected, claiming the US would be ‘majority minority’ by 2042. The current forecast, based on lower Hispanic fertility and immigration, puts the date closer to 2055. In any event, by mid-century, a majority of the country will be Latino, black or Asian as it already is among the under-fives, in twenty-two metropolitan areas and in Hawaii, California, Texas and New Mexico.

The surge of immigration after 1965 was largely Hispanic and initially concentrated in California, Chicago, New York and Miami. Miami was transformed most. It changed from a small city of half a million with a 4 per cent Hispanic population in 1950 to a 36 per cent Hispanic metropolis of 1.7 million in 1980. By 2015 its 2.8 million residents were two-thirds Hispanic. Over 70 per cent of residents of the city (as distinct from the metro area) spoke only Spanish at home. Yet transformations at neighbourhood or even city level are arguably less momentous than those which encompass entire political jurisdictions.

California is often considered to be on the leading edge of American trends, from car culture and yoga to Flower Power and the personal computer. It’s therefore fitting that it was the first major state to undergo what David Coleman terms the ‘third demographic transition’ from predominantly white to ‘majority minority’. The state was 80 per cent non-Hispanic white as recently as 1970 and fell below the 50 per cent mark some time in the late 1990s. By 2050, California’s department of finance projects that Hispanics will form 32 per cent of the population, with whites down to only a quarter. Hispanic growth was driven by immigration and higher fertility. In the year 2000, the number of children an average Hispanic woman was expected to bear over her lifetime (TFR) was 2.75 compared to around 2 for non-Hispanic whites and 2.1 for black Americans. By the 2010s, however, Hispanic fertility had dropped to the replacement level of 2.1 and more Mexicans were leaving the country than entering it. Those from poorer countries in Central America, the Caribbean and the Andean cone of South America have replaced Mexicans in the illegal inflow. Yet those countries are further away, their fertility is falling and they are developing, all of which intimate that future flows will abate. Figure 3.2 shows that during 2010–15, the number of illegal immigrants apprehended on the southwest border fell to early 1970s levels. Trump’s enforcement policies halved this figure, reducing 2017 apprehensions to 1960s levels, though this rebounded in mid-2018 with a spike in Central American asylum claimants. Nevertheless, the demographic momentum of decades past
people's answers in two-dimensional space. These heat maps show how answers to a question such as voting populist correlate with a battery of other questions. From experience, Dade arrays the questions as dots on a map, with questions that tend to be answered similarly positioned close together. These surveys are often used to help companies or NGOs rather than political scientists, so it is all the more surprising how nicely they illuminate supporters and opponents of the populist right.

Dade identifies three zones in this value space: Settlers, Prospectors and Pioneers. Settlers prefer order, security and stability, eschewing change. Prospectors are hedonistic and status-conscious, focused on conspicuous consumption and success. Pioneers are interested in self-exploration, novelty and caring. The old left–right economic divide largely separated Pioneers from Prospectors, with Settlers somewhere in the middle. What's new is that today's identity divide pits Settlers against Pioneers, with the consumerist Prospectors looking on from the sidelines. The maps are too detailed to reproduce here, but you can find several examples on this book's companion website.

The base of support for anti-immigration politics in countries' populations is rooted in the Settlers. Most Settlers are psychologically conservative, seeking to secure their multi-generational group attachments and identity reference points for posterity. This is not the same as political conservatism. Many psychological conservatives will be on the right because right-wing parties often take conservative positions on cultural issues. But some cultural conservatives may have left-wing economic interests while others may be quiescent non-voters with little connection to politics. This is especially true in societies where anti-racist social norms or the dominance of economic issues prevents right-wing elites from appealing to the conservative instincts of these voters. Finally, psychological conservatives tend to be attached to established parties so are less likely to cut these cords to vote for insurgent right-wing parties.

Psychological conservatives benchmark their nation against the world they knew growing up. Ethnic changes are particularly jarring as they disrupt the sense of attachment to locale, ethnic group and nation. These ascribed identities provide a broader storyline which anchors their lives and lends meaning to their daily routines. In ethnic terms, rising diversity leads to a sense of white American demise and a fading connection between local referents and the white American presence.
Usually this takes the form of nostalgia for the loss of an unhyphenated ‘white American’ presence. In more specific ‘white ethnic’ neighbourhoods such as Italian-American Bensonhurst, Brooklyn or Irish-American South Boston, the narrative of white decline emerges as a higher-order property of Italian or Irish decline.

In national terms, ethnic change produces an erosion of the tradition of whites comprising a majority of the American nation. A fading of white cultural predominance further adds to the conservative malaise, but ethno-traditions will decline as a function of demographic change even if the content of mass culture remains oriented to white tastes and personalities. Culture is not ethnicity and the two have too often been conflated. Even if white culture remains the default mode, ethnocultural decline may proceed apace. There are two separate ethno-cultural dynamics, white ethnic decline and the attenuation of the white tradition in American national identity. Only whites will be concerned with the former, but conservative-minded minorities may be attached to white ethno-traditions of nationhood. That is, they will wish to slow changes to the America ‘they know’. The white tradition is of course only one of three strands of the broader W-AS-P tradition of nationhood which has declined substantially. Jewish-American Peter Schrag, inhabiting the very white but increasingly post-WASP America of the early 1970s, conveys a touch of this minority ethno-traditionalism in his Decline of the WASP: ‘The old WASP character had been rooted in regions, each of them sufficiently distinct for “character,” yet each also acceptably American ... Hester Prynne, Captain Ahab, Huck Finn, Horace Bembow, Temple Drake. Now much of that material is gone.’

A second component of the anti-immigration settler electorate are the order-seekers, known somewhat disparagingly in the psychology literature as ‘authoritarians’. Where conservatives seek to preserve the status quo, which might be multiracial, authoritarians always prefer less diversity and dissent. Conservatives are not the same as authoritarians. For instance, authoritarians dislike inequality – a form of economic diversity – thus may find themselves on the left. Conservatives prefer the status quo, however unequal. This means they will often be on the right unless society is becoming more unequal in which case they will hark back to a time of greater equality. But things can go the other way too. If blacks left the coastal south in large numbers, conservative whites might lament a decline in the historic black presence there whereas authoritarian whites would welcome it. However, immigrant-led ethnic change galvanizes both conservatives – who dislike change – and authoritarians, with their distaste for diversity.11

Importantly, this means conservatives will be most sensitive to increases in minority share but should become less worried as the rate of change subsides. This is clear in the data on neighbourhood change, where places that undergo ethnic shifts see higher white opposition to immigration but this effect disappears a decade after the change subsides.12 Authoritarians, by comparison, are most sensitive to the stock of minorities. For instance, it is conceivable that the rate of ethnic change may taper but assimilation proceeds too slowly to prevent the stock of non-whites from continuing to rise. In this case, we should expect reduced conservative opposition to immigration in tandem with heightening authoritarian concern. In a meta-analysis of all academic articles published between 1995 and 2016 on the relationship between diversity and either opposition to immigration or support for populist-right parties in the West, Matthew Goodwin and I found that both ethnic change and raw minority levels counted at the national level – though minority change was a somewhat stronger predictor of white hostility than minority share.13

Needless to say, the survey and election data we have, much of which dates from the 1990s, makes it very difficult to disentangle the effect of levels from changes. It is clear that rapid changes such as the 2015 European migrant crisis increased concern over immigration and support for the populist right. As the flows subsided, concern began to retreat from its high-water mark. But what about minority levels? Is France, with its 10 per cent minority share, more at risk of populist-right support than Italy, with a lower minority share but a rapid rate of increase? Might countries with a high share be more susceptible to right-wing populism due to the greater insecurity of their ethnic majority authoritarians? Only by considering historical patterns can we arrive at a sense of whether the share of minorities may reach a tipping point, sparking a white political response.14
ETHNO-NATIONALIST INTELLECTUALS

Thus far we've discussed conservatives and authoritarians, who tend to be Settlers. But there is another, vital, part of any restrictionist coalition. Namely the small proportion of Dade's 'Pioneers' – open, self-directed and ideologically motivated – who are drawn to ethno-cultural preservation. These figures – such as Henry Cabot Lodge in the 1920s or Stephen Miller today – tend to form a small ethno-nationalist elite. In many historical periods, their psychological peers will be pro-immigration liberals. These intellectuals are not simply motivated by local and nostalgic considerations but often seek to return to a historic 'golden age' or imagined ethnic past before they were born. The Gaelic Revival in Ireland in the 1880s and Irish president Éamon de Valera's quest to make Ireland a Gaelic-speaking country once again is one example. Welsh nationalists' struggle to revive the Welsh language in recent decades is another.¹³

In certain periods, fashions may shift so that cultural conservatism becomes the ascendant elite worldview. The Romantic movement emerged as a counter-Enlightenment reaction in the early nineteenth century. In the Muslim world, Islamism became fashionable among formerly secular intellectuals after 1970 following the perceived failure of non-aligned socialism and secular nationalism. Often there is an inter-elite identity dynamic at work. Romanticism caught the imagination of German thinkers who resented the dominance of Parian intellectual trends. Intellectuals in the Muslim world are attracted to the Islamic Revival as a riposte to the West, while nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals were drawn to Slavophilism because it elevated the worth of characteristics such as emotion and simplicity which were held in low regard by the Western Enlightenment.¹⁴ In the 1930s US, provincial intellectuals and artists who resented the dominance of New York and the north-east gave voice to Regionalism. This rural-historical and working-class idiom challenged – though ultimately failed to overturn – the dominant modernist aesthetic in American arts and letters established by the Young Intellectuals.¹⁵

Might the intellectual mood turn from liberalism to conservatism in the West? It is difficult to imagine who the foreign liberal reference point could be for Western intellectuals to rally against. 'The West' might work as a foil for East European writers but fails for Western ones. Similarly, the integration of provincial intellectuals into national networks and identities militates against them spearheading a new anti-metropolitan cultural movement. Instead, a conservative intellectual climate is more likely to emerge as a response to changing 'facts on the ground' or to a popular new theory which plugs into one of modernity's holy trinity of liberty, equality and rationality. The rise of right-wing populism, for example, is a 'fact on the ground' which dragged centre-left intellectuals away from multiculturalism in Europe in the 1990s and 2000s.¹⁸

In a related vein, there is a new politics of the white working class. Their electoral assertiveness has challenged the prevailing intellectual climate as populist leaders brandish egalitarian arguments about peripheral whites being neglected and 'left behind' by metropolitan elites. 'Political correctness' about the white working class offers partial legitimacy to those resisting the subaltern identity groups favoured by left-modernists.¹⁹ Finally, opponents of Islamic immigration in the West have keyed into liberal concerns over freedom of expression and rationalist worries about religious fundamentalism. For others, Islam is held to threaten the equal treatment of women, gays and Jews. Many of these writers also lean on security arguments to appeal to state elites and those concerned with crime and terrorism. These are modern arguments with little obvious connection to counter-Enlightenment themes such as Romanticism or the conservation of ethno-tradition.

In a modern differentiated society, purveyors of intellectual wares need to craft an appeal that resonates with many identities and interests. One of the reasons anti-immigration populists failed to achieve an outright majority in 1850s America or 1930s Scotland was because a chunk of the electorate, however sympathetic, was primarily concerned about issues other than immigration or anti-Catholicism.²⁰ This electoral logic means populist parties must broaden their appeal to capture voters for whom immigration is a second-order concern. This helps explain the populist right’s embrace of Islamophobia. Focusing on Muslims appeals not only to ethno-nationalists but to an important minority of liberals, women, gays, Jews, Hindus and young hedonists.²¹ The more issues that can be bundled onto the conservative anti-immigration core, the wider a party’s potential appeal.
VALUE CHANGE AND IMMIGRATION ATTITUDES AFTER 1965

The dramatic increase in American immigration, from 300,000 per year in 1965 to over a million by the 1990s, combined with the cultural distance of Latin American and Asian immigrants from the white Christian core, should, according to my ‘voice’ model of cultural anxiety, have led to rising anti-immigration sentiment. This is confirmed in Gallup’s time series of opinion polls from 1965 to 1995. In 1965, 39 per cent of Americans wanted decreased immigration, 39 per cent favoured the current level, 7 per cent sought an increase and 10 per cent had no opinion. By 1977, the number favouring a decrease had risen to 42 per cent, reaching 49 per cent in 1986 and 65 per cent in 1993.

But what is striking, and runs counter to what we might expect from European patterns and much of American history, is the pronounced liberalization of attitudes since 1995. As figure 3.2 shows, the share of the population desiring a decrease in immigration went into reverse after 1995: dropping from 65 per cent in 1995 into the 35–50 per cent range after 1999. At the same time, the proportion of Americans favouring increased immigration rose substantially, from 6 per cent in 1995 to 27 per cent in 2016. How might this be explained?

The first point to bear in mind is that, unlike previous periods in American history, increased immigration from non-traditional sources took place against the backdrop of large-scale liberal attitude change within the American public. As noted, attitudes on race, religion, sexuality and women’s roles shifted markedly between the 1950s and 1970s and continued as new liberal generations became a larger share of the electorate. Egalitarian and humanitarian attitudes have been shown to be especially strong predictors of the desire to increase US immigration levels, and this could underlie the steady post-1995 rise in pro-immigration sentiment from 6 to 27 per cent. Cohort replacement—whereby older generations die off and new ones enter the electorate—led to steady liberalization in this period. The rising share of university-educated liberal Americans, spearheaded by the Baby Boomers, altered the profile of the median voter. The sexual revolution, anti-Vietnam War protests and Civil Rights movement of the 1960s recast the political culture by altering the values of the country’s institutions. Not only were elite institutions ‘de-WASPed’, as Christopher puts it, but their ethos shifted from Anglo-conformity to universalist individualism. I would argue that the main reason attitude liberalization on this question only appears after 1995 is that the issue was barely present in many Americans’ consciousness: it only gradually became politicized after California’s Proposition 187 in 1994. Thus the steady rise in the share seeking increased immigration dates from this period.

Rising African-American political assertiveness led to a flowering of other forms of subaltern group politics that came to be labelled ‘multiculturalism’ in the 1970s, including Latino, American Indian, feminist and gay movements. These were nourished by the cultural radicalism of the New Left, which reproduced many aspects of the 1920s Village adversary culture on a larger scale. The new minority social movements in turn energized the New Left and shifted the focus of left-wing activism from Marxism and industrial workers to disadvantaged cultural groups. Cultural politics had been a low priority on the American left during the Progressive and New Deal periods. While pluralist cosmopolitanism had become the dominant progressive outlook by the 1920s and was the guiding philosophy of the influential ‘New York
Intelectuals' in the 1930s and 1940s, this did not translate into change within a Democratic Party that was still beholden to its southern segregationist wing. The expansion of education and a centralized electronic media, however, spread the anti-WASP outlook of the Young Intellectuals and Liberal Progressives to an educated stratum of society that was, by the 1960s, able to influence elite institutions such as the Democratic Party. In the words of well-known social critic and New York Intellectual Daniel Bell: 'the life-style once practiced by a small cénacle ... is now copied by many ... [and] this change of scale gave the culture of the 1960s its special surge, coupled with the fact that a bohemian life-style once limited to a tiny elite is now acted out on the giant screen of the mass media'\(^24\)

The sixties brought not only value change but individualism. Divorce rates doubled between 1965 and 1976, and the proportion of unmarried twentysomethings jumped two to three times between 1970 and 1987.\(^23\) This was accompanied by the emergence of what Robert Bellah terms 'lifestyle enclaves'.\(^26\) These are subcultural identities with their own identity narratives which displace those of ethnic group and nation. For instance, the hippies were a lifestyle group which came to encompass millions of young Americans in the late 1960s. Where the Young Intellectuals of the 1930s or New York Intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s were small enough to form social circles, millions now participated in a countercultural identity. Other lifestyle enclaves formed around fashions and consumer tastes. The new subcultural identities were what Daniel Bell terms 'modernist' in sensibility, emphasizing novelty, immediacy and diversity of experience rather than tradition. They were necessarily disconnected from older multi-generational communities of ethnic group and nation.\(^27\)

As the hippies grew up, they developed new group narratives around occupation and lifestyle. Often, members of countercultural lifestyle enclaves lived in identifiable sections of large cities such as Greenwich Village, the original home of the Young Intellectuals, or Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco. One index of rising bohemianism was the explosion in the number of artists in New York, from a few thousand in the 1960s to 100,000 by the early 1970s.\(^28\) Meanwhile, the share of single households in Manhattan had surged to a third of the city's population by 1980. In the 1980s, upwardly mobile professionals, or 'yuppies', came to adopt aspects of bohemianism, combining economic

self-interest with social liberalism. This is nicely explored by David Brooks's sardonic social commentary on the bohemian affections of the American bourgeoisie, Bobos in Paradise (2013). One 'bobo' hotbed was the emerging tech hub of Silicon Valley, where countercultural values fused with venture capitalism and big science to form a new social ecosystem.

Techies, hippies, hipsters and yuppies represent different facets of the fragmentation of identity among young, well-educated modernist whites. Under the influence of the new social liberalism, mobile whites' meaning systems and attachments became increasingly divorced from ethno-histories anchored in locale, state and nation. This was accompanied by the breakup of white ethnic neighbourhoods in the 1960s which in many cases dated from the nineteenth century: places such as Philadelphia's WASP Main Line, Detroit's Polish Hamtramck and New York's Little Italy. Spatial assimilation into a new Euro-American melting pot was the main driver of declining local ethno-traditionalism. Nevertheless, expressive individualism accelerated the process by breaking down ethnic, religious and, ultimately, racial boundaries between neighbourhoods.

There is a parallel here with secularization, which Steve Bruce argues occurs in part because society becomes differentiated into many specialized occupations and leisure niches. Like the size of a slice in an increasingly crosscut pie, differentiation shrinks the niche occupied by religion even if a person remains a believer.\(^29\) In a similar way, the proliferation of countercultural and consumerist lifestyle identities crowded out ethnic narratives. The only ethnic identities to resist differentiation were minority ones such as Latino or African-American, which worked with the grain of the new counterculture. Something similar took place for minority national identities like Québécois, Northern Irish Catholic or Scottish in the 1960s. These too came to be expressed in the new countercultural vernacular. The conservative white American narrative of revolutionaries, pioneers, settlers and industrial workers was much less fashionable, persisting most strongly among the less mobile: non-college, rural or older whites. A consequence of liberalism and its attendant individualist fragmentation was a hollowing out of ethno-traditional Americanism. This explains why, even during the period of rising opposition to immigration between 1965 and 1995, the issue fell well down Americans' list of electoral
priorities. I suspect an American poll on immigration in 1855 or 1915 would look more like a West European one does today – with immigration ranking as a leading issue – than like an American survey from the 1990s.

A second reason for the low priority accorded to immigration in the 1965–95 period is elite agenda-setting. The economy, foreign wars and religious issues took precedence over immigration in the public mind. Social research tells us that cues from politicians and the media are often required to increase the importance of an issue for voters. You can be in favour of reducing immigration, but if the issue is rarely raised in the media or by politicians, it tends to remain latent in your consciousness. Only if you are living in a rapidly changing neighbourhood will the issue strike you between the eyes. A more liberal post-1960s media elite, committed to calling out anti-immigration politics as racism, helped set the tone of political discussion in this area. The new mood music reoriented American political culture towards a cross-party consensus on immigration. This atmosphere discouraged both Democratic and Republican politicians from campaigning to reduce it. Debating measures to contain illegal immigration was legitimate because it concerned state security. Yet this had to be conducted with sensitivity given the ethnic differences between most Americans and the majority of undocumented migrants.

Finally, liberal social attitudes made a difference, especially as the Baby Boomers became the dominant segment in the population in the 1990s. This was symbolized by the election of Bill Clinton in 1992, the first member of the sixties generation to occupy the Oval Office. Despite the anti-immigration sentiment which rapid immigration usually produces, the rising liberalism of the Boomers was able to exert a countervailing influence on immigration attitudes. Later in the book, and in the online blog, I consider more rigorous evidence for this claim.

IMMIGRATION POLITICS IN THE POST-1965 PERIOD

Legal and illegal immigration rose steadily from 300,000 per year in 1965 to 500,000 in the 1970s and 750,000 in the 1980s. This spurred anti-immigration organizing by the 1980s, but produced only a modest public response. In legislative terms, discussion focused only on illegal immigration. Some legislators pushed for employer sanctions to punish those who knowingly hired unauthorized workers. Liberals argued that regularizing the status of the undocumented was necessary for them to become productive citizens but this had not become a partisan issue. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) ostensibly struck a compromise, but the amnesty provisions in IRCA – which led to legal status for 1.8 million undocumented people – far outweighed the bite of employer sanctions, which were only sporadically enforced. In 1990, recognizing reality, a new immigration act raised the official immigration cap from 270,000 to 675,000 per year while more than doubling employment-related visas and creating the H-1B programme for high-skilled immigrants.

The IRCA amnesty may or may not have acted as an incentive for others to try their luck crossing the border. Alternatively, it may be that lofty legislation made little difference to the inflow, since apprehensions of illegal immigrants on the southern border continued at around 1 million per year. Against the backdrop of rising illegal immigration and legal admissions, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) was founded in 1978. The organization sought to ‘end illegal immigration’ and to ‘set legal immigration at the lowest feasible levels consistent with the demographic, economic, and social realities of the present’. It eschewed ethnic quotas in favour of numerical limits, calling for a temporary moratorium on immigration to facilitate assimilation. However, FAIR also embodied important ethno-traditionalist concerns at leadership level reminiscent of those expressed by Theodore Roosevelt nearly a century earlier. ‘One of my prime concerns’, FAIR founder John Tanton admitted to a major donor, ‘is about the decline of folks who look like you and me.’ Elsewhere he told a friend: ‘for European-American society and culture to persist requires a European-American majority, and a clear one at that’.

Tanton, a small-town Michigan eye doctor, began his political career as an environmentalist who set up local chapters of Planned Parenthood, Zero Population Growth and the Sierra Club the 1970s. Family planning and environmentalism are strongly identified with the liberal end of the political spectrum in America, but Tanton attempted to convince his comrades that immigration control was important to advance the environmentalist cause. In 1998, the Sierra Club would have this
debate, with members voting 3–2 against supporting the goal of ‘a reduction in net immigration’ after a noisy battle. But at this point injecting concern about immigration into environmental discussions made Tanton’s colleagues uneasy, jarring against deep emotional associations between left-wing environmentalism and left-modernism’s open-borders inclination. ‘I finally concluded’, observed Tanton after being greeted with repeated awkward silences, ‘that if anything was going to happen, I would have to do it myself.’

Tanton set about creating an organization that would appeal to the centre-ground of public opinion. Racists and radicals were to be kept out of the new movement. FAIR went out of its way to reach out to anti-sprawl environmentalists, unions worried about job competition and African-Americans concerned Hispanic immigrants would compete for jobs, housing and schools. However, as Otis Graham Jr, a history professor and FAIR founding board member, recalls, liberal groups were unresponsive. Though a small number of Democratic representatives endorsed FAIR, liberal pressure groups viewed immigrants, legal or otherwise, exclusively through a protective lens. Unions, now under the sway of leaders sensitive to the ideological multiculturalism of the New Left and the pragmatic multiculturalism of the Democratic Party’s ‘rainbow coalition’ of minorities, preferred to frame immigrants as potential members. This was virtually unprecedented in American labour history and a major change from the period from the 1830s to the 1960s when figures such as Samuel Gompers of the AFL railed against immigrants undercutting wages. Though the Democratic leadership was aware of the political opportunities offered by a large influx of low-income voters, the ideological shifts that had taken place in the party by the 1960s were arguably more important in moving it towards a pro-immigration stance. New Left ideas quite simply reframed the way the entire issue was perceived.

OFFICIAL ENGLISH

Tanton was increasingly active on other fronts, pursuing a cultural nationalist agenda focused on making English the official language of the United States. The impetus behind the move stemmed from the 1968 Bilingual Education Act, enacted by the Johnson administration to address poor performance among Hispanic children in Texas schools. The pragmatic law aimed to destigmatize Spanish, improve self-esteem and thereby enhance education outcomes. However, the Act would also encourage the bilingual and multicultural education movement of the 1970s and 1980s – an outgrowth of minority ethnic activism as well as lobbying from progressive groups such as the National Education Association (NEA). The NEA, inspired by Deweyite Liberal Progressivism, had played a key role in lobbying school boards to replace Anglo-conformist school textbooks like Muzzey’s American History with more pluralist texts from the 1930s onward. It now sought to enhance the scope of bilingual Spanish-English education and develop a more multicultural, less Eurocentric curriculum.

The rapid increase in Spanish-speaking immigrants after 1968 and growing bilingual activism prompted a conservative response. In 1986, voters in ethnically transforming Dade County, Florida, approved an anti-bilingual ordinance. However, continued Hispanic growth in Miami and consequent redistricting demographically overwhelmed white restrictionism, resulting in the measure being repealed in 1993. Despite this, Miami voters had set the ball rolling, and in 1981 Virginia became the first state to make English an official language. Over the next ten years, ten Republican states adopted Official English statutes. These had little legislative bite, but served as symbolic statements about the country’s linguistic identity. In order to advance the cause in more politically divided or liberal states, Tanton, together with Japanese-American Senator Hayakawa of California, founded US English in 1983. The aim was to use popular initiative mechanisms, where available, to compel reluctant legislators to enact Official English laws. The movement enjoyed rapid success, enrolling almost 2 million members by the early 2000s. More importantly, Official English ballots succeeded in Florida, Arizona, California and Colorado between 1988 and 1988. To date, thirty-two states have some form of Official English statute. States which have not passed the measure tend to be those that are Democrat-dominated and lack popular initiative mechanisms. In addition, states with large historic non-Anglo communities, notably Alaska, Hawaii, New Mexico and Texas, have either not adopted a measure or have enshrined English as one of several official languages.

Official English took care, from its founding, to make a scrupulously civic-national rather than Anglo nationalist case. Its message remains
popular across partisan and racial divides. Over 60 per cent of the public endorse making English the official language of the United States. Only among self-identified liberals and Hispanics is a majority opposed.37 The scale of support was evident in Proposition 63, California’s Official English vote, which passed 73–27 in 1986, the largest margin on a popular initiative recorded to date. This despite the fact the California political establishment – Republican Governor George Deukmejian, his Democratic opponent and Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley and LA police chief Daryl Gates, stood united against it. Sixty-seven per cent of California blacks and 58 per cent of Asian voters backed the measure, though a majority of Hispanics and liberals demurred. Three years on, in 1989, support among Hispanics had risen to 63 per cent, possibly because they realized the measure would have few concrete implications in their daily lives.38 Likewise, both the Republican vice-president, George H. W. Bush, and his Democratic adversary, Michael Dukakis, opposed the English Only position prior to the successful Florida, Arizona and Colorado English Only votes of 1988. Almost everywhere, opposition to Official English was bipartisan, uniting Republican and Democratic elites together with progressive organizations like the NEA and ACLU. Mainstream progressives rather than Hispanic advocacy organizations, who tended to be weak, organized the opposition. Yet virtually everywhere they were held, whether in conservative or liberal states, Official English initiatives succeeded.

NEOCONSERVATISM AND THE REPUBLICAN ELITE

Elite bipartisan opposition has repeatedly helped defeat attempts to enact a nationwide Official English law. Puerto Rico, a Spanish-speaking island, would make an Official English law an impossibility if it became a state. Yet more congressmen voted for Puerto Rican statehood (209–208) than for Official English (238–182) in 1998. The list of supporters of Puerto Rican statehood included Newt Gingrich and former religious-right figurehead Ralph Reed. Their backing coincided with the neoconservative ascendency in the Republican Party, wherein fiscal, military and religious conservatives set the ideological tone. The leaders of these factions cleaved to the view of Republican strategist Karl Rove that in order to win power for their ideas in an increasingly diverse country they needed to court the Hispanic vote. This would be achieved through an appeal to immigrants’ religious and family values.39 Needless to say, the Republican elite's ideological aims did not include white ethno-traditionalism.

Rove had cut his teeth in Texas gubernatorial and Senate campaigns working for both George H. W. Bush and his son George W. Bush. Texas Hispanics, who are predominantly of Mexican origin, have tended to vote Republican at a higher rate than Mexican-Americans elsewhere. For instance, they were key to George W. Bush’s victory as governor of Texas in 1994. In 2000, Republican governor Kay Bailey Hutchinson won fully half the Hispanic vote. That year, Bush Jr became president, winning 35 per cent of the Latino vote nationwide, a figure that rose to 40 per cent in the 2004 election. His brother Jeb, meanwhile, was elected governor of Florida in 1998 on 61 per cent of the Hispanic vote and his Mexican-American wife was viewed as an asset with Latino voters that would one day help him become president. The Bushes’ string of victories produced an optimistic mindset in which the Republican elite felt they could win Latino votes with a package emphasizing conservative social values and the work ethic.

Ideologically, the fall of the Berlin Wall gave rise to an optimistic ‘End of History’ spirit among American neoconservatives and interventionist liberals, symbolized by Francis Fukuyama’s iconic book of 1992.40 With communism defeated, liberalism, capitalism and democracy, under American tutelage, could finally become universal. A global framework based on the Pax Americana and the shared values of the ‘Washington Consensus’ would revolutionize humanity. Here was a classic form of liberal-democratic missionary nationalism in keeping with the country’s ‘City on a Hill’ traditions. Some neoconservatives advocated the use of American military power to accelerate the regime changes needed to spread democracy. Then, on 11 September 2001, jihadi attacks destroyed the Twin Towers. This national shock energized neoconservatives in the Bush administration. First Bush intervened in Afghanistan to rid the country of Al Qaeda. He also placed the country on a domestic state of alert, replete with a powerful new Department of Homeland Security.

Some time later, the US government called for the ousting of secular-nationalist Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. This had been official US policy
since 1998 under Clinton. Bush made this real by invading Iraq in 2003 on the grounds that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction. American involvement in Iraq only ended in 2011, and the last troops didn’t leave Afghanistan until 2014. In addition to hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, the former conflict claimed over 4,000 American soldiers’ lives and the latter more than 2,300. Funerals for deceased servicemen became a routine aspect of the news during this period, helping to flag state nationalism to the population on a regular basis.

War abroad and readiness at home played to the more missionary, statist registers of American nationalism that had held sway since 1939. Ribbons in trees, military funerals and the obvious participation of Hispanic and immigrant soldiers kept state-led missionary nationalism to the fore. The enemy in this period were radical Islamists, an ‘other’ against which virtually all Americans – not least patriotic Hispanics – could unite. Authoritarian white voters could rally to the cause while embracing an inclusive civic nationalism and multi-ethnic military. Just as the Civil War dampened anti-Irish sentiment and the Second World War calmed anti-Semitism, it can be argued that the War on Terror muted white ethno-traditionalist opposition to the growing Hispanic and immigrant presence.

THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

A second game-changer for ethno-traditional conservatism was the retreat of the religious right. In the late 1970s, the Republicans began to target white evangelicals, a group which increased dramatically over the course of the twentieth century due mainly to higher conservative Protestant birth rates – though defection from liberal denominations played a partial role. Some of these voters went for Jimmy Carter in 1976, a fellow evangelical from Georgia, but had yet to throw their lot in with either party. This changed when two Catholic Republicans, Richard Viguerie and Paul Weyrich, joined Howard Phillips, a Jewish convert to evangelicalism. They forged links with the Southern Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell to create the Moral Majority, a Christian Right political coalition. Meanwhile, abortion, once a Catholic issue ignored by evangelicals, became a rallying cry for the movement following the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion. In the 1980s, abortion figured prominently in the campaigns of Falwell’s Moral Majority; in the 1990s, it was the top line for Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition and Charles Dobson’s Focus on the Family.

The Christian Coalition alone boasted nearly a million members at its height in the mid-1990s. The New Christian Right formed a powerful grassroots network rooted in churches and para-church organizations. It soon went on the attack, winning control of state school boards and numerous local Republican Party branches. It sponsored candidates in the Republican primaries and became such a powerful faction that all Republican candidates were compelled to establish their religious bona fides. The movement’s aims went beyond abortion to encompass the teaching of Creationism and opposition to same-sex marriage. In legislative terms, the religious right had its greatest success at state level, lobbying legislators to enact laws compelling minors to notify their parents when having an abortion and generally making life difficult for abortion providers. Religious conservatives also successfully sponsored state popular initiatives designed to repeal or block same-sex marriage.

Under President George W. Bush, a declared evangelical, late-term ‘partial-birth’ abortions were banned. Bush created a new Office of Faith-Based Initiatives which channelled federal money to religious social service providers. In foreign policy terms, the political theology known as Christian Zionism, whereby Jewish conquest of biblical lands is deemed a sign of the Second Coming, crystallized evangelical support for Israel. It likewise won evangelical backing for Bush’s hawkish foreign policy adventures in the Middle East.

At the elite level, the religious right was universalist, not white nationalist. Its founding involved a collaboration between Catholics, a Jew and a southern WASP. Its cardinal issues – abortion, same-sex marriage, family values – drew Americans of many stripes together. The new ‘culture war’ of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s pitted the faithful of all races and religions against seculars and moderates. The inter-faith aspect of religious right politics is discernible in Bush’s winning coalition, which knitted conservative Catholics, Protestants and Jews together. For instance, while 86 per cent of Catholics voted for Kennedy in 1960, 74 per cent of traditionalist Catholics chose Bush in 2004. Seventy per cent of Jews voted Democratic in 2004, yet two thirds of their Orthodox co-religionists voted for the former Texas governor. Outside party structures, collaboration was even more successful. California’s Proposition 8 (2008) banning same-sex
marriage passed 52–48 as Latino votes overcame majority white opposition and black neutrality. Mexican television personality José Eduardo Verástegui was even enlisted to the cause in Spanish-language commercials, urging Latinos to support the measure. In organizational terms, conservative Mormons, evangelicals, and Latino and white Catholics joined forces to campaign for victory. Similar successes were notched up in Texas and Florida.

The religious right is willing to reach across religious and racial lines to advance its universalist agenda. At the leadership level, in the bible colleges and pages of Christianity Today, there is an awareness that near a quarter of evangelicals are non-white, a share that is rising while the proportion of evangelicals in America has been falling. White evangelical leaders interact closely with their black and Hispanic evangelical peers. The centre of world Christianity is in the global South, and many evangelical elites are excited by the opportunities for evangelizing Hispanic, Asian and African immigrants. In the pews, however, identities are far less universalist, reflecting the ethno-regional particularism of local congregations. Trump’s victory in 2016 opened up a divide between evangelical elites and masses no less consequential than the one separating elite Republicans from Trumpists, or, for that matter, Republicans from Democrats.46

Internationally, conservative evangelicals have cooperated with Sunni Muslim imams, Shiite mullahs, Mormons and the Vatican to stifle UN family planning initiatives. Meanwhile the faith-friendly Bush administration defunded Planned Parenthood and forced successful family-planning programmes, such as Uganda’s anti-HIV campaign, to terminate.47 The universalist Americanism of the religious right is clear from the Christian Coalition’s website of the late 1990s:

The Christian Coalition is leading a growing new alliance of evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Jews, African-Americans and Hispanics who are working hard for common-sense legislation that will strengthen families... It was the religious values of our people that made this nation a refuge for the poor, the outcast, and the downtrodden. America has lifted its lamp beside the golden door of entry to all immigrant groups, particularly Jews, and to victims of persecution the world over. We are part of that legacy. Let me be clear: the Christian Coalition believes in a nation that is not officially Christian, Jewish, or Muslim.48

EBB TIDE FOR THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

The Christian Right surge of the 1990s ran out of steam, not least because the movement had impacted the lives of numerous Americans beyond its evangelical core – a core which comprised, at most, a quarter of the electorate. In September 2008, the country elected its first African-American president, Barack Obama, a devout Christian who invited evangelical pastor Rick Warren to deliver a prayer at his inauguration. However, he also won on the strength of the youth vote, which contained an unprecedented share of non-religious people. This was a chastening period for the religious right. At state level, Christian Right ‘stealth’ campaigns and ballot initiatives were being repealed or defeated in the courts. Even in the south, the Christian Right lost control of school boards and failed to institue school prayer, teach Creationism and restrict abortion. Newly mobilized anti-fundamentalist Democratic voters and Republican activists compelled religious conservatives to moderate their agenda. In 2008, 45 per cent of people agreed that religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote, up from 30 per cent in 1991.49

In fact the overreach of the religious right seemed to have accelerated a trend towards secularization among Millennial Americans. The proportion of Americans who never attend religious services increased from 25 per cent in 1995 to 22 per cent by 2008. The share with no religious affiliation reached 17 per cent of the total in 2008, and 23 per cent by 2014. In that year, 35 per cent of Americans born after 1981 had no religious affiliation, more than double the rate for the Baby Boomers.50 The old wisdom that the United States was immune from European-style secularization was beginning to crack. Another index of creeping Europeanization was rising support for same-sex marriage, from 27 per cent in 1996 to 40 per cent in the 2000s to 53 per cent by 2012–13 and 64 per cent in 2017.51

The neoconservative trinity of military hawkishness, religious conservatism and free-market economics received a further blow with the 2007–8 financial crisis. Combined with stagnating real wages for American workers and rising inequality, the crisis shattered many thinkers and voters’ formerly cocksure faith in the virtues of unfettered free markets. The neoconservative trinity remained powerful but had
lost its primacy. The ebbing of its missionary nationalism created an
opening on the political right which ethno-traditionalist Americanism
stood ready to enter. During the Bush years, European observers saw
American politics as profoundly alien. By 2016, it was to become
thoroughly familiar.

PALEOCONS VERSUS NEOCONS

To understand the entry of ethno-traditional nationalism on the Ameri-
can right we need to revisit how it left the scene. This brings us back to
debates between the so-called paleoconservatives and neoconservatives
which resulted in neoconservatism's post-1960s victory. Neoconserv-
ativism's missionary nationalism fed off the country's struggle against
communism. Recall that anti-communism, by shifting the litmus test
of Americanism from Anglo-Protestant ethnicity to universalist ideol-
gy, permitted non-WASPs like Joseph McCarthy or semi-WASPs like
Barry Goldwater to convincingly engage in the politics of patriotism.
Neoconservatism's roots likewise lay in the immigrant, anti-communist,
ex-leftist 'New York Intellectual' tradition. Stalin's Show Trials of the
1930s, and, later, the excesses of the 1960s campus revolts prompted
many formerly left-wing, predominantly Jewish, intellectuals to move
right. Figures such as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, writing
in journals such as Commentary and the Public Interest, along with
Catholic 'theocos' brought new vigour to American conservatism. As
Edward Shapiro masterfully put it:

> Conservatives, they believed, belonged to country clubs, disliked blacks
> and immigrants, and came from the Protestant hinterland. They were
> not likely to be found on the Lower East Side, in the East Bronx, or on
> the West Side of Chicago ... For the Jewish Neoconservatives ... this
> was far too narrow a view of American culture. They emphasized the
> pluralism and openness of America and claimed that Americanism was
> less a matter of biological descent and European culture than of civic
> values and political ideology. Just as the neoconservatives stressed the
> ideological content of American diplomacy and asserted that American
> political ideology had well-nigh universal applicability, so they unders-
> scored the plastic character of American identity. Anyone was potentially

ETHNO-TRADITIONAL NATIONALISM IN AN AGE OF IMMIGRATION

a good American just as long as he or she affirmed the fundamental
American political precepts of the Declaration of Independence, the Bill
of Rights, and the Gettysburg Address. The Neoconservatives, the tradi-
tionalists responded, exaggerated the appeal of American political
principles to the rest of the world, and they underestimated the powerful
hold which culture has, or should have, on its citizens. 12

The Cold War struggle and the victory of the creedal 'nation of immi-
gants' version of American identity helped enshrine neoconservatism
as the dominant force on the intellectual right. The older WASP ethno-
traditionalism faded with the Civil Rights reforms of the 1960s, which
delegitimized the racial and religious overtones of American conserva-
tivism. This was a contest between two versions of American nationalism:
WASP ethno-traditionalism and American liberal exceptionalism.
American exceptionalism is a missionary nationalism which perceives
the US as the apostle leading the world on a universalist crusade for
liberal-democratic-capitalism. 23

Neoconservatism can also be viewed as a species of conservative
thinking compatible with the new cultural liberalism of the sixties.
Conservatism was adapting to the new racist taboos which set the
parameters of political debate and were shaped by the once-radical
ideas of the Liberal Progressives and Young Intellectuals. Yet this man-
euvre left the question of American ethno-traditionalism unresolved.
No serious person could argue that discrimination against blacks was
not a stain on the American past which persisted in some quarters. On
immigration, all could agree that barring non-whites was racist. But
was it also the case that limiting immigration to a level the ethnic majority
could assimilate was racist? This assumption came to be smuggled
into the cultural revolution of the period – a critical normative move.
Curiously, this was never manifestly stated, nor did progressive politi-
cicans explicitly call for rapid increases in immigration levels as an
antidote to racism. The representations of Bobby Kennedy and other
supporters of the 1965 Hart–Celler Act in fact showed reverence for
the country's ethno-traditions by envisioning minimal alteration to the
ethnic composition of the country. In theory the question of American
ethno-traditions would never need to be answered.

Yet by the 1980s this view had become untenable: diversity was ris-
ing and the 'browning of America' would enter the lexicon in the 1990s.
The new demographic realities increasingly laid bare the contradictions between universalist anti-racism and Kennedy’s promise that cultural change would be minimal. With the emergence of ‘majority minority’ cities and states in the 1990s the question of what should happen to the country’s white tradition, and to the ethnic majority, was re-emerging. Should whites ‘die’ by subsuming themselves in a futuristic cosmopolitan nation, as John Dewey argued? Should the country become a multicultural federation, with whites surviving as a tight-bounded minority, as Horace Kalen envisioned? Or should white Americans respond to ethnic change by embracing Randolph Bourne’s injunction to reject their poisoned heritage and become cosmopolitans, celebrating the rich identities of immigrant groups?

Immigration and ethno-traditionalism are central to understanding the neocon–paleocon split. As the country became more diverse, a number of paleoconservative voices emerged warning that the country was on the verge of losing its ethnic traditions. In *The Path to National Suicide* (1987), Lawrence Auster, a Jewish-American who converted to Episcopalianism and subsequently to Catholicism wrote:

> The very manner in which the [immigration] issue is framed – as a matter of equal rights and the blessings of diversity on one side, versus ‘racism’ on the other – tends to cut off all rational discourse on the subject . . .

Instead of saying: ‘We believe in the equal and unlimited right of all people to immigrate to the U.S. and enrich our land with their diversity,’ what if they said: ‘We believe in an immigration policy which must result in a staggering increase in our population, a revolution in our culture and way of life, and the gradual submergence of our current population by Hispanic and Caribbean and Asian peoples.’ Such frankness would open up an honest debate between those who favor a radical change in America’s ethnic and cultural identity and those who think this nation should preserve its way of life and its predominant, European-American character.

Auster in turn influenced Peter Brimelow, an expatriate Briton and *National Review* editor whose *Alien Nation* (1995) became a widely discussed bestseller. Brimelow described the country as having a ‘white’ ethnic core. ‘It is simply common sense that Americans have a legitimate interest in their country’s racial balance,’ he argued. ‘They have a right to insist that their government stop shifting it. Indeed, it seems to me that they have a right to insist that it be shifted back.’ Brimelow argued against American exceptionalism, stating that the US was ‘a nation like any other’ with a historic white core. Brimelow formed part of a congeries of paleoconservative intellectuals including Chilton Williamson and *Washington Times* columnist Samuel Francis. To their right, the paleoconservatives had connections to white nationalist Jared Taylor. In 1990 Taylor founded *American Renaissance* magazine and in 1999 Brimelow established *VDare*, an anti-immigration website. Both are seminal influences on today’s internet-based white nationalist movement which forms the core of today’s alternative right, or ‘alt right’.55

Neoconservatives preferred to endorse American exceptionalism, the idea that the US was a new type of post-ethnic nation. Most came to approve of Official English, opposed affirmative action and bilingual education and endorsed the need for immigrants to embrace a positive view of American history. They focused squarely on the creedal elements in the national repertoire. Francis Fukuyama, whom I interviewed soon after Brimelow’s book came out, saw value in the country’s ethno-traditions, thus deviating from the missionary nationalism of the neoconservatives. He argued that English was key for assimilation and traced the country’s founding to its Anglo-Protestant forebears. Where Fukuyama was critical of paleoconservatism was over Brimelow’s emphasis on a ‘white’ ethnic core rather than an Anglo-Protestant cultural inheritance which could be readily adopted by citizens of any background. Fukuyama was also of the view that immigration was not a growing issue in American politics, a position disputed by *National Review* editor John O’Sullivan, whom I also spoke to at the time.65

Fukuyama was right: O’ Sullivan was two decades early.

Michael Lind, former editor of the neoconservative *Public Interest* and Harvard professor Samuel Huntington operated between the neocon and paleocon positions. Lind’s *Next American Nation* (1993) mounted a stinging critique of the American elite’s universalist individualism. In the book, Lind offered a groundbreaking attack on ‘mass immigration’ as a policy which both right- and left-wing American elites favoured but which was opposed by working-class Americans of all races. John Judis endorsed this view, accusing the neoconservative right of fetishizing a free-market ideology which appealed to few ordinary Americans.57 Huntington, in his final book, *Who Are We?: Challenges to American Identity* (2004), pushed back against the missionary creedal nationalism he had once endorsed, arguing that if America had been
settled by French or Spanish Catholics instead of Anglo-Protestants it would have been a wholly different country. This put him in similar territory to Fukuyama on the question of the country’s cultural antecedents. Rather than a nation of immigrants, Huntington identified the country as nation of native-born people who had assimilated immigrants into their Anglo-Protestant traditions over time. The volume and geographic concentration of Latinos, warned Huntington, was making them resistant to assimilation and could lead to the secession of the south-western United States.38

PAT BUCHANAN’S AMERICA FIRST

At the foot of Lookout Mountain in north-west Georgia in 2005, a former Nixon and Reagan adviser and presidential hopeful, Pat Buchanan, delivered the eulogy at the funeral of the prominent paleoconservative Samuel Francis, his friend and muse. Buchanan, a Donald Trump avant la lettre, ran for the Republican nomination in 1992 and 1996 on an anti-globalist, ethno-traditionalist, religious-right platform. In 1996, he wrote of the challenge to the country’s ethno-traditions:

Consider the change in our own country in four decades. In 1950, America was . . . 90 percent of European stock. . . By 2050, according to the Census Bureau, whites may be near a minority in an America of 81 million Hispanics, 62 million blacks and 41 million Asians. By the middle of the next century, the United States will have become a veritable Brazil of North America. If the future character of America is not to be decided by our own paralysis, Americans must stop being intimidated by charges of ‘racist,’ ‘nativist,’ and ‘xenophobe’—and we must begin to address the hard issues of race, culture and national unity.39

In 1992, Buchanan attacked the Republican establishment for failing to stand up for American workers against Japan Inc. He assailed frontrunner George H. W. Bush on cultural issues: immigration, multiculturalism, gay marriage and feminism. Blending ethno-nationalist and religious conservatism with an appeal to the white working class, Buchanan came a close second to Bush in the pace-setting New Hampshire primary with 38 per cent of the vote. Nation-wide, he finished with a respectable 23 per cent. At the Republican convention, Buchanan endorsed Bush and delivered a rousing ‘culture war’ speech. In it, he praised Bush’s war record and foreign policy achievements, rallying the faithful behind religious issues. This was, however, a speech oriented to a mainstream audience: references to multiculturalism and immigration were conspicuously absent.

In 1996, the Republican establishment candidate was Bob Dole, a weaker, uncharismatic figure. In New Hampshire, an insurgent Buchanan stunned pundits by winning the state primary. Research shows that his campaign attracted a disproportionate share of votes from working-class and religious conservatives.60 He won Alaska, Missouri and Louisiana as well, but finished with a similar national vote share to 1992, 21 per cent. At this point, however, opposition to immigration and multiculturalism was only a minor chord in Buchanan’s symphony. Officially, even his immigration message centred mainly on border security rather than ethno-cultural threats. For the most part, Buchanan blended economic populism on NAFTA and Japan with an attack on out-of-touch Washington insiders. He praised the patriotic working man, God and guns—all fairly standard fare.

Buchanan’s ethno-traditionalist radicalism increased after he had left the Republican Party in 1998. In 1999, he turned up the rhetoric on immigration. He called for a militarization of the border, repatriation of illegal immigrants and cutting legal immigration from a million back to its ‘historic’ level of 250,000 per year. In a May 2000 interview on National Public Radio, he said record immigration levels meant ‘we’re gonna lose our country’. That year, Buchanan won the nomination of the Reform Party but finished with a pitiful 0.4 per cent of the vote in the presidential election. Among his rivals for the Reform nomination was a political novice and property tycoon named Donald Trump. After losing to Buchanan, Trump lashed out at his rival for being politically incorrect on race and sex: ‘Look, he’s a Hitler lover . . . He doesn’t like the blacks, he doesn’t like the gays.’ ‘We must recognize bigotry and prejudice,’ Trump added, ‘and defeat it wherever it appears.’61 Trump would apologize a decade later to Buchanan, but his remarks capture an ideological climate in which establishment conservatism, with its more ‘politically correct’ economic, military and religious chords, was firmly in the driver’s seat.
At the mass level, Buchanan’s run showed that immigration was not yet an issue that could mobilize the Republican membership. Buchanan suggests this is because ethnic change remained localized in hotspots like California and Miami and the Republican leadership had avoided politicking the issue. Only with Hispanic dispersion did the pace of ethnic change become apparent to most white Americans, he argues. In his words, ‘The numbers had reached critical mass, and native-born Americans saw immigration altering the recognizable character of the country they loved. The soil was more fertile for Trump because ... by 2016, we no longer saw as through a glass darkly, but face to face.’

Low immigration salience forms a clear contrast to Britain and several European countries where, by 2000, politicians were starting to convert anti-immigration sentiment into electoral hard currency. The one American jurisdiction where immigration was important was California. As the state most affected by undocumented immigration, it might be expected that its conservative white voters would be receptive. Nonetheless, immigration was an issue both major parties avoided. Since the 1960s, cultural liberals had become ascendant on the centre-left and the Democrats were now pro-immigration; on the right, business interests and neoconservatism kept restriction off the Republican agenda. Without elite cues, mass concern among authoritarian and conservative voters remained latent. Even where manifest, anti-immigration feeling found no ready political outlet.

This began to change by the early 1990s. In 1985, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) established the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), a think tank dedicated to, in founder John Tanton’s words, making ‘the restriction of immigration a legitimate position for thinking people’. In the 1990s, FAIR began to function as a nerve centre for grassroots restrictionist groups and a bridge between local activists and Congress. It became increasingly active in issuing press releases and lobbying members of Congress, and its first success was Proposition 187 in California. California, on the frontline of undocumented immigration, is one of several states which permits citizens to raise popular initiatives (referendums) when a threshold of signatures is obtained. However, no ballot initiative had ever been held on immigration, which was deemed to be a federal matter. In 1994 FAIR helped coordinate grassroots organizations like Voice of Citizens Together (VCT) and Americans Against Illegal Immigration (AAII) to gather the necessary signatures to support the initiative they dubbed ‘Save Our State’ (SOS).

As a state ballot, Proposition 187 was not about border enforcement, a federal matter. Rather, its stated goal was to deny public services to illegal immigrants. In addition to acting as a deterrent, the measure would serve as a powerful symbol of local opposition to undocumented immigration. Despite its security and economic rationale, there was an important streak of white ethno-traditionalism among grassroots 187 activists. Nearly all contributors to the campaign were white and some 60 per cent were retirees, reflecting the fact California’s seniors were considerably less diverse than its younger residents. FAIR’s leader, Tanton, as we saw, worried greatly about the loss of the country’s Euro-American character.

The initial public reception to Prop 187 was enthusiastic, with 86 per cent of respondents in a Los Angeles Times poll approving of the measure. This was followed by a sustained counterattack by the media and sections of the political elite – largely but not wholly Democratic. Anti-187 activists organized street demonstrations, charging the initiative’s supporters with racism and nativism. Supporters of the measure were placed on the defensive, repeatedly stressing its economic and security rationales. Despite the opposition of much of the media and large sections of the national political elites (including Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition and Republicans like Jack Kemp), the measure passed with 59 per cent support. Sixty-four per cent of whites backed it, as did 57 per cent of Asians, 56 per cent of African-Americans and a third of Hispanics.

Studies subsequently showed that citizens of southern California, where undocumented immigration had its largest impact, voted most strongly in favour of restriction. Democrats living closest to the border had a 64 per cent likelihood of backing it compared to 31 per cent for those situated furthest from Mexico. However, whites in high-Hispanic counties weren’t much more supportive, and whites in more Asian counties were less likely to back restriction. Anti-Latino stereotypes, conservative self-placement and republican partisanship were the most important predictors of support. Among Latino citizens,
American-born and English-speaking Hispanics stood out as supporters of Prop 187 compared to immigrant and Spanish-speaking Latinos, exposing a cleavage within the Hispanic community that would be laid bare once again in the 2016 presidential election.  

Whereas the Republican Governor Deukmejian had opposed the state’s Official English bill in 1986, Governor Pete Wilson threw his support behind Prop 187. Wilson had trailed his Democratic opponent Kathleen Brown by 20 points prior to the election, but emerged victorious in the 1994 gubernatorial election. Much of the credit was given to his vocal support for Prop 187. Though the courts struck it down, the initiative helped shape the political agenda well beyond California. While not quite Wilson’s ‘two-by-four [wood plank] we need to make them take notice in Washington’, it placed the question on Washington’s agenda. President Clinton, though an opponent, said he understood Californians’ desire to control illegal immigration and was working on federal legislation. Prominent Republicans like Bob Dole, caught between pro- and anti-immigration wings and mindful of Rove’s Hispanic strategy, were largely silent on immigration in 1994. But in the 1996 election campaign Dole made immigration one of his issues, and vowed to oust Clinton on border security and deportation.

Meanwhile, in 1994, a bipartisan Commission on Immigration Reform chaired by African-American Congresswoman and Democrat Barbara Jordan tabled its long-awaited report. Its remit involved travelling the country to take soundings from ‘Town Hall’-style meetings. The commission recommended increasing money for the border patrol, setting up a computerized registry, enacting employer sanctions and reducing legal immigration to 550,000. The report’s findings informed President Clinton’s Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996. Though border enforcement was beefed up, employer sanctions were never properly enforced, which reduced the effectiveness of the measures. In addition, Jordan’s recommendation to set a lower cap for legal immigration never saw the light of day. Inflows remained at record levels.

In his analysis of why House and Senate bills sponsored by Congressman Lamar Smith and Senator Alan Simpson failed, citizenship and migration scholar Christian Joppke shows that a coalition of special interests from an unusually broad spectrum succeeded in quashing it:

Hardly had the ink dried, when the machine of client politics was set in motion. An unusually broad ‘Left-Right Coalition on Immigration’ included not just the usually odd immigration bedfellows of employers and ethnic and civil rights groups, but also the Home School Network, a Christian fundamentalist group rallying against the antifamily measures to curtail legal immigration . . . and the National Rifle Association, upset by the employment verification system (if you’re going to register people, why not guns? they shouted). Richard Day, the chief counsel to the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee, characterized this unusual line-up as ‘Washington groups’ against ‘the American people,’ who had asked for ‘some breathing space’ from immigration.  

THE MEDIA AND IMMIGRATION SALIENCE

The flurry of legislative activity in 1994 and 1996 seems to have coincided with a bump in opposition to immigration. The ANES time series which began in 1992 shows that the share of non-Hispanic whites wanting reduced immigration levels jumped from 56 per cent in 1992 to 68 per cent in 1994 and 64 per cent in 1996 before slipping back to 52 per cent in 1998. In many countries, populist forces would have compelled politicians to take on the special interests. The fact this did not occur testifies to the fact that immigration was not a major issue on Americans’ list of priorities. If it was, the collapse of immigration reform would have had political repercussions.

It’s unclear whether Clinton’s IIRIRA was responsible for lowering the temperature of the issue, but what can be disputed is the relatively low salience of immigration throughout this period of record inflows and failed reforms. Figure 3.3 tracks the proportion of Americans naming immigration as the country’s most important problem between 1994 and 2014. The measure remains below 5 per cent between 1994 and 2006. Thereafter, we see high volatility, with a baseline at generally higher levels than those recorded prior to 2006. Thus, even as the share of white Americans opposing immigration remained flat at 50 per cent, concern within the restrictionist half of the white population seems to have grown. A major reason is increasing post-2006 coverage
of immigration driven by immigration events. This coverage is generally negative: even in more liberal publications such as the New York Times, negative stories outnumbered positive ones by a 4:1 ratio.\textsuperscript{70}

Periodic spikes in immigration salience correspond to high levels of media reporting about illegal immigration. In March 2006, for instance, Latino activists organized demonstrations over an eight-week period protesting against a bill that would criminalize those who assisted undocumented immigrants to enter or remain in the United States. Rallies took place in cities across America, with 100,000 marching in Chicago and 500,000 in Los Angeles. Many waved Mexican flags. The protests sparked a conservative backlash and helped increase support for volunteer border patrol groups like the ‘Minutemen’. In a survey experiment conducted by Matthew Wright and Jack Citrin, 68 per cent of non-Hispanic Americans, and 86 per cent of conservatives, said they were ‘bothered a lot’ by an image of anti-immigration protesters waving Mexican flags. When people were shown pictures of protesters waving American flags, antipathy fell 10 points but still remained the majority view.\textsuperscript{71} Congressional immigration debates during 2007–8 also kept the issue front and centre.

Likewise, in May 2010, protesters took to the streets to oppose Arizona’s anti-illegal immigration law SB 1070. And in 2014 tens of thousands of Central American mothers and children fleeing drug-fuelled violence and poverty in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras crossed the southern border. This led to agonized debates and concern about impending waves of migrants. Once again, we see a spike in salience around this time in figure 3.3. From this point on, polls record a stable step-change increase in the share of Americans citing immigration as a top concern from under 5 per cent to a new steady-state of 5–10 per cent.

Among those identifying as Republican, the figures rose from 5 to 10 per cent and among the ‘very conservative’ figure 3.4 shows they jumped from around 5 per cent into the 10–15 per cent range. Terrorism surged even more: from under 5 per cent in 2012 to 20–30 per cent by 2017, while moral issues remained flat at 10 per cent. Those citing the economy as the top issue sagged from 40 per cent in 2012 to little more than 10 per cent by 2017 among both Democrats and Republicans reflecting both an improving economy and cultural polarization. On the right, non-economic questions had emerged as central, with security and identity issues overshadowing religious-moral themes.
Researchers find that the salience of immigration rises and falls with the number of immigration-related news stories. Immigration is more salient for people living close to the Mexican border, partly because local newspapers carry more immigration coverage. A study using 2006 data shows that monthly coverage of immigration ranged from twelve to sixty articles during that year. All else being equal, 7 per cent of those polled during a ‘slow’ month (twelve articles) said immigration was the most important issue facing the country. In the busiest month, when sixty articles appeared, 43 per cent said it was the number-one issue. In addition, whites in places with fast-growing immigrant populations are more likely to cite immigration as a serious problem, especially at moments when it features in the news. Salience is critical because only then do political parties take notice and begin to campaign on an issue, shifting policy.

Another important change in public opinion is the strengthening association in the restrictionist mind between illegal immigrants and Latinos. ANES shows that whites’ feelings towards blacks and Hispanics improved between 1988 and 2004 by 15–20 points, moving towards 70 out of 100 while their opinion of whites (their own group) declined from 86 in 1964 to 71 by 1996. This speaks to the generational liberalization on questions of race we visited earlier. After 2004, both sets of numbers went into reverse by 5 points, possibly hinting at a rising Anglo ethnocentrism captured in other work. More importantly, Nicholas Valentino, Ted Brader and Ashley Jardina found that the difference between whites’ ‘thermometer’ feeling towards their own group on a 0–100 scale and their warmth towards Hispanics came to be associated with their views of immigration. In 1992, opposition to immigration was linked with negative opinions of African-Americans but not of Hispanics. By 1994, during the debate over Prop 187, we see a big change, with negative views of Hispanics now closely tied to a desire to reduce numbers. From this point on, views of Latinos rather than blacks drive Anglo opinion. Feelings towards Hispanics mattered more for immigration than feelings towards Muslims in 2012, but by 2016 anti-Muslim sentiment was slightly more important: a white person’s chance of wanting less immigration jumps from 46 to 85 per cent when we compare a person who feels equally warm towards whites and Hispanics with someone who feels 50 points cooler towards Hispanics than whites. For Muslims the equivalent move is from 38 to 85 per cent support for restriction.

In the 1990s and 2000s, Latinos increasingly left their initial settlement areas in Southern California and greater Miami for blue-collar jobs in whiter towns or states in the inland west, south-east or Midwest. Even recent Latino immigrants dispersed more widely. This brought a much broader range of white and black Americans into contact with significant numbers of Latino immigrants. North Carolina, for instance, saw its immigrant population increase fivefold between 1990 and 2000. Nashville (Tennessee), Atlanta, Charlotte (North Carolina), Fayetteville (Arkansas) and Boise (Idaho) were among the 145 places which experienced an average Hispanic growth rate of 61 per cent between 2000 and 2010. Smaller towns generally felt less change, but there were many prominent exceptions: Latinos account for just 6 per cent of Wisconsin’s population but in Republican governor Scott Walker’s hometown of Delavan Hispanics now comprise a third of the total and nearly half the school-age population. The town was 7 per cent Latino in 1980, 11 per cent in 1990, 21 per cent in 2000 and 30 per cent in 2010. In Arcadia, Wisconsin, the increase was sandwiched into half the time as the share of Latinos rose from 3 per cent in 2000 to a third in 2015. Dramatic shifts in local populations were especially common in towns with meat-packing plants such as Springdale, Arkansas, home to a large Tyson Foods facility.

Local opposition to immigration in all Western countries tends to increase in places which experience rapid ethnic change. In the US, this is especially true of towns which have not had historically large immigrant populations. Whites in counties which were heavily white in 1990 and experienced rapid Latino growth in the subsequent decade were much more likely to say that immigration undermined American culture than whites in places with limited Hispanic increases. In the 2000s, fast-changing locales and states began to take the lead on immigration policy, exasperated by what the Harvard demographer Michael Teitelbaum refers to as the bipartisan ‘half-hearted and ineffectual enforcement of existing immigration laws’ under the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations. By 2010, 370 jurisdictions had passed Illegal Immigration
Important dissenters were present among whites in all locales, showing that struggling white communities are more complex than the stereotype. This highlights the importance of psychological and ideological differences which operate at the individual level within communities. As one Carpentersville liberal argued, ‘This debate is about language, but everybody knows it’s about . . . racism’. ‘Why not rename the city Xenophobe’s Branch,’ complained pro-immigration Farmers Branch resident Glen Johnstone.82

Local legislation soon ran into legal challenges, mobilized by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in partnership with local law firms. The ACLU’s challenge threatened to overwhelm Hazleton with legal expenses. However, Hazleton mayor Lou Barletta, who backed his town’s ordinance, vowed to fight on, appealing against the local district court’s finding that Hazleton had overstepped its jurisdictional powers. In order to meet the threat of being buried by legal costs, Hazleton set up an internet fundraising group, Small Town Defenders. The group ultimately managed to raise over $500,000 nationwide. ‘If they stop Hazleton,’ warned the site, ‘they may stop your community next.’ ‘I’m confident the people of this country will back the city,’ he declared.83

Barletta mounted a public relations effort that vaulted his local issue onto the national stage. In November 2006, Barletta appeared on CBS’s 60 Minutes. He appeared regularly on Lou Dobbs Tonight, a CNN programme hosted by a prominent anti-immigration presenter who twice broadcast the show live from the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)’s national convention. Dobbs’s support of FAIR, along with his perceived softness on supporters of the ‘birther’ conspiracy theory that Obama was born abroad, resulted in a campaign by the Southern Poverty Law Center and other liberal advocacy groups to force him to leave CNN. This he did in 2009. Dobbs resurfaced two years later at Fox News — a textbook case of how ideological pressures result in the sorting of journalists, contributing to a polarization of the country’s media. In the end, mayor Barletta won the right to implement his IIRO, and the town’s Hispanic population declined by over 5,000, even as many concrete aspects of the ordinance failed to be implemented.84

Expansion of California’s border wall diverted more undocumented immigrants towards Arizona. Partly as a consequence, the state’s Hispanic population tripled between 1990 and 2010, with much of the
growth centred on Phoenix. Since the state’s white population consisted of a disproportionate number of retirees, there were more Hispanics than whites in its school-age population by 2010. Indeed, by 2015, metropolitan Phoenix had the second-highest ‘cultural generation gap’ in the country: 85 per cent of seniors were white compared to 44 per cent of those under eighteen.\(^{83}\) This set the scene for increased anti-immigration agitation in the state. In April 2010, Arizona governor Jan Brewer signed the state’s SB 1070 into law, requiring citizens to carry documents and law enforcement officers to stop or arrest individuals if there is a ‘reasonable suspicion’ that they lack the right to be in the United States. State and local officials were compelled to cooperate with federal ICE agents. Those found aiding or sheltering illegal immigrants would be penalized. The measure was described as an ‘attrition through enforcement’ doctrine by its proponents. Polls showed Arizonans to be 64–30 in favour. National opinion surveys similarly found 50–60 per cent support for Arizona’s law with fewer than 40 per cent opposed. SB 1070 caused Brewer’s approval ratings to soar from 40 to 56 per cent, while those of her anti-1070 Democratic opponent Terry Goddard slumped.\(^{86}\)

Importantly, the law split the Arizona legislature and national politicians along partisan lines with opponents worried that the bill’s stop-and-search provisions would lead to the racial profiling of Latinos. Arizona’s outgoing Democratic governor Janet Napolitano had vetoed all attempts at enacting similar legislation prior to leaving office in 2009. President Obama meanwhile, despite deporting a record number of unauthorized immigrants, expressed concern that SB 1070 would ‘undermine basic notions of fairness that we cherish as Americans, as well as the trust between police and our communities that is so crucial to keeping us safe’. Democrat Linda Sanchez, from a mixed Anglo-Latino district of Los Angeles, warned: ‘There’s a concerted effort behind promoting these kinds of laws on a state-by-state basis by people who have ties to white supremacy groups. It’s been documented. It’s not mainstream politics.’ This charge was angrily rebutted by Gary Miller, a Republican from a majority Anglo district in southern California who accused Sanchez of trying to reframe the debate around racism rather than law enforcement. While most Republican representatives were positive, Florida governor Jeb Bush and strategist Karl Rove, key architects of the GOP’s Hispanic strategy, voiced their opposition.\(^{87}\)

On 1 May, tens of thousands protested in Los Angeles, many waving Mexican flags. Thousands also marched in Phoenix, Dallas and other cities. The Major League Baseball (MLB) association called for 1070 to be repealed or modified due to the adverse effects it may have on the quarter of MLB players of Latino background. The National Basketball Association (NBA) Phoenix Suns joined in, wearing special Spanish ‘Los Suns’ uniforms to protest against the bill. The gesture was lauded by Barack Obama but incensed some of the team’s fans and conservative talk-show hosts like Rush Limbaugh. Meanwhile, Arizona Congressman Raúl Grijalva and others called for an economic boycott of the state. Liberal cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, Denver and Los Angeles responded by limiting their employees’ travel to Arizona and severing business links with the state. New York Democrat José Serrano then called on MLB commissioner Bud Selig to move the 2011 All-Star Game from Chase Field in Phoenix, which he refused to do. At this, conservative supporters of SB 1070 – notably conservative radio hosts and the grassroots Tea Party movement – countered with a ‘boycott’ to support the state. In the end, the Arizona boycott was judged a failure.

SB 1070, like Hazleton’s IIRP, was challenged in the courts. This time the federal Justice Department placed its weight behind a legal challenge, arguing that SB 1070 usurped federal authority. Supporters of Arizona responded that the state was only enforcing federal laws. Arizona senators John Kyl and John McCain released a joint statement to the same effect: ‘The American people must wonder whether the Obama administration is really committed to securing the border when it sues a state that is simply trying to protect its people by enforcing immigration law.’ Lower courts initially struck down most of SB 1070’s provisions, which was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. The Court rendered a 5–3 verdict in favour of modifying the law – the three dissenters being conservative justices Scalia, Alito and Thomas who favoured retaining it essentially intact. Yet overall the judgment was a victory for Arizona. State law enforcement officials would be able to check the residency status of suspects and could take action against ‘sanctuary cities’. Soon afterwards, a range of other states passed or drafted similar measures. By 2015, only a handful of states, mainly in the liberal north-east, had failed to pass a measure on immigration enforcement.\(^{88}\)

The conflict also launched the careers of three Italian-American Republicans, demonstrating how effectively the Euro-American melting pot had worked to create a sense of white identity among those whose
ancestors were once viewed as not truly American. Hazleton’s mayor Lou Barletta, who won the battle to keep his town’s IIRO, became a Republican state representative in Pennsylvania. In Phoenix (Maricopa County), sheriff Joe Arpaio, who styled himself ‘America’s Toughest Sheriff’, became a national figure. Arpaio only became attuned to the immigration issue in 2005 when Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas was elected on a ‘stop illegal immigration’ platform. Arpaio soon initiated controversial police sweeps of Latino neighbourhoods and local businesses suspected of employing undocumented immigrants. In 2012, Arpaio and the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO) were sued for racially profiling Latinos in their stop-and-search efforts. Arpaio and MCSO were found guilty, but Arpaio remained unrepentant, and frequently appeared on the national right-wing media scene. In 2016, President Trump officially pardoned him.

The third individual was Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo, who ran in the 2008 Republican primary on a hardline anti-immigration ticket, winning 5 per cent support before pledging his support to Mitt Romney. Tancredo founded and led from 1999 to 2007 the Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus, which worked closely with FAIR to advance the anti-immigration agenda. In 2001, he sponsored a proposed moratorium on immigration entitled the Mass Immigration Reduction Act which called for immigration to be restricted for a period of five years to the spouses and children of American citizens. Though unsuccessful, it signalled a new assertiveness within the restrictionist movement.

FEDERAL IMMIGRATION BATTLES, 2005–2014

A chronically gridlocked Congress made it difficult for federal legislation on border enforcement or the fate of undocumented immigrants to pass – a vacuum increasingly filled by local and state IIROs. Democrats were largely united behind a liberal policy that granted a suite of rights and path to citizenship for the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants. In general, they opposed Official English and supported bilingualism in service provision and education. They took pains to stress the law-abiding nature of most illegal immigrants and their contribution to the economy. This reflected their pluralistic, cosmopolitan conception of America which blended the Liberal Progressive and Young Intellectual traditions. The Republicans were divided between a missionary nationalist elite, motivated by free-market ideology, neoconservative foreign policy, family values and Rove’s Hispanic strategy; and many ordinary congressmen and women from strongly Republican districts who – up for election every two years and vulnerable to challenges from the right – were alive to the concerns of their conservative constituents.

John McCain, despite backing SB 1070, stemmed from the party’s establishment wing. In 2005, he co-sponsored a bill with Democratic senator Ted Kennedy which combined more funds for border enforcement with a temporary worker programme and a path to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants. The bill met strong resistance from both ends of the ideological spectrum: liberal Democrats and congressional Republicans. By 2007, the bill had gained the sponsorship of President George W. Bush, a senior Republican, Lindsey Graham, and the Democratic Senate Majority Leader, Harry Reid. It included the DREAM Act, designed to regularize the status of those who entered the country as minors and have met a number of conditions such as not having committed a crime and having graduated from high school. The bipartisan bill failed by fourteen votes, however, meeting resistance from conservative Republicans who claimed its provisions would act as a magnet for further illegal immigration. Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama contended the bill would result in a further 8.7 million illegal immigrants arriving in the next two decades.

During the debate in Congress, FAIR and a linked organization, Roy Beck’s Numbers USA (which has since eclipsed FAIR), channelled popular anxiety directly to Congress, rallying popular opposition on conservative radio. At their behest, constituents besieged their representatives. They ‘lit up the switchboard for weeks’, said Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. ‘And to every one of them, I say today: “Your voice was heard.”’ After the defeat, America’s Voice, a pro-immigration lobby group for businesses and immigrants, went on a coordinated attack. The Southern Poverty Law Center called FAIR a ‘hate group’. America’s Voice placed ads warning Congress not to meet with extremist groups like FAIR. Opponents focused on John Tanton, whose correspondence revealed an interest in eugenics and white nationalism.
FAIR's president, Dan Stein, and Beck disavowed Tanton's comments, and the organization weathered the storm.90

Barack Obama took office in 2008 promising, among other things, to reverse the defeat on immigration. In 2010, a combination of conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats, acting for diametrically opposing reasons, defeated immigration reform in the Senate. Meanwhile, Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney, in his bid for president in 2012, stood squarely on the side of the illegal immigration sceptics. He favoured a 2,800-mile fence and strict law enforcement, which would lead the undocumented to 'self-deport' and apply legally to enter the country. His stance on immigration was not, however, central to his nomination message in the Republican primaries, and was little discussed during the 2012 presidential election, which he lost to Barack Obama. Romney's defeat saw the Republicans win just 27 per cent of the Hispanic vote compared to Bush's 40 per cent and McCain's 31 per cent. In a report dubbed 'the autopsy', the Republican National Committee (RNC), chaired by Reince Priebus, reiterated the need for the party to appeal to Hispanics and young people by embracing immigration reform. The then reality-TV star Donald Trump echoed the RNC line: '[Romney] had a crazy policy of self-deportation,' he told the conservative website Newsmax. 'He lost all of the Latino vote. He lost the Asian vote. He lost everybody who is inspired to come into this country.'91

Bypassing Congress, Obama initiated the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programme in 2012 which allows undocumented immigrants who entered the country as minors to apply for a renewable two-year permit preventing them from being deported. DACA was widely criticized by the Republicans and in Arizona governor Jan Brewer refused to recognize those possessing DACA permits. In 2013, with a Democratic majority in the Senate, an immigration reform bill finally gained ground. It passed 68–32 on the back of all Democratic and fourteen of forty-six Republican votes. The legislation combined employer verification, border security and a path to citizenship for the undocumented. Tellingly, Republican supporters of the bill were establishment figures such as John McCain, Jeb Bush and Lindsey Graham. The RNC, Karl Rove, Grover Norquist, 100 conservative economists, the CATO Institute and the Wall Street Journal urged congressmen to pass the bill.92 All Democrats were now onside, but

when the bill came to the Republican-controlled House it suffered a crushing defeat.

Why did immigration reform fail? In a perceptive analysis, Christopher Parker of the University of Washington argues: 'House Republicans aren't motivated by true conservatism. Rather, they represent constituencies haunted by anxiety associated with the perception that they're “losing their country” to immigrants from south of the border.' Parker noted that over a quarter of Republican legislators won seats due to endorsement from the Tea Party. Parker identified a 70 per cent overlap between the Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus, which Tancredo had founded, and congressmen supported by the Tea Party. Formed after Obama's inauguration in 2009, the Tea Party reflected a wholly new right-wing ecosystem. Unlike the religious right, it didn't spring from a network of churches and para-church organizations but was nourished by activists linked via Fox News, talk radio and the right-wing internet. Religious and moral issues ranked lower on their priority list than secular concerns. Though composed of various strands, immigration was one of the movement's top priorities. Among Massachusetts Tea Partiers surveyed by Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol and John Coggin in 2010, 78 per cent cited immigration as a leading issue, second only to 'deficits and spending'. Nationally, 80 per cent of Tea Party members considered immigration to be a serious problem.93 Tea Partiers' oppositional, anti-politically correct orientation towards the Republican Party establishment distinguishes it from the religious right, which sought to win over and co-opt the party elite.

An estimated 10 per cent of Americans identify with the Tea Party, and Parker's survey shows they differ in important ways from other conservatives. Asked whether 'restrictive immigration policies are based in part on racism', only 18 per cent of Tea Party conservatives agreed, compared to 40 per cent of non-Tea Party conservatives. Racial resentment measures (containing statements to the effect that blacks could succeed if they worked harder) correlated with Tea Party affiliation. There were also 20-point differences between Tea Party and non-Tea Party supporters on support for the idea that a child born in the United States should automatically get citizenship ('birthright citizenship') and support for the DREAM Act. Finally, 71 per cent of Tea
Parties agreed with the statement that Obama was ‘destroying the country’ compared to 6 per cent of non-Tea Partiers. Obama, who had been fairly tough on border security, took a much more liberal line towards those already in the country. Frustrated by the lack of legislative progress towards normalizing the status of the undocumented, he initiated both DACA and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), a programme to regularize the parents of lawful American residents (i.e., migrant parents of US-born children or the parents of illegals who subsequently acquired legal residency). ‘Taken together,’ Michael Teitelbaum remarks, Obama’s executive order ‘would establish legal status for nearly one-half of the 10–11 million’ illegal immigrants in the country. This led twenty-six of the nation’s fifty states, all with Republican governors, to sue the government for failing to enforce US immigration law. The courts ruled in their favour, issuing an injunction preventing Obama from implementing DAPA, and the order was rescinded by Trump in 2017. Michael Teitelbaum notes that bipartisanship had almost completely collapsed compared to 2007–8, when an important minority of Republicans backed a path to citizenship. By 2014, Republican backing was confined to a handful of elite figures such as John McCain and Marco Rubio. In 2014, Tea Party candidate Dave Brat, an unknown figure, claimed the scalp of Eric Cantor of Virginia, the second-highest-ranking Republican in Congress, in a party primary. Cantor was convinced of the establishment position that the party needed to pass an immigration bill in order to reassure conservative Latino voters and safeguard its demographic future. Though generally quiet on immigration, he was on record as favouring the regularization of those who came to the country as children. During the campaign, Cantor tried to distance himself from Obama’s ‘amnesty’, but faced a tough challenge from the upstart Brat, who declared: ‘Eric Cantor is saying we should bring more folks into the country, increase the labor supply – and by doing so, lower wage rates for the working person.’ The defeat of Cantor, who had been working quietly to salvage immigration reform, demonstrated the growing power of immigration on the Republican right.

The patchwork of state and local ordinances broke on partisan lines between pro-enforcement and ‘sanctuary’ jurisdictions. This, and the public split among national politicians over SB 1070, sucked immigration into the ever-widening and more racialized partisan vortex of the 2000s. In the 1970s, American parties were weak and congressmen only slightly more likely to back their own party in roll-call votes. The median voter identified as conservative and Democratic, illustrating how ideology and partisanship were not neatly aligned. This began to change, especially in the 1980s, as Reagan ran on a more ideological conservatism. By 2000, polarization in Congress had exceeded its 1905 peak and shot past it. As the parties began to differentiate, the average American became better able to distinguish parties’ stances on various issues. Previously, many voters, especially those without degrees, had difficulty pinning the tail of policies they supported on the donkey (or elephant) of party. Yet eventually even these Americans began correctly matching party to ideology. The era of mass polarization had begun.

Party identities are linked to race as well as ideology. In the 1950s, the electorate was 95 per cent white, and there was only a modest difference between the parties’ bases. As more southern blacks won the right to vote after the Voting Rights Act of 1965, they increasingly moved towards the Democrats while southern whites realigned to the Republicans. Then, in the 1990s, the growing Latino and Asian vote broke largely for the Democrats while northern white Catholics moved several points towards the Republicans each election. By 2008, figure 3.5 shows that minorities made up half the Democratic base but just 10 per cent of the Republican electorate. More than this, Republicans perceived Democratic voters to be 46 per cent black (rather than the actual 24) as well as 37 per cent LGBT (rather than the actual 6). Those with the greatest interest in political news had the most distorted picture of the other side’s demographics and considered the opposing party’s voters to be more ideologically extreme and socially distant.

Race and attitudes to religious issues may have separated Republicans from Democrats, but immigration only emerged as a partisan issue in the late 2000s. As figure 3.6 shows, the gap on immigration
between white Republicans and Democrats in the ANES was no more than a few points between 1992 and 2008. This reflected wealthy suburban Republicans’ predilection for low-cost, hard-working immigrants and white working-class Democrats’ opposition to it. But between 2008 and 2012 Democratic voters became 3.5 points more liberal while Republicans grew 3.5 points more restrictive. By 2016, 69 per cent of white Republicans wanted less immigration compared to only 21 per cent of white Democrats, a yawning chasm. In high-immigration California, white partisans divided by a whopping 73–16. White Democrats had become 19 points less restrictionist nationally while white Republicans grew 15 points more so. The two effects cancelled each other out because the number of Democrats in the white population had declined while the number of Republicans among whites increased. The Republicans’ outspoken stance on immigration had won them

3.5. Share of non-whites among Democratic, Republican and all voters by decade, %
Source: Alan Abramowitz, ‘How race and religion have polarized American voters’, Washington Post (Monkey Cage), 20 January 2014

white working-class Democrats, Independents and non-voters despite losing them sections of their wealthier suburban support base.

3.6. Share of white Americans wanting less immigration, by party identity, %

THE RISE OF A RIGHT-WING ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Political scientists emphasize that elite cues are important in shaping public opinion on issues and according them importance. American voters can be ‘cued’ by media as well as by political elites. When it comes to the rise of immigration politics, both are important. One of the liberalizing forces in American life after 1960 had been the expanding New York and Hollywood-based television media, with content produced by a media elite which leaned in a culturally liberal direction. However, by the 1990s, cable television began to chip away at the primacy of ABC, NBC and CBS, the so-called ‘big three’ television networks. Market segmentation into specialty channels fragmented the media landscape. In addition, in 1987, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) stopped enforcing the ‘fairness doctrine’, which opened the door to conservative talk radio. In 1996, new laws enabled radio stations to become nationally syndicated.
WHITESHIFT

So began the erosion of one of the institutional cornerstones of the country's post-1960s attitude liberalization. The growth of right-wing cable television, and, later, internet sites, induced a polarizing shift in American political culture. Between 1996 and 2000, cable was laid in 20 per cent of American towns. An influential study showed that towns which received cable - which came bundled with the right-wing Fox News channel - produced a small bump in Republican vote share and a major increase of as much as 28 per cent in turnout among registered Republicans. The study design neatly ruled out the possibility that right-wing voters were selecting into Fox or lobbying for it because the cable was laid in an entirely random manner.

Conservatives selected away from the mainstream networks and radio stations towards conservative ones like Fox while liberals moved towards liberal outlets like MSNBC/CNN or National Public Radio. One study finds that Republicans who watch conservative cable news are more opposed to Mexican immigration than Republicans who don't. My analyses of 2012 and 2016 ANES data show that, controlling for party identification, those who listen to conservative radio shows or watch conservative cable news are no more likely than others to want reduced immigration. However, people who watch or listen to liberal radio news shows - whether they be Republicans or Democrats, liberals or conservatives - are almost 20 points less likely to favour cutting immigration than other white Americans. Thirty-one per cent of white Democrats who listen to liberal radio stations favour restriction compared to 49 per cent of those who don't. Among Republicans who listen to liberal radio, the numbers jump from 47 to 60 per cent. Across a range of questions pertaining to the undocumented: whether to allow those under sixteen to acquire citizenship, whether police should be compelled to conduct background checks on suspects' immigration status, and whether to deport the unauthorized, liberal radio and news consumption is strongly correlated with attitudes. Support for deportation, for instance, is almost three times lower among white Republicans who listen to liberal radio programmes than among those who don't.

Conservative radio or news consumption makes a difference on the question of whether police should be required to conduct background checks on suspected non-citizens: support among white Republicans rises from 77 to 89 per cent and among non-Republicans from 50 to 69 per cent as we move from those who don't consume conservative

ETHNO-TRADITIONAL NATIONALISM IN AN AGE OF IMMIGRATION

news to those who do. On the key question of attitudes towards Hispanics, however, I could find no conservative media effect, though consumers of conservative TV news were a few points warmer towards whites than others in the population. All of which suggests the fragmentation of the news media is only part of the story of how the country began to polarize on immigration. Demographic change in white middle-class communities ignited the movement and led to copypast efforts in similarly affected areas. The tumultuous local battles to gain control over immigration enforcement began with grassroots activists, who shaped local and state legislation. The laws were popular - as much for symbolic as for practical reasons - and polarized national politicians and the media. Once signed up to the restrictionist cause, conservative media and politicians began providing the cues which shifted public opinion among the mass of people living in more demographically stable locations.

THE RISE OF TRUMP

American immigration politics since 1980 was driven by bottom-up dynamics which were ignored, to a greater or lesser extent, by the Republican establishment. Official English began as a grassroots endeavour that was initially resisted by conservative intellectuals and politicians, who soon realized, however, how popular these measures were and switched to endorsing them. Proposition 187 commenced as a socio-political movement which encountered opposition from Republican elites outside California. Similarly, local and state anti-illegal immigration laws in the 2000s reflect conservative white mobilization in ethnically shifting parts of the country. These efforts, channelled via the Tea Party, thwarted the Republican elite's strategy of yielding on immigration in order to win Hispanic support for an agenda based on economic liberalism, overseas regime change and social conservatism. The final nail in the establishment coffin was the election of Donald J. Trump as president in 2016.

Trump, a New York property tycoon and star of NBC's reality TV show The Apprentice, had a quixotic relationship with politics. Over the years he gave verbal or monetary support to George H. W. Bush, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Though interested in American
protectionism, his views on immigration were generally liberal or conventional. This changed in 2015 when he entered the race for the Republican leadership. On Tuesday, 16 June, he announced his intention to run. The speech contained a bombshell on immigration which walked all over the red lines in American public discourse: ‘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 us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.’ He surpassed any previous candidate in the zeal of his immigration message, avowing: ‘I will build a great wall . . . I will build a great, great wall on our southern border and I will have Mexico pay for that wall.’ In December he called for ‘a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States’.

It’s not entirely clear if Trump sincerely believes in immigration restriction or merely found it a useful tool to acquire the presidency. Some allege he was influenced by polling which showed that the immigration issue had immense potential within the active base of Republican Party members. Scott Walker, Rick Santorum and Ted Cruz all talked tough on illegal immigration though only Trump called for lower levels of legal immigration. Others argue Trump’s anti-Mexican rhetoric reflected the views of conservative anti-immigration pundit Anne Coulter in her book Adios America: The Left’s Plan to Turn Our Country into a Third World Hellhole (2015). Trump continually surprised himself by how well he was doing. He came second to Cruz in relatively evangelical Iowa, but won New Hampshire handily. On Super Tuesday in March 2016, Cruz won in Texas, Oklahoma and Alaska, but Trump secured seven states, many in the relatively religious south-east, which surprised pundits. By March, Trump was well ahead of Cruz, with establishment candidates Jeb Bush and John Kasich out of contention. Alarmed, fiscal conservative groups like the Club for Growth, as well as religious conservative pundits like Glenn Beck, got behind the ‘Stop Trump Movement’. Bush and Kasich chose the lesser of two evils and endorsed Cruz, a populist in the religious-right mould who attacked Trump’s ‘New York values’. All to no avail. In April, Trump swept the north-eastern primaries, ending Cruz’s challenge. The party establishment, used to weathering insurgent outsiders before getting its preferred candidate in place, was in shock. In July, at the Republican National Convention, Trump officially became the Republican nominee.

Trump named Indiana governor Mike Pence, an evangelical, as his running mate and in August appointed Steve Bannon, head of the right-wing news website Breitbart, to run his campaign. Bannon, a former investment banker and media industry executive, moved in transnational right-wing circles by the 2000s. In 2007, he wrote an eight-page treatment for a documentary entitled Destroying the Great Satan: The Rise of Islamic Facism [sic] in America. He has spoken approvingly of ethno-nationalist writers like Charles Maurras and Jean Raspail, author of the apocalyptic racist novel Camp of Saints based on a fictional account of a peaceful immigrant invasion of France. At Breitbart, his organization was routinely accused of publishing racist and anti-Muslim content and his appointment to Trump’s Cabinet brought anti-racist protesters onto the streets. Breitbart has also been linked to the alt-right, a label which encompasses various forms of right-wing extremism but coalesces around the idea of white nationalism. Like Kellyanne Conway, whom Bannon was in conversation with by 2015, he believed the immigration issue could be used to win white working-class votes in critical swing states like Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan.

The strategy worked. On 9 November, I was floored by news that Trump had become US president, having won key Midwestern battlegrounds while taking Florida. Never had the country seemed so polarized. During the primaries and campaign, Trump’s rallies attracted considerable protest from liberals, pro-immigration advocates, Muslim-Americans and others. On many occasions, protesters encountered hostility and were forcibly ejected by security, abused and even attacked by Trump’s audience. Sometimes Trump appeared to condone the violence. In February 2016, he told an Iowa crowd, ‘So if you see somebody getting ready to throw a tomato, knock the crap out of him, would you? Seriously, okay, just knock the hell. I promise you, I will pay for the legal fees; I promise, I promise.’ After a protestor at another Trump rally was punched, Trump answered, ‘Maybe he deserved to get roughed up.’
WHY TRUMP WON

In dissecting Trump’s win, it’s vital to separate his personal popularity from his election victory. I’ll consider both in the pages that follow but let’s begin with the election. Many loyal Republicans held their noses and voted for him in November. Most would have voted for any Republican candidate. On the other hand, the fact that Trump’s outrageous statements about women and minorities were not a deal-breaker for many voters is an important indicator of the limited power that norms of ‘political correctness’ — not making remarks about minorities that are negative (or which might be construed as negative by left-modernists) — possess over much of the Republican electorate.

Attacks on political correctness were a signature of Trump’s campaign and, as we’ll see, one of the themes that resonated most strongly with many voters. The phrase repeatedly got the president out of tight spots during interviews and demonstrates how far he managed to stretch the ‘Overton Window’ of acceptable public discourse. Trump’s repeated outrages and cavalier attitude to controversy seemed to blunt the force of the social sanctions which had, for instance, compelled FAIR to avoid any mention of cultural anxieties over immigration. Questioned by Fox host Megyn Kelly regarding his pejorative comments about women as ‘animals’, ‘slobs’ and sex objects, he replied, ‘I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct.’ Likewise, after NBC had severed links with him over his remarks about Mexicans, he retorted, ‘NBC is weak, and like everybody else is trying to be politically correct.’

As in Britain, right- and left-wing pundits endorse the ‘left behind’ explanation that white working-class voters voted for populism to protest against a selfish economic and political elite at a time of inequality and stagnant real wages. This permits them to shoehorn favoured policy solutions into the discussion, with the left calling for more public spending to reduce inequality and the right for less public spending to free up the economy. As with Brexit, the storyline also works for the right-wing populists themselves because it lends a ‘we are defending the powerless’ David-and-Goliath nobility to their cause. Countless observers point to work by Anne Case and Nobel Prize winner Angus Deaton to stake their claim. These researchers discovered a steady increase in non-Hispanic white suicide rates linked to an opioid epidemic among working-class white Americans. Other authors favoured J. D. Vance’s autobiographical and evocative Hillbilly Elegy, about growing up in backwoods poverty in Appalachia. Some tramped the byways of rustbelt Ohio or reported from struggling post-industrial towns to suggest that economic misery explained Trump’s success. None performed any sophisticated individual-level data analysis.

Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky emphasize that our brains are wired to work with vivid images such as a coal miner in a down-at-the-heel West Virginia town. Liking Billy Beane in Michael Lewis’s Moneyball, we are better off ignoring gut feel and looking at the individual-level data. It’s much harder for us to digest the fact that the psychological differences between two Appalachian miners matter more for the Trump vote than the social distance between Youngstown, Ohio, and the northern Virginia suburbs. Electoral maps based on aggregate county results matched to census data offered the first snapshot of the social drivers of Trump, and it was apparent that education, not income, best predicted Trump success. Still, at first glance, maps reinforce stereotypes like the urban–rural divide.

As with Brexit, income is correlated with education, but there are many wealthy people — think successful plumber — with few qualifications. Similarly, many resemble struggling artists, possessing degrees but little money. When you control for education, income has no effect on whether a white person voted for, or supports, Trump. Being less well-off produces an effect on Trump voting only when authoritarian and conservative values are held constant — and even then has a much smaller impact than values. Education is the best census indicator because it reflects people’s subjective worldview, not just their material circumstances. Researchers find that teenagers with more open and exploratory psychological orientations self-select into university. This, much more than what people learn at university, makes them more liberal. Median education level offers a window onto the cultural values of a voting district, which is why it correlates best with Trump’s vote share. In American exit polls, Trump won whites without college degrees 67–28, compared to 49–45 for whites with degrees.
VALUES VOTERS, OF A DIFFERENT KIND

Values, the invisible social-psychological makeup of an individual, are much closer to explaining the vote than demographics of any kind, whether income, age, gender or even education. Most of the variation in values is within-group rather than between-group. For example, within the degree-holding population there is a great deal of social-psychological variation. Conservatives and authoritarians, who value stability and order, went strongly for Trump. These are the same people whom Dade classifies as Settlers and form the core of those Goodhart labels Somewheres. Those preferring change and diversity voted instead for Saunders or Clinton. Plenty of university graduates in major metropolitan areas are conservative and authoritarian. Many high-school-educated rural whites are liberal. While whites without degrees broke 67–28 for Trump, don’t forget white degree holders still favoured him 49–45. White women came out 52–44 for Trump over Clinton and whites under the age of thirty backed him 47–43.

Indicators of psychological authoritarianism consistently predicted support for Trump. A subtle social-psychology question asks people whether it is more important for children to be considerate or well mannered. The two options sound alike but the first gets at empathy for others and the second adherence to rules. In a Policy Exchange (PX)-YouGov survey I ran in mid-August 2016 during the primaries, white Americans were asked to rate Trump on a 0–10 thermometer scale. The average warmth towards him was 4.34. Those who said it was more important for children to be considerate than well mannered rated Trump a 3.5, while people who answered that it was more important for them to be well mannered gave him 5.5, a powerful statistical difference. White Americans who scored lowest on a measure of openness, one of the big five personality dimensions, scored Trump a 6.4, out of 10 while those who scored highest on openness gave him a 3.4.

I also asked one of Pat Dade’s more outlandish authoritarianism questions which is one of the top predictors of populist-right support in Europe: ‘How well does this describe the REAL you: I believe that sex crimes, such as rape and attacks on children, deserve more than mere imprisonment. I think that such criminals ought to be publicly whipped, or worse.’ Those who most disagreed with this sentiment gave Trump a 2.2 out of 10 while those most in agreement scored him 5.7. Not only that, but the pattern of responses in the Trump questionnaire was a carbon copy of what I obtained in a survey of Brexit voting fielded in Britain on the same day: a big difference between those who strongly and ‘somewhat’ opposed whipping sex criminals, not much action in the middle of the distribution, and a big gap between those ‘somewhat’ and strongly in favour of whipping.

In the ANES, only 20 per cent of whites who most oppose the death penalty voted for Trump compared to 69 per cent of those most in favour of capital punishment. Trump did much better than Romney among these voters: in 2012 just 46 per cent of whites most in favour of the death penalty backed the Massachusetts governor. Among Latinos, Trump support likewise jumps from 12 to 35 per cent comparing the least and most pro-death penalty voters. But authoritarianism is less effective than conservatism in picking out Trump supporters. In the PX-YouGov data from August 2016, white Americans who strongly disagreed with the view that ‘things in America were better in the past’ rated Trump a 1.59. Whites who most agreed gave him a 6.85, a whopping 5.3-point differential. Recall that Karen Stenner distinguished authoritarianism – involving opposition to diversity – from status quo conservatism, a preference for continuity with the past. Both are important, but conservatism, as in the UK data, seems to correlate somewhat more strongly with right-wing populist support.

IT’S ABOUT IMMIGRATION

But even conservatism and authoritarianism are less important than immigration attitudes for Trump support because right-wing media and political elites have some sway in framing what their supporters should be conservative or authoritarian about. Should they be more worried about a threat to American military power or the loss of America’s white Christian identity? The consensus from two decades of work on immigration attitudes in America is that cultural and psychological dispositions, i.e. conservatism and authoritarianism, drive attitudes. Economic factors are far less important. Meanwhile the focus for conservatives and authoritarians has tilted away from foreign policy to
domestic identity questions. Seventy per cent of white Trump voters want immigration reduced, rising to 75 per cent among strong Trump supporters. This compares to 20 per cent of white Clinton voters, a gap of more than 50 points.

Figure 3.7 reveals that when we control for age and education a person’s probability of having voted for Trump and strongly preferring him over other primary candidates increases from 7 per cent among those who want immigration increased a lot to 45 per cent for those who want it reduced a lot. The tight and inconsistent lines for income, by contrast, reveal that a person’s income had no real effect on Trump support.

Immigration and a cluster of attitudes labelled ‘nativism’ were likewise identified as the key drivers of Trump support in the primaries in an Ipsos study using sophisticated Bayesian modelling techniques. ‘Simply put, it is all about nativism!’ the author wrote. Indeed, in the ANES data, a Romney vote in 2012 plus immigration attitudes on a five-point scale predict a striking 40.5 per cent of the variation in the probability of having voted for Trump. This compares with 3.6 per cent for a model combining age, income and education. It’s not just that opposition to immigration is related to Trump support. The other side of the coin is that people who want liberal immigration, or think the past wasn’t better than the present, are especially sour on Trump. My PX-YouGov 2016 data suggests liberal immigration opinion predicts 22 per cent of the variation in hard opposition to Trump while restrictive immigration attitudes predict 12 per cent of the variation in strong support for him. These numbers may not sound like much but are extremely powerful results for this kind of research. Immigration was also crucial for voters who shifted from voting for Obama or not voting in 2012 to voting Trump in 2016. Figure 3.8 shows that anti-immigration Obama voters were more inclined to switch to Trump than pro-immigration Romney voters were to switch to Clinton. Overall, the issue was a winner for the reality-TV mogul.

How much of a realignment was there? In the 2012 ANES, 47 per cent of whites who reported voting for Romney wanted immigration reduced. In the 2016 ANES, 63 per cent of people who said they voted for Romney in 2012 wanted immigration reduced. This suggests events and GOP cueing during 2012–16 moved Romney voters’ opinion in the direction of restriction by 16 points. Opposition to immigration rises to 77 per cent across all 2016 Trump voters. Thus 14 points of the rise

3.7. Strong Trump vote, by immigration view and income (US whites)


3.8. Shifts between 2012 and 2016 elections among those wanting immigration reduced or same/increase

Source: ANES 2016, using RAWGraphs.io.
(77 minus 63) is a result of switching. This tells us roughly half the increase in white Republican opposition to immigration between 2012 and 2016 was due to switching. The other half has to do with the changing content of conservatives’ beliefs due to a combination of events such as the 2014 Central American child refugees, Trump’s cues to Republican voters or the rising prominence of anti-immigration messaging on right-wing outlets like Fox. On the Democratic side, party and media cueing (including the response to Trump) rather than switching seem to account for the lion’s share of attitude liberalization.

MINORITY TRUMP VOTERS

As in Britain, an important share of minorities in America want reduced immigration. In my PX–YouGov data, for instance, 39 per cent of African-Americans and 36 per cent of Latinos want less immigration. In the ANES, the figures are 33 and 31 per cent respectively. Trump surprised pollsters by taking 28 per cent of the Latino vote, without which he could not have won the election. This was a small improvement on Romney’s performance with Hispanics and defied the conventional wisdom that Trump’s remarks about Mexicans would lead to a crash in Latino support. It appears something similar took place as occurred in 1994 when a third of California Hispanics voted for Proposition 187. Immigration seems key to explaining Latino voting in both contests – anti-immigration Latinos enthusiastically backed Trump in a way restrictionist African-Americans did not. For instance, in the ANES, around half of Latinos who say immigration should be reduced voted for Trump, but this is true of only 10 per cent of restrictionist blacks. In the PX data, restrictionist Latinos score Trump a 5.1 out of 10 compared to 1.9 for Latinos who want current or higher immigration levels. Among blacks, the differences are not statistically significant in models: 2.1 out of 10 for restrictionists and 1.6 for others. This means restrictionist Latinos are marginally closer to Trump than the median white voter but less so than restrictionist whites, who rated Trump a 6.4 out of 10 and voted for him to the tune of 77 per cent.

While Latino restrictionists were undoubtedly motivated by economic considerations as well as intra-Latino social divides, I would argue that at least some were attached to the white ethno-tradition.

ETHNO-TRADITIONAL NATIONALISM IN AN AGE OF IMMIGRATION

That is, they felt warmly about an America in which the majority of the population is non-Hispanic white. I asked a small opt-in sample of thirty minority Republicans on Prolific Academic how sad they felt on a 0–100 scale when they heard that the US would ‘lose its white majority’ by 2042. The average score was 47, with a score of 50 for Latinos. This was noticeably less than the 67 out of 100 among the fifty-five white Trump voters in the same sample and a bit lower than the 54/100 among the fifty white Trump voters in an MTurk sample where I asked the same question. But it was markedly higher than the 20/100 recorded for white Clinton voters or the 13/100 for the forty mainly Democrat minority voters in my MTurk sample.

This echoes the views of some 300 Hispanic and Asian Trump voters in a University of Virginia survey in which over half endorsed the idea that the US needed to ‘protect and preserve its white European heritage’. It chimes with work which finds that Hispanics are more likely than whites to say that being white and Christian are important to being ‘truly’ American. It seems that minority Republicans are more attached to the white tradition of American nationhood than white Democrats. All of which underscores the difference between white ethno-traditional nationalism, which can be embraced by someone of any background, and white ethnicity, which is open only to those with at least some European ancestry. The decline of whites is experienced twice over by conservative white Americans: as ethnic loss and as national loss. Conservative minorities feel it only as national loss, hence their lower ‘sadness’ score.

IMMIGRATION SALIENCE, NOT IMMIGRATION ATTITUDES

Earlier I noted the importance of the salience of immigration for populist-right support, and not just attitudes about whether it should be increased or reduced. Immigration was the top issue for 10 per cent of white American voters in my mid-August 2016 PX–YouGov survey, high by post-1965 standards but low compared to Britain, where 20 per cent of white British voters said immigration was their most important issue. Importantly, immigration was the top issue for 25 per cent of those ranking Trump a perfect 10, a higher level than the white British
average. Against this, only 2 per cent of the considerable number of white voters rating Trump a zero said immigration was the country’s most important challenge, a 10 to 1 gap between strong Trump supporters and strong opponents.

Having said this, immigration is still not as prominent an issue in Trumpist America as it is in Brexit Britain. As in Britain, those taking the PX survey were asked to read a passage about the country becoming increasingly diverse, or managing to assimilate its immigrants. But the reassuring paragraph did not lead to a softening in American attitudes as it did in Britain. Instead, white anti-immigration voters who read either the ‘alarming’ or reassuring passage responded with significantly elevated immigration salience. That is, while 14 per cent of whites who want immigration reduced a lot but read no paragraph said it was their most important issue, this rose to 24 per cent among whites who read either the alarming or reassuring immigration message. Much of this increase seemed to come from those who would have named terrorism their top issue but when reading an immigration passage switched their priority to immigration.

The fact that reading a short immigration passage can significantly boost the ranking of immigration as a concern among anti-immigration whites suggests it has not reached the same saturation point in the American conservative consciousness that it has in Europe. Much will depend on how committed right-wing media and political elites are to the immigration-restriction narrative. If there is sustained momentum, spreading beyond anti-immigration pundits such as Tucker Carlson or Anne Coulter, then immigration has room to become even more important. If key anti-immigration figures in the administration such as Jeff Sessions and Stephen Miller are able to persuade Trump to keep anti-immigration rhetoric to the fore and downplay foreign policy threats like Russia and ISIS, this too could change the conversation on the right. A lot also depends on whether Trump’s example shifts the message and priorities of future Republican primary candidates.

Next to immigration, ‘left behind’ issues are a busted flush. Just 4 per cent of whites who ranked Trump 10 out of 10 said inequality was the country’s most important problem. Contrast this with the 40 per cent of those scoring him a zero who said inequality was the top issue, a tenfold difference. Compared to inequality and immigration, even the gap on terrorism, at around two to one, fades into insignificance.

The vote for Trump also doesn’t seem to reflect a revolt against the rich and powerful. In Britain we saw that all measures of generalized anti-elitism failed to identify Brexit voters.

In March 2017, I asked 361 white American voters on MTurk, ‘What annoys you most about the American elite?’ Respondents could answer ‘they don’t annoy me’, ‘they are rich and powerful’ or ‘they are politically correct’. Clinton voters were actually marginally more annoyed by the American elite (64 to 60 per cent) than Trump voters, though this is not statistically significant. There is a current of resentment of the rich and powerful that runs through American society, but only 27 per cent of my sample of Trump voters said elites annoyed them because ‘they are rich and powerful’ whereas 55 per cent of Clinton voters did. On the other hand, 54 per cent of Trump voters but just 9 per cent of Clinton voters said it was the political correctness of elites that annoyed them. Thus Trump support, like Brexit, is distinctive in its opposition to liberal elites, not the elite in general, whom many voters from all parties dislike.

Ethnic change is central to explaining Trump’s victory. We already noted how local anti-immigration ordinances tended to spring up in communities undergoing rapid ethnic change. Political scientist Dan Hopkins finds that, comparing two communities with identical characteristics, one which experienced an 8-point increase in immigrants in the 1990s had a .66 chance of adopting an anti-illegal immigration ordinance compared to .37 for one with no immigrant increase. The political psychologists Eric Knowles and Linda Tropp suggest ethnic change tends to highlight people’s sense of white identity. They asked 1,700 white Americans five questions about white identity including ‘Being a white person is an important part of how I see myself’ and ‘I feel solidarity with other white people.’ This was used to create an index with a range from 1, low white identity, to 5, high white identity. Whites in neighbourhoods with no Latinos scored a 3.2 out of 5 for white identity while those in neighbourhoods which were half Latino scored around 3.6, a significant difference. Moreover, during Trump’s leadership bid, whites’ propensity to support him rises from 20 per cent in a neighbourhood without Hispanics to 35 per cent in a half-Hispanic neighbourhood.

Ethnic change also affects the politically vital salience of immigration in voters’ minds. In my PX–YouGov data, ethnic change increases the
importance of the immigration issue among voters who prefer less immigration. The threat effect is curvilinear: modest in areas changing a bit, but high in fast-changing locales. This accords with a large volume of work that shows that rapid ethnic change increases anti-immigration feeling.\textsuperscript{121} For high-Latino areas that may not be changing so fast, there is a different effect. I find that whites in high-Latino neighbourhoods (ZIP codes) who are opposed to immigration are far more likely to say it is the most important issue facing the country when primed by reading an alarmist or reassuring paragraph on immigration. An anti-immigration white person in a neighbourhood with no Latinos who reads about immigration has a 12 per cent chance of calling it the nation's top issue; this soars threefold to 36 per cent among the same people in half-Latino neighbourhoods. This may explain why white attitudes to immigration polarized more between 2012 and 2016 in high-immigrant California than in the country as a whole.

More generally, many white Americans already think whites are a minority of the population.\textsuperscript{122} Duke political scientist Ashley Jardina finds, across a range of surveys, that the share of whites who say white identity is 'very' or 'moderately' important to them almost doubled between the 1990s and 2010s – to the point that 45–65 per cent now say it matters. This is especially the case among authoritarian or low-openness whites, those who would be categorized as Settlers by Pat Dade. Older and southern whites also have stronger white identities, but, critically, identification as white is not related to antipathy to outgroups. This suggests that the common view that white identity leads to a dislike of minorities is misplaced.\textsuperscript{123} Similarly, in the ANES, warmth towards whites is correlated with warmth towards both blacks and Latinos. A positive feeling towards whites, much more than negative feelings towards minorities, predicts whether a white person voted for Trump or wants less immigration. Only antipathy to Muslims has a similar (or slightly stronger) effect in predicting a Trump vote.

Many survey experiments which allocate one group of whites to read a news report or passage about whites' declining share of the population find that the group which reads about white decline experiences a higher sense of ethnic threat. In one study, whites who read about group demise expressed greater Republican identification and stronger support for conservative policies.\textsuperscript{124} Other studies find that whites who read about their group's decline are significantly more likely to support the Tea Party. In addition, the effect is stronger for passages about white demographic decline than for fictional paragraphs which talk about whites losing their economic advantage, though both predict higher Tea Party support.\textsuperscript{125} The effect is especially noticeable among high-identifying whites. Jardina finds a big jump in high-identifying whites' reported fear on a 0 to 1 scale, from .1 to almost .5, when they read about white demographic decline. These whites also reported higher anger and lower enthusiasm after reading the news story.\textsuperscript{126}

THE MUSLIM FACTOR

Immigration is key for Trump support, but questions that combine opposition to immigration with an anti-Muslim security dimension are even more potent. In the January 2016 ANES pilot survey, 70 per cent of 501 whites who scored Trump above a 72 out of 100 said they greatly opposed Syrian refugees coming to live in America compared to a mere 10 per cent among the 302 whites scoring him less than 10 out of 100. The 2016 ANES shows that white Americans rate Muslims a 52 out of 100, considerably cooler than the 66 out of 100 accorded to Latinos. For the first time in the ANES series, coolness towards Muslims exceeded antipathy to Latinos as a predictor of the desire to reduce immigration. The new mood is reflected in Trump's 'total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States' declaration in 2015 following a jihadi bombing at an Orlando gay nightclub. It also registered in his hastily implemented attempt in January 2017 to bar travellers from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States.

Trump's legislation was not a Muslim ban but a seven-country travel order that quietly avoided targeting Saudi Arabia and other foreign policy allies with arguably more fundamentalist religious philosophies than the countries on the list. The first iteration of Trump's ban included an explicit preference for Christian over Muslim refugees and did not exempt green-card holders. It was struck down by the courts for discriminating among those already resident in the country (green-card holders). In late June, a suitably reformed version passed scrutiny and went into operation, affecting all travellers entering from Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen apart from those with valid green cards.\textsuperscript{127} The new legislation included a refugee cap of 50,000, a
considerable decline from the previous ceiling of 110,000. Trump also attempted to enact a four-month freeze on all admissions through an Executive Order. Trump’s freeze was stayed by federal judges and the case was appealed to the Supreme Court on the grounds that Trump’s ban violates the right to equal treatment regardless of religion or race.

At stake is a key principle: whether the United States can select its immigrants on the basis of cultural criteria. This was clearly the case in the past with legislation such as National Origins or Chinese Exclusion. Trump even cited FDR’s use of the Alien and Sedition Acts during the Second World War (in which German, Japanese and Italian-American citizens were incarcerated — though Trump criticized Japanese internment) as a precedent for his legislation. Many assume — because of the way anti-racism norms around Civil Rights came to be applied to the immigration issue — that the law prevents the country from selecting immigrants on the basis of cultural criteria. Trump’s anti-Muslim tone was cited as evidence for the anti-religious motivation behind the ban. The Supreme Court, in contrast to more liberal lower courts, was not persuaded by this anti-discrimination line of reasoning. In a 5–4 decision that broke on ideological lines, it ruled that presidents have wide leeway to set immigration policy in the national interest.128

Trump’s election has resulted in a tighter enforcement of immigration laws and a crackdown on ‘sanctuary cities’. His Executive Order in January 2017 expanded the definition of those eligible for deportation to include minor felonies. As a result, ICE agents arrested 58 per cent more people in Trump’s first 100 days than in the analogous period in 2016.129 The number of illegal immigrants apprehended on the southern border in 2017 was half the level of 2016, which may indicate a deterrence effect.130 Meanwhile, Trump appointee Stephen Miller is working on a bill with Senators Tom Cotton of Arkansas and David Perdue of Georgia to slash legal immigration from 1 million to 500,000 per year. If successful, this would represent a historic interruption of the post-1965 pro-immigration consensus: the first reduction in numbers since 1965 and a return to immigration levels not seen since the 1960s. In addition to its practical ramifications, the move is pregnant with symbolism because it politicizes legal immigration, a topic once considered outside the Overton Window of acceptable debate in American politics.

Between the Wall, cuts to legal immigration and the fate of the DREAMers — whose Obama-era protection from deportation was set to expire — immigration had become the central point of contention in American politics. In January 2018, the Democrats and Republicans failed to agree over the fate of the DREAMers, whom the Republicans promised to protect in exchange for concessions on the Wall and reductions in legal immigration. This produced a government shutdown. In effect, the Democrats were willing to see government — traditionally a Democratic bastion — go unfunded to force the Republicans to grant unconditional protection to the DREAMers. This tactic failed, and while an extension was passed, a further shutdown remains a possibility. Meanwhile the minority of pro-immigration Republicans in Congress joined with the Democrats to rebuff Trump’s immigration proposals, preventing the Trump administration from getting the votes they needed despite the Republicans’ congressional majority. As a result, the newly ascendancy populist wing of the Republican Party is attempting to oust pro-immigration Republicans in local primaries to increase the likelihood of immigration restriction succeeding in the future.

Immigration remains a flashpoint for other reasons. In June 2018, facing a spike in Central American child and family refugees, the Trump administration began separating children from parents caught crossing illegally. According to a liberal court ruling, the Flores Agreement, children are not permitted to join parents in detention but must be released to accredited childcare or sponsors. This means children are divided from criminal parents as a matter of course. Thus when illegal immigration becomes a crime and parents are detained, more children wind up with extended family or carers. Trump’s decision to alter first-time illegal crossing from a civil misdemeanour to a criminal felony did not invent the practice of separation but it did increase the number of family separations by over 2,000 in a six-week period, a much higher rate than under the Obama or Bush administrations.131 A majority of Americans oppose the policy of separation, but a narrow majority also blame migrant parents more than Trump. In both instances, opinion splits sharply along partisan lines. For instance, 72 per cent of Trump voters deemed separations acceptable compared to only 47 per cent of Clinton voters; 83 per cent of Trump voters said parents of migrants were to blame for separations, compared to only 19 per cent of Clinton voters.132 The separations also led to polarized reporting, which implied that separations were a new tactic designed to
increase deterrence. Unfortunately, parts of the American mainstream media – which is reliable despite having a liberal tilt – allowed emotion to run away with the truth. In one case, Time magazine’s cover showed a crying child looking up at President Trump. This was based on a picture which had gone viral, and which Time claimed, erroneously, involved the child being dragged from its parents. Even after publishing a correction, the magazine continued to defend the publication of the photo. Given Trump’s oft-repeated and usually false charge of ‘fake news’, Time’s refusal to admit it made a mistake is disheartening.133

Trump’s move is part of a series of reforms to end “catch and release”, an approach which permits illegal immigrants to enter society as their cases are processed, which often results in them disappearing into the US. Ideally, families would remain intact as asylum cases are adjudicated, but this can take years due to a backlogged system. Meanwhile, the 1997 Flores ruling and 2016 follow-up decision stipulate that children may be held for no more than twenty days, whether alone or as part of a family. It may even be interpreted as encouraging children to be separated and sent to relatives rather than remaining in custody with their parents. While Bush and Obama opted to allow the families of those caught crossing illegally the first time to remain intact until the twenty-day limit expired, then be released into the country, Trump initially chose the harsher alternative of separating the children, which expedites the processing of adult claims – most of which fail – to a month or two. Many argue the separations were designed to act as a deterrent, but it’s also true the administration was compelled by liberal judicial decisions to separate families if it wished to speed up asylum processing and avoid releasing claimants into the US. A subsequent agreement between the government and ACLU lawyers enabled interned parents to waive the Flores mandatory-separation provision, allowing them to be reunited with their children beyond the twenty-day limit. The upshot is that Trump’s administration moved the enforcement vs humanitarianism dial in the direction of the former.134

Some claim Trump’s policy was spearheaded by Jeff Sessions and Stephen Miller. Regardless, it produced the tragic separation of thousands of children from parents, resulting in anguished scenes which were broadcast on television. The combination of Trump’s enforcement policies, an underfunded asylum system and liberal judicial rulings caught the children in a vice. Democrats and some Republicans railed against the measure, while the administration was accused of using the kids as pawns in a struggle to secure backing for the Wall and deter future migrants. It’s fair to say that the Trump administration should have anticipated the increase in scale and acted sooner to build more facilities for family detention to avoid having to separate families. Following adverse coverage, Trump responded with an executive order doing precisely this – though the action will most likely violate the judicial rulings mandating family (read: child) detention periods of under twenty days. The saga is not over.

A more humane solution that has a fairly high success rate in ensuring claimants turn up for their asylum hearings is ankle bracelets for those released pending their hearings, though it is not clear if Trump is willing to stomach the 20 per cent slippage rate. Is the problem similar to the ones which led to the EU-Turkey deal and Australia’s “Stop the Boats” policy? Namely, that if people can enter, make an asylum claim, and stay, this will incentivize others, overloading the system. Perhaps. Yet it is unclear whether Latin America is poor enough or demographically buoyant enough to generate a migrant crisis: the million refugees from chaotic post-Chavez Venezuela have opted for Colombia and Brazil, while Nicaraguans prefer Costa Rica. This leaves only Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, three relatively small entities, as source countries. Even here, Guatemalans sometimes choose Belize, rather than the US. Relatively prosperous Costa Rica and Panama are not far away.

More broadly, a sensible compromise on the fate of the country’s 11 million undocumented is needed. The idea of an amnesty or “path to citizenship” is anathema to most Republicans. But things need not be so binary. One possibility could be to offer a kind of second-tier citizenship to non-DREAMers who have been in the country for a period of, say, five or ten years. This official status would protect them from deportation (apart from major crimes) and allow them to access social services, jobs, banking and housing. However, in recognition of the fact they broke the law to enter, it would deny them membership in the nation and the right to vote. DREAMer citizens would be unable to sponsor undocumented relatives for citizenship. Alongside border-strengthening policies such as the Wall and employer measures like E-Verify, this would minister to Trump voters’ symbolic desire to preserve a nation of laws while also addressing their concerns about the adverse electoral impact of the new residents. Needless to say, much
depends on future illegal inflows. There is now a greater sensitivity to illegal immigration, but if flows return to the lower levels of 2016, this may make it easier to liberalize policy towards those already in the country.

THE NEW RESTRICTIONIST ELITE

For the first time in recent memory, conservative voters were more fired up about immigration than about religious questions. The secularization of American cultural conservatism was bringing it into line with the European right, for which immigration and Islam had long eclipsed questions of religion. Increasingly, on blogs and in politics, the populist right on both sides of the Atlantic riff off each other. Intellectually, right-wing talk radio, cable news and websites are giving increased oxygen to immigration and fears about the specter of Islam in the West. A new online movement, the alt-right, sprang up around figures like Richard Spencer. Though the alt-right had only limited reach, a less radical but more influential restrictionist elite emerged online and in the right-wing media. Popular right-wing bloggers like Ann Coulter or Mike Cernovich, with followers numbering in the millions, routinely flag violent incidents involving illegal Hispanic immigrants and Muslims.

At the institutional level, Trump adviser Steve Bannon, though forced out of both Trump’s White House and Breitbart News, helped lay the groundwork for the new cultural nationalism. Bannon was influenced by Jean Raspail’s apocalyptic novel about a Third World immigrant invasion of France called The Camp of the Saints (1973) and was well versed in ‘counter-jihadist’ currents of European thought. All successful nationalist movements require cultural elites, and while the new online right is less anchored in class and institutions than the patrician Immigration Restriction League of Henry Cabot Lodge’s day, it still constitutes a coherent network.

Bannon’s anti-immigration approach was important for Trump’s long-shot presidential bid which succeeded against all odds, bringing paleoconservative-cum-alt-right ideas into the heart of the Oval Office. Trump’s outrageous comments about Muslims and Mexicans walked all over the taboos which had previously defined the limits of public discourse. Ethno-traditionalist and racist ‘voice’ had ‘trumped’ elite norms within the Republican Party and wider political arena which viewed the politicization of immigration as deviant. The fact that Trump was elected despite his comments sent a signal to many conservative voters that others shared their antipathy to political correctness and, for some, fear of minorities. This stretched the Overton Window still further, rumbling the sting of anti-racism, emboldening other conservative voters and propelling a self-fulfilling dynamic. In chapter 8, I chart the erosion of the anti-racism norm around multiculturalism and immigration in the West. I also ask whether an expansive definition of racism, which depicts expressions of white group interest as racist, aggravates the white backlash.

Importantly, even Trump has not transgressed the anti-nativism taboo by directly invoking an ethnocultural rationale for restriction, citing materialist worries about terrorism, crime and welfare dependency instead. However, Europe can serve as a safe neutral screen upon which conservative white Americans may project their sense of ethnocultural dispossession. These sublimated ethno-traditional concerns surfaced when Trump visited Britain in July 2018. ‘Allowing the immigration to take place in Europe is a shame,’ he told the Sun, a British tabloid newspaper. ‘I think it changed the fabric of Europe and, unless you act very quickly, it’s never going to be what it was . . . I think you are losing your culture.’

The changing racial demographics of America could permit the Democrats to consistently win first the presidential, then congressional, elections. Alternatively, the Republican establishment may be able to install a pro-immigration primary candidate. But is this a solution? With no federal outlet for white identity concerns or ethno-traditional nationalism, and with a return to policies of multiculturalism and high immigration which are viewed as a threat to these identities, it’s possible the culturally conservative section of the US population could start viewing the government as an enemy. This is an old trope in American history and could pose a security problem. It is also how violent ethnic conflict sometimes ignites. For instance, the British-Protestant majority in Northern Ireland, where parties run on ethnic lines, meant Irish Catholics lost every election in the province between 1922 and the abolition of the Northern Ireland provincial government in 1972. This lack of political representation produced alienation which helped foment the civil war in 1969. What happens if rural and red-state America is
permanently frozen out of power when it considers itself the repository of authentic Americanism?

The American hinterland is unlikely to support white terrorism, but Republican states or rural districts may become openly antagonistic towards the 'alien' federal government and the cities. As I'll argue, it would be far better if a transracial 'white' or 'American' majority could be forged which bridges rural and urban, as occurred when the largely rural Protestant population fused with predominantly urban Catholics and Jews to form a new white majority between the 1960s and 1980s.