



Migration Supporters Worry China's Epidemic Could Reduce Immigration

Neil Munro

March 16, 2020

“The Coronavirus Is Killing Globalization as We Know It,” says a headline at ForeignPolicy.com by Phillippe Legrain, a self-described “cosmopolitan” supporter of migration, and an aide to left-wing European politicians.

“The outbreak has been a gift to nativist nationalists and protectionists, and it is likely to have a long-term impact on the free movement of people and goods,” Legrai worried in a March 12 article. He continued:

Much of this disruption may be temporary. But the coronavirus crisis is likely to have a lasting impact, especially when it reinforces other trends that are already undermining globalization. It may deal a blow to fragmented international supply chains, reduce the hypermobility of global business travelers, and provide political fodder for nationalists who favor greater protectionism and immigration controls.

Once the pandemic and panic abate, those who believe that openness to people and products from around the world is generally a good thing will need to make the case for it in fresh and persuasive ways.

The worries were echoed by Ali Noorani, director of the National Immigration Forum. This pro-migration group is subsidized by employers who are eager to hire refugees and migrants at wages far below the income sought by American parents. The 1918 flu helped build public support for the 1925 Immigration Act that drastically reduced the flow of migrants, he warned in Medium.com, adding:

All of this was long before our globalized, integrated, economy; before the information bubbles that sharply define public opinion; and, most importantly, before the rise of today's powers that look to demagogue immigrants and immigration.

Already, one side of the narrative is shaped by claims the virus came from a backward, corrupt, unclean China, facilitated by Democrats' open-borders ideology, only to be stopped by travel bans.

What is stopping the rhetoric getting even worse?

Noorani's NIF is backed by companies such as Walmart, because it helps raise the labor supply and the inflow of new consumers. He and his allies are already facing growing public opposition to legal and illegal migration, which transfers wealth from young wage-earners to older shareholders, and from the heartland to the coastal states.

As Trump and the federal government try to mitigate the disease via "social distancing," Noorani writes:

a consequence of social distancing is, well, social distancing. As Lyman Stone wrote in Foreign Policy, "Bereft of work, school, public gatherings, sports and hobbies, or even the outside world at all, humans do poorly. We need the moral and mental support of communities to be the decent people we all aspire to be." Churches take their services online, schools close, sporting events are shuttered. The political and social divide that defines our times grows wider.

Into the [political] vacuum created by these necessary measures [against the disease] will step powerful forces. Their goal will be to breed mistrust, fan the flames of xenophobia and turn Americans against "the other."

Democrats have begun trying to prevent any political link between Americans' immigration policy and the Chinese epidemic, usually by stigmatizing critics of migration as mentally ill "xenophobes."

"The global response to COVID-19 has made clear that the fear of contracting disease has an ugly cousin: xenophobia," claimed a March 4 report at NPR. "As the coronavirus has spread from China to other countries, anti-Asian discrimination has followed closely behind."

"Nationalism is the exactly wrong approach to take to a global pandemic, where the solution requires a worldwide pooling of medical resources," the Nation declared March 13, as many nations around the world shut their borders to foreign travelers.

"We have, right now, a crisis with the coronavirus," Biden said in Iowa, according to a February 1 report in TheHill.com. "This is no time for Donald Trump's record of hysteria and xenophobia – hysterical xenophobia – and fearmongering to lead the way instead of science."

Other migration activists are hoping the China-origin crisis will help them import more migrants, including Chinese migrants.

"As Congress prepares a legislative response to the [coronavirus] crisis, it should consider completely exempting all pharmaceutical researchers and scientists as well as doctors and physicians from the H-1B and green card limits and expediting their processing," says an op-ed by David Bier, an advocate at the Cato Institute. The institute is a libertarian advocacy center founded by an open borders champion, Charles Koch.

The federal government should respond to the epidemic by putting roughly 1.2 million Indians — some of whom are doctors — on a fast-track to green cards and citizenship, says Immigration Voice, an activist group for Indian contract workers who hold white-collar jobs in the United States.

The group is aggressively lobbying for passage of a Senate bill S.386, by Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), that would reward hundreds of thousands of Indian graduates for taking jobs from American graduates.

The lobbying is directed at Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill), who recognizes that the gain for Silicon Valley's imported Indian workforce would shrink the supply of green cards for scientists and graduates from many other countries.

Immigration does accelerate economic growth by providing more consumers, house buyers, renters, and cheaper workers. The extra population pushes up real estate prices, creates new companies, boosts sales, grows profits, and supercharges growth on Wall Street for investors, shareholders, and company owners — especially if family wages stall or fall amid the artificial supply of immigrant labor.

The damaging impact of immigration on Americans' wages has been admitted by independent academics, the National Academies of Science, the Congressional Budget Office, executives, more academics, New York Times reporters, state officials, unions, more business executives, lobbyists, employees, the Wall Street Journal, federal economists, Goldman Sachs, oil drillers, Wall Street analysts, fired professionals, legislators, construction workers, New York Times subscribers, Robert Rubin, and even by the Bank of Ireland.