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## Trump might not have gotten his ‘Muslim ban.’ But he sure got his ‘extreme vetting.’

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Three years ago, President Trump called for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.” Over time, this idea, in his words, “morphed into” various other policies that he calls “extreme vetting.” Despite challenges, courts have largely allowed these policies to take effect, and the results are now evident: The president is achieving his stated aim of slashing entries of Muslims into the United States.

A new analysis from the Cato Institute — based on data from the State Department — makes the facts clear. On refugee policy — the area where the president has the most discretion to enact his vision — his administration has almost completely shut out Muslims.

From 2016 to 2018, the government cut admissions for Muslim refugees — which Trump has called a “Trojan horse” designed to bring down America — by 91 percent. In 2016, the government accepted nearly 40,000 Muslim refugees around the world, compared with just 3,000 in 2018. And while refugee admissions overall have plummeted, the Muslim share dropped from 45 percent to 15 percent, meaning it’s fallen at an even faster rate. This reverses a prior trend: From 2009 to 2016, the Obama administration more than doubled Muslim refugee admissions.

This extends to legal immigration as well. The State Department fortunately does not require visa applicants to record their religion in applying for visas (imagine how Trump, who once justified his proposed ban on his stated belief that “Islam hates us,” might use that information). Nonetheless, it is clear from data on nationality of that visa approvals for Muslims have fallen.

Visa approvals for immigrants from the world’s 48 majority-Muslim countries plummeted 30 percent since 2016, amounting to 35,000 fewer immigrants from these countries in 2018. This, too, translates to a fall in the share of total immigrant visas from these countries (from 19 percent in 2016 to 15 percent this year) and reverses a trend of growing approvals for such applicants during the Obama administration. Most of this decline can be attributed to a fall in family-sponsored immigration — what Trump refers to as “chain migration.”

A similar trend has played out for temporary visitors — tourists, students and guest workers — as well. Almost 155,000 fewer people traveled to the United States from the Muslim world this past year than in 2016, an 18 percent drop. Fewer visitors for business or pleasure explain about three quarters of this decline; fewer guest workers and students explain the rest.

These declines are primarily policy driven. Trump has total authority over the refugee program and has made a conscious decision to cut the refugee program to the smallest size in its history.

And even within this cap, the administration has deprioritized Muslim immigrants — especially from Syria.

Since January 2017, Trump has also targeted at various times eight specific majority-Muslim countries — Chad, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Somalia and Yemen — with a “travel ban,” which prohibited entries from those countries unless the applicants fit into narrow exceptions. The decline in approvals for these countries were much steeper: 62 percent for visitors and 70 percent for immigrants.

The Cato Institute calculates that the travel ban countries explain two-thirds of the decline in immigrants and 28 percent of the decline for visitors. Three of those countries — Chad, Iraq and Sudan — are now off the list. While the immigrant visa approvals for Chad and Sudan are back up, Iraqis were still down 42 percent in 2018. This highlights that policies at work are much broader than the highly publicized ban.

The administration might not have gotten the “Muslim ban” Trump promised, but it clearly found other ways to achieve the results he wanted by implementing “extreme vetting.” Immigrants from majority-Muslim countries have been reporting that their applications seem to disappear into an “administrative processing” hole — code for extra security screening.

The government has also doubled or even tripled the length of immigration forms with vague new “security” questions such as, “Have you ever been arrested . . . or detained by any law enforcement officer?” Many people might say, “No,” but does “detained” include at airports? These legally complex forms are costly to fill out and result in longer delays and more denials.

These policies are based on the mistaken view that Muslim Americans are a significant threat to our country. Yet the evidence shows that any threat they pose is minuscule. The annual likelihood of being killed in a terrorist attack by a foreigner since 1975 is just 1 in 3.6 million. No one from the travel ban countries, nor any Muslim refugee, has killed anyone in a terrorist attack in the United States in more than 40 years.

While the risks from Muslim immigrants are insignificant, the costs of keeping them out are real. Not only do Americans lose out on the economic benefits that immigrants and visitors provide — through purchases, employment and entrepreneurship — but also we lose an essential principle that have guided America since its founding: that America is a home for all faiths.

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