



# Big Ideas: On deportations, emperors and college dropouts

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*Alex Nowrasteh for [Cato at Liberty](#)*: It's become clear over the last few months that something very funny is going on with immigration enforcement statistics. ... The data generally show that interior enforcement, what most people commonly think of as “deportations” (but also includes I-9, Secure Communities, and E-Verify), has declined as a percentage of total removals. Many of the removals appear to be unlawful immigrants apprehended by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and then turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for removal -- a trend that began in 2012 and accelerated in 2013. That transfer makes it appear as if there was more internal enforcement than there really was. The administration is therefore deporting an increasing number of recent border crossers and a decreasing number of unlawful immigrants apprehended in the interior.

It appears, then, that President Obama’s reputation for severe interior enforcement was earned for 2009, 2010, and 2011 but is somewhat unjustified in 2012 and 2013. ...

A decrease in interior immigration enforcement relative to increased border enforcement does not signal the end of immigration enforcement, as so many are hyperbolically claiming. Interior and border immigration enforcement are substitutes, but border enforcement is much more efficient at actually deterring unauthorized immigration — the actual strategic goal of immigration enforcement.

## LET'S NOT BE LIKE THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

*Matt Mitchell for the Mercatus Center's [Neighborhood Effects](#)*: Whenever someone suggested a new innovation or an improvement, Empress Maria Theresa had a favorite response: "Leave everything as it is." As the sovereign of most of central Europe during the 18th century, the Habsburg empress epitomized absolutist rule, claiming that her powers had no limit.

But as her statement demonstrates, she clearly understood that her powers were limited by new and disruptive innovations. Her husband, Holy Roman Emperor Francis I, understood this as well. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson relate that when an English philanthropist suggested some social reforms for the benefit of Austria's poorest, one of Francis's assistants replied: "We do not desire at all that the great masses shall become well off and independent. ... How could we otherwise rule over them?" (A&R, 224).

This is why these Habsburg rulers did everything they could to stand athwart innovation. ...

Francis went so far as to block new technologies. For instance, he banned the adoption of new industrial machinery until 1811. He also refused to permit the building of steam railroads. ...

Unfortunately, history is replete with examples of despots who stood in the way of innovation. In Russia, Nicholas I enacted laws restricting the number of factories and "forbade the opening of any new cotton or woolen spinning mills and iron foundries." (A&R, 229) And in the Ottoman Empire, sultans banned the use of printing. So stultifying was the effect that "well into the second half of the 19th century, book production in the Ottoman Empire was still primarily undertaken by scribes hand-copying existing books." (A&R, 214).

The centuries and the miles that separate us from these episodes give us some objectivity and allow us to see them for what they are: the naked exercise of government force to obstruct innovation for the benefit of a few entrenched interests. But how different are these episodes, really, from the stories we read in today's newspapers?

## DROMOUTS SHOW FAILINGS OF COLLEGE SYSTEM

*Diana Carew for the [Progressive Policy Institute](#)*: No group epitomizes the failings of the current college system more than those who enrolled in college but failed to graduate -- college dropouts. Though often left out of the conversation, the latest figures show that the average four-year completion rate for those entering four-year colleges was 38.6 percent and that the six-year completion rate is still just 58.8 percent (rates are lower for two-year schools, but many transfer to other institutions). ...

College dropouts face the worst struggle of all. On average, they make little more than those with a high school diploma but are still saddled with thousands in student debt. They are at the highest risk of defaulting on their student loans, by some estimates up to four times more likely than

graduates. They are the most vulnerable in terms of financial security, from slipping into a hole they cannot climb out of.

The large share of college dropouts is evidence that the current structure of postsecondary education as the main vehicle for workforce preparation isn't working.

Their fate is also an indication that the future of college may — and should — look very different. The ongoing revolution of low-cost, high-speed broadband makes education more accessible, affordable, and customizable. This, coupled with decreasing returns on the four-year college model, should lead to more post-secondary pathways into the workforce (such as German-style “apprenticeships”