



## Cato Institute on Welcoming Immigrants from China

Gary Chodorow

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“The United States Should Welcome Immigrants from China,” proclaims an article on the Cato Institute website by Alex Nowrasteh and John Glaser.

The authors see that competition with China is dominating America’s foreign policy discourse in a way reminiscent of the Cold War.

The authors blame this poisoned discourse for President Biden’s failure to overturn anti-Chinese immigration policies adopted by the Trump administration. Top examples include:

- Suspending entry of F-1 student and J-1 exchange visitors with ties to entities ties to China’s “military-civil fusion strategy.” This overly broad policy bars persons who have studied or worked at universities or companies that have received Chinese military funding. That’s analogous to China banning people who have attended University of California or MIT because those universities receive Defense Department funding.
- Broadening the scope of Chinese F-1 graduate students in fields related to science and technology who need “special clearance from multiple U.S. agencies” that are “expected to take months for each visa application.”

The thesis of the article is that to the extent that China poses a serious threat to the United States, policymakers should be clamoring to liberalize immigration with China rather than restrict it. That was a winning strategy during the Cold War with the Soviet Union:

“Starting with President Truman, who ordered the admission of 80,000 refugees from Soviet-occupied Poland, the Baltic countries, and from areas of Southern Europe where communist insurgencies were active in 1945, and ending with the Lautenberg Amendment of 1990, the U.S. government consistently liberalized refugee and asylum policy for those fleeing communism. They let in millions of refugees and asylum seekers from countries as varied as Hungary, China, Greece, the Soviet Union, and Cuba....

“Welcoming immigrants from communist countries produced important economic, political, moral, and propaganda victories during the Cold War that showcased the superiority of individual liberty and capitalism over communism.

The Cato article argues that if China poses a technological threat then an “obvious response is to channel the most productive and educated Chinese citizens to our shores.” Espionage is cited by some as a reason to limit immigration. But the article argues that losses due to espionage, and in particular stolen national security secrets, have been low, whereas Chinese immigrants are making “huge contributions to research and development” that will “unlock economic and technological innovation going forward.”

The Cato Institute’s policy recommendations typically lean towards libertarianism. What do you think of this call to “use the Cold War immigration playbook to liberalize immigration with China”?

Sure there is Cold War-like rhetoric being tossed about. But in some ways, China is not analogous to the USSR. China is an economic power that the USSR never was. And Xi Jinping’s line about the great rejuvenation of China on the world stage is probably embraced by China’s populace more fervently than Soviet propaganda was embraced by people in the USSR. Do these distinctions impact the authors’ prescriptions for U.S. immigration policy?