

CHAPTER 8

Domestic Interests as Explanations

Most explanations for immigration policy, for increasing restrictiveness or for relaxation, focus on the accessible and obvious material interests that legislators and business people hold. Economic interests, such as competition for jobs—presumably good for employers and bad for unions—or welfare benefits, and legislative interests, such as capturing the votes of an ethnic constituency or voting with the party, have been mentioned often as the main, if not only, reasons for policy change. The business community is interested in profits; therefore, they must lobby for openness when profits fall. Labor is interested in wage levels; therefore, it must lobby for restriction when unemployment rises. Legislators are interested in reelection; therefore, they must respond primarily to party demands, public opinion about immigrants, or immigrant interest groups. This view pervades attention to immigration policy among journalists, scholars, and talk-show hosts. It is mistaken in the main, although it captures part of the truth. In fact, congressional votes on immigration policy have never divided along party lines or on regional lines, and the times of increasing restrictionism have been times of economic boom in the United States. An examination of the evidence shows that regional politics and economic forces have strongly influenced enforcement but have had little effect on policy. During periods of high unemployment, for example, apprehensions and deportations have increased, as have exclusions. Federal policy has not changed during these times. This shows that congressional and public arguments about perceived threat do not shield “real” electoral or economic motives; in fact, they do not even correlate with them. Public opinion is random or reactive, not causal. Domestic elections and economic ups and downs explain change in enforcement, while foreign threat perception explains change in policy.

Partisanship

That legislators usually vote with their party is no secret. Presumably, a representative elected on a particular ticket chose to join that party

because he or she shared most of the party's ideals and concerns, or at least shared them more than he or she shared those of the alternative parties. Legislators who side against their party risk losing general electoral support from the party as well as consideration on future votes. For these reasons, both the timing of immigration policy changes and the outcome of particular votes should be explainable with reference to party. When the party associated with isolationism or protectionism took power, efforts to restrict immigration would start; when the party associated with internationalism or laissez-faire took power, efforts to open immigration would begin. Since legislative agendas are crowded and respond to ad hoc crises, party divisions should be clearer on specific votes than they are on the timing of change.

Major efforts to revamp immigration policy began in 1908, 1919, 1941, 1946, 1962, 1978, and 1982.¹ In 1908, Republicans had dominated both houses of Congress and had claimed the presidency for thirteen years, or five Congresses. From 1913 through 1919, this situation was reversed; Democrat Woodrow Wilson led a Democratic Congress. During his tenure in 1917, the first law to set a numerical limit on immigration passed, over his veto. The timing of neither lends support to the new-party hypothesis. Since Franklin Roosevelt led a Democratic Congress for eight years before restriction of Chinese immigrants became a sustained political (rather than a special administrative) issue, the new-party hypothesis is also unconfirmed in that case. Such is also true of the post-World War II debate over immigration, which eventually led to the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. From 1947 to 1949, Republicans dominated both houses of Congress, but for sixteen years before this and four years after this, Democratic presidents had led Democratic Congresses. What to do about immigration policy became a central issue in 1946, immediately after World War II—indeed, debate about Europeans as well as Asians started during the war—and continued through the beginning of the Eisenhower presidency.

Two episodes, close together in time, lend some support to this hypothesis. When President Carter was elected in 1976, he was able to facilitate legislation desired by the longtime Democratic majority. Whether he or the legislators set the agenda, the constellation of party votes was suddenly in their favor. Less clear but also tending to support this hypothesis is the legislative change following the Carter presidency. Ronald Reagan's election left a Democratic majority in the House but carried a Republic majority into the Senate for the first time in three decades. In the case of the beginnings of both Reagan's and Carter's presidencies, immigration found its way to the agenda one year after the change of party. Two other episodes lend support to a related idea, though one that

does not further the null hypothesis. The fact that the first major changes in general immigration policy happened just after Wilson's defeat appears to lend support to the idea that while discussion of restriction might be unrelated to partisan rivalries, perhaps action on it is. The discussion of immigration policy that started in 1961 essentially continued the earlier debate that had been abandoned after McCarran-Walter's passage in 1952, but no action was taken on it until 1965, when the large Democratic majorities took responsibility for passing the major series of Great Society bills. Given the simple evidence presented, the strongest case that can be made for the new-party hypothesis about when immigration finds its way to the legislative agenda is that it might hold from the late 1970s through the 1980s.

Party divisions should, in this view, be clearer on individual votes. Once an issue got all the way to a roll call vote, party stands should be clear and party leaders should have made the stakes clear to their members. The evidence from roll call votes on bills to revise immigration policy is mixed. Partisan divisions are sometimes significant and sometimes not. When they are, however, regional bloc voting proves to be a better predictor than party. As with the new-party hypothesis, the degree to which this rule holds changes over time. Table 11 summarizes the degree to which party differences and regional differences show up in the seventeen major congressional roll call votes on immigration. The votes and descriptive statistics describing them are contained in appendix B. In summary, for each vote was calculated the deviation from what one would expect if region or party were to have no influence in determining how legislators voted. For the seventeen major votes on immigration policy, region was significant in thirteen, party in seven. In fact, region was a stronger predictor than party in every vote up to the three House votes of the 1980s: those to pass IRCA, to affirm the IRCA conference report, and to pass the 1990 legislation.

Splits along party lines sometimes help to explain the passage of a particular bill. In the 1980s, legislators' party affiliations were good predictors of the way that they would vote on bills. Before then, however, region systematically does better at anticipating the way a representative would vote; it also produced a chi-square larger than that for party for all

TABLE 11. Party and Region in Congressional Voting

Region significant (<.05)	13
Party significant (<.05)	7
Region chi-square higher than party	14
Party chi-square higher than region	3

but three bills: the Refugee Act of 1980, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, and the Immigration Act of 1990. In each case, the difference was in the House vote and occurred in the later periods. Given this basic evidence, the strongest case that can be made for the hypothesis that partisanship drives voting is that as of the 1950s it became one among other factors, such as region, that help to predict voting, and it appears to be a better predictor for the period of the Reagan administration than for the earlier and later years.

Public Opinion

Systematic polls of American opinion about immigration policy do not exist. Good survey data are gathered at special times, when immigration has become a hot issue. For this reason, the data that are available describe unusual, unrepresentative, and irregular periods. Nevertheless, they might suggest a pattern of variation that corresponds to change in legislative attention to and action on immigration policy. Since data are not available before 1937, public opinion changes cannot help to illuminate early efforts to establish an immigration ceiling. However, in later legislative change, they should clarify the role that public wishes play.

By “change in public opinion,” one can mean a change in the proportions of people with one or another conviction or one can mean a qualitative change in the nature of the opinions that people hold. Most of the data is directed solely at quantitative change, and a minority of it asks about specific issues or groups. Sometimes pollsters asked the public about generic immigrants, although they did so when immigration was on the national agenda because it began to come disproportionately from one region of the world. For this reason, an unspoken and unwritten agenda often lurks behind the questions and answers. Responses about particular clusters of immigrants reveal an attitude in which the amount and identity of prospective immigrants are mixed. For example, probably the only famous opinion poll on American immigration policy, taken in early 1938, asked about a group of refugees from Nazi Germany.² As would later be proven typical, 5 percent of respondents indicated that quotas should be raised, 9 percent did not know, 18 percent believed that the refugees should be admitted but without allowing quotas to be raised, and 68 percent of respondents agreed that “with conditions as they are, we should keep them out.” Later, higher percentages insisted that the country should not allow any additional European refugees to enter.³

Edwin Harwood points out that “Americans are restrictionist mainly on the quantity issue—how many immigrants to accept—rather than on

the quality issue—which nationalities should be allowed to enter.”⁴ For example, although when asked how they feel about the general level of immigration, Americans are restrictive, when asked about any individual for whom details are given, for example, a French-Canadian farmer or a young Kenyan businessman, they believe that the individual should be allowed to enter. He also noted that the proportion of Americans who believe that current levels of immigration are too low is always between 4 and 8 percent. What varies is the balance between those who believe that immigration is too high and those who have no opinion.⁵ American opinion is remarkably constant regardless of when it has been sampled. It is a “variable” that really does not vary. Table 12 displays the results of bottom-line polls conducted by Gallup or the Roper Center.

Similar results come from polls about specific crises and specific groups. Americans do distinguish between allies and enemies, although they are on balance still opposed to allowing just anyone in. For example, regarding the Chinese, American allies in World War II, a poll asked: “After the war, would you like to see the number of Chinese allowed to come into this country, be figured on the same basis as for people from European countries, or should the Chinese be barred as at present?” A full 50 percent of the respondents said “barred.” Eleven percent had no opinion, while the remaining 39 said that the Chinese ought to be allowed to come in.⁶ With respect to Vietnamese refugees resettling in the United States, about 30 percent in each poll approved and 50 percent disapproved.⁷

A majority of Americans is never in favor of liberalizing immigration ceilings, but that majority does sometimes liberalize its views by shifting to uncertainty. For example, in 1965 as Congress debated the bill that would

TABLE 12. Public Opinion About Immigration Levels (percentage of those agreeing)

Response	1953	1965	1977	1993	1995
Increased	13	8	7	6	8
Present level	37	39	37	27	28
Decreased	39	33	42	65	62
No opinion	11	20	14	2	4

Source: 1953: Roper Center, April 1955; 1965: Gallup Opinion Index (August 1965) 3; 1977: Gallup Opinion Index (June 1977) 143; USGALLUP.422002.R06 July 9–11, 1993; USGALLUP.95JUL7.R25 July 7–15, 1995.

eliminate race and national origin as the basis for admissions, Gallup asked the public whether they would “favor or oppose changing the law so that people would be admitted on the basis of their occupational skills rather than on the basis of the country they come from” and found 51 percent in favor and 32 percent opposed. At the same time, while Congress adjusted preferences to give relatives 80 percent of the available slots, Americans responded 71 to 21 percent that it was “very important” that a new immigrant have occupational skills.⁸ The evidence makes it difficult to avoid Harwood’s conclusion that public opinion lags behind official policy.

Interest Groups

Probably the two most widely held convictions of both academic analysts and the public are that immigrant interest groups and unemployment swings drive changes in American immigration policy. The strength of the belief in the influence that immigrant groups wield is oddly high given its logical inconsistency. Clearly, a group of immigrants ready to lobby for their compatriots would not be in the country in the first place unless the country’s policy already allowed their immigration. Cubans cannot lobby in the United States unless they are in the United States, and they cannot be in the United States unless someone besides Cubans has facilitated their entry. More sensible is the position that immigrants, like other interest groups, gel around policies that are put in place for other reasons and defend the policy in which they have acquired an interest. That such immigrant groups are in favor of increasing immigration or defending high immigration levels is a widespread corollary, also assumed. Why is unclear, since immigrant groups are diverse enough to include as many whose interest is in excluding further immigration as who desire to include others. In any case, immigrant interest groups might help to entrench policy once formulated, but they cannot cause initial change.

Unemployment

Unemployment affects all Americans, regardless of their origins. A commonly held view about changes in legal immigration levels holds that increases in unemployment will prompt demands for restriction.⁹ The assumed causal mechanism is straightforward. Unemployment among citizens rises because alien labor, which requires compensation below the level acceptable to citizens, elbows domestic workers out of their jobs. Increasing the supply of cheap labor decreases the demand for highly paid

local workers, who are laid off, fired, or simply not hired. Growing groups of disgruntled native laborers pressure their legislators to stop immigration. Meanwhile, big business, assumed to benefit from the higher profit levels that low-wage workers allow, lobbies for open immigration, especially of those likely not to become unionized. The periodic dominance first of big business, then of big labor, drives the cycle of openness and restriction in American immigration policy.

No evidence supports the hypothesis that unemployment affects immigration policy. At no time did the U.S. Congress revamp immigration policy during or immediately after a period of high unemployment. Congress makes major changes during the country's best, not worst, years. In the 1920s, while the economy boomed, Congress debated, implemented, then revised two major laws to restrict immigration. It was not during the Depression but during the post-World War II boom that immigration next became a central political issue. When Congress passed the 1965 reforms, unemployment and inflation were both minimal. Again, during the years of oil shocks and stagflation, immigration was far from the congressional agenda. Not until the mid-1980s, after the worst recession, did the legislature again turn its attention to the question of restriction. Given this pattern, it should be unsurprising that the unemployment level varies in a direction opposite that predicted by this hypothesis.¹⁰ As unemployment goes down, immigration ceilings also tend to go down.

Of course, it is possible that the public and legislators respond to other economic indicators. Following the same logic, one might argue that large trade deficits, or excessive dependence on imports and exports compared with other countries, might have the same effect on local economic interests, or at least on fears about how those interests will be affected. In a regression to determine the weight of economic indicators generally in explaining policy changes, however, none of the proximate variables that could be supposed to affect public perceptions of scarcity is predictive as this hypothesis expects; unemployment seems to be significant but in a direction opposite to that predicted. Such is also true of previous immigration; when it is high in the past, it is likely to be high in the future. And the other significant predictor measures something that no member of the public pays attention to.

Table 13 shows the results of a regression equation using the independent variables that have been suggested to predict the U.S. immigration ceiling. The dependent variable is the legal immigration ceiling as a proportion of the American population. Since the hypotheses about possible causes of immigration change all posit that an event at Time X will prompt change in immigration policy at Time X_{+Y} , a time-series regression weighs the possible Xs, unemployment, economic protection, imports and exports

as proportions of U.S. GNP and of world imports and exports, and the number of countries eligible for a quota, and evaluates how well they predict immigration policy at time X_{+Y} . Since the independent variables here achieved their highest significance when predicting the immigration ceiling three years hence (i.e., $Y = 3$), those are the results that are listed here. Table 13 shows how well these variables do in predicting the immigration ceiling three years later. Because there was no ceiling until 1921, there are 70 (1921 through 1990), rather than 100 (1891 through 1990) datapoints.

The proportion of goods entering the United States as free and dutiable, that is, the overall tariff level, emerges as a helpful and robust predictor. Tariff levels, however, capture two phenomena distinct from public perceptions of pocketbook issues: they indicate the outcome of social struggles over domestic economic protection and show the extent to which foreign goods have been imported in spite of sectoral protection. Tariff levels do affect Americans' incomes, but they do so by operating through prices and exchange rates. In this context, changes in their levels signify changes in institutional openness, not imminent changes in income.

What this regression indicates is that the legal immigration ceiling, as a proportion of the U.S. population, is a reaction to a worsening American economy, whether one defines as central the unemployment of individuals, the degree to which the country's economic performance depends on trade, or the country's relative economic vulnerability. It is predictable knowing the level of economic openness that Congress has chosen to secure; one can say that the legal ceiling is low when, three years earlier, actual immigration and unemployment have been low (not high as the counterhypothesis would predict), and tariff levels have been high.

Shifts in party majorities, public opinion, and unemployment have been supposed to drive immigration restriction. Yet none does. Most

TABLE 13. Explaining the Immigration Ceiling (in relation to the U.S. population)

Variable	Coefficient	Significance
Constant	.001	.717
Unemployment	.0004	.0021
Proportion of free and dutiable imports	-.001	.0108
Exports as a proportion of GNP	-.0011	.9181
Imports as a proportion of GNP	-.012	.3908
U.S. share of world exports	-.000067	.8497
U.S. share of world imports	-.000126	.8460
Actual immigration	.000000039	.0000
Number of sovereign countries eligible for a quota	-.000036	.1453

Note: All of these variables except unemployment and the number of countries are actually residuals of the measure when regressed on time.

immigration votes are better predicted by region than by party affiliation, and the timing of when such issues reach the national agenda does not seem to depend on reversals in dominant majorities. The American public is always opposed to increasing immigration, so there is no variation in this independent variable. The variation that does occur is not between those in favor of and those opposed to immigration, but between those who have an opinion and those who have none—and this shift occurs after the topic has hit the media, not before. Unemployment does not precede major efforts to overhaul immigration policy, but the reverse: unemployment declines before Congress attempts to extend its regulatory control. None of these null hypotheses, as stated, can be supported.

Given this, the obvious question is why the conviction that material domestic interests propel restriction is so widespread and seemingly unshakable. There are two separate, though compatible, ways of answering this question. The first is that economic changes drive two processes close to but fundamentally different from immigration policy: administrative enforcement of the immigration statutes (apprehensions on the border) and the level of nonimmigrant arrivals. Migration responds to economic changes, even if immigration policy does not. Exchange rates affect tourism as well as exports, wage rates affect illegal immigration, and unemployment seems to account for many apprehensions and deportations. People come and go with great rapidity when the economy changes, but they are moving apolitically, not achieving and leaving citizenship.

The second answer involves the same process discussed earlier, whereby interested parties make their arguments in public terms. Legislators frame their arguments for or against restriction with reference to unemployment, public opinion, and deficits. None of these is a plausible driving force since none varies with immigration policy changes or ceilings; they instead are statements of what legislators and the public take to be in the public interest. They are statements of what ought to be valued when contemplating immigration restrictions, not descriptions of what is actually prompting reform. The next section details the connections between nonimmigrant movement and economic changes, while the following one makes a case for interpreting these statements about constituencies and their interests as statements about values.

Economic Fluctuations and Actual Border Activity

Legislators opposed to restricting the number of immigrants have pointed out that immigration has been to a large extent self-regulating. During economic booms, legal immigration rises, nonimmigrant visitors and busi-

ness travelers arrive in higher volumes, and illegal immigration soars. When unemployment and costs rise, immigration drops. Throughout the Depression, for example, not only did immigration drop—in part due to the efforts of the Immigration Service to enforce the “public charge” provision more strictly—but emigration rose, and in 1910, 1915, and then from 1931 to 1936, emigration exceeded immigration, making the flow to the United States negative. During the less severe downturns that characterize later years, delay replaces return migration. Prospective employees delay their applications, and family members wait until their relatives become financially stable before joining them. The year after unemployment rises, immigration declines; the two measures correlate at $-.39$.¹¹ Illegal immigration is also thought to rise during economic booms, though hard data are scarce.

People on business or tourist visas are economic visitors, but those who overstay their visas, or enter without one, edge toward citizenship. The longer they stay in the country and the more ties they establish, the greater their presumptive claim to consideration. Expelling “illegals,” whom the Immigration and Naturalization Service refers to as “undocumented aliens,” reinforces immigrant exclusions. Apprehensions, the prelude to detention and deportation, rise as the American unemployment rate rises.¹² Since the interest in immigration declines when the economy sours, presumably attempts to immigrate illegally also decline. For this reason, increases in apprehensions cannot be taken as indicative of increases in attempts to enter illegally, but must be seen as the symptom of redoubled efforts at enforcement. Apprehensions have in fact increased exponentially.

So have indicators of economic openness, such as the number of non-immigrant visitors and reliance on imports, and measures of average wealth. Separately, levels of apprehensions have somewhat paralleled trends in the domestic economy; in the period since World War II, they correlate with the volume of nonimmigrants (.37), import reliance (.80), and per capita GNP (.49), but only weakly with unemployment. Yet when these variables are each held constant, unemployment emerges as a strong predictor. Table 14 describes the result of a time-series regression to explain apprehension levels. Apprehensions have risen with increases in unemployment and with America's growing market for imports, indicators both taken to connote vulnerability by the media and members of the public as well as by some economists. They have also tended to go up as barriers to trade have disappeared. Felt vulnerability apparently translates into efforts to clarify the citizen population by expelling those who are illegally resident.

If illegal immigration responds as closely to economic fluctuations as

do changes in tourism and business travel, then those who are bent on stopping illegal immigration will have to halt the American economy. If immigrants are consumer durables, nonimmigrants are consumer disposables. Nonimmigrant visitors have entered the United States in such close relation with imports that one could believe that U.S. imports were each hand-carried by foreign couriers. Nonimmigrant travel and import volume correlate at .90 over the past century, or .94 since World War II. Nonimmigrant travel also correlates highly with American reliance on imports (imports as a proportion of GNP), .99 before World War II and .82 after it. Travelers clearly respond to economic booms and might also help to create them. Tourists and business people respond to the exchange rates that trade and productivity determine, but also bring in money, increasing American “exports” of services and goods. The number of travelers correlates highly with per capita GNP (unlagged), at .88, fairly steadily throughout the past century. Figure 10 shows increases in nonimmigrants and imports.

That changes in these migrant categories are so highly correlated with economic fluctuations highlights the extent to which immigration policy intervenes to reconfigure the pattern of who goes where and when. At first glance, migration in response to economic or personal motives appears “natural,” and limits placed on it seem “unnatural.” Yet both are the result of policy consciously pursued. The contrast between what motivates foreigners to come to (and leave) the United States and what motivates legislators to select and exclude potential citizens emerges from the political decision to encourage one type of transborder movement and to discourage the other. Before World War II, isolationism was embedded in trade and in immigration policies. After World War II, the United States helped to create and enforce an order in which countries jointly reduced their barriers to trade, while it helped to cement an order in which they extended their barriers to citizenship. Legislators have allowed economic forces to drive immigration of persons who carry little or no political weight: tourists, students, business people, illegal workers; this is one rea-

TABLE 14. Explaining Apprehensions

Variable	Coefficient	Significance
Constant	-173,700	.0009
Unemployment	34,866	.0000
Free and dutiable imports	-89,737	.0000
Imports as a proportion of GNP	8,132,000	.0000

Note: R^2 is .51 for this regression.

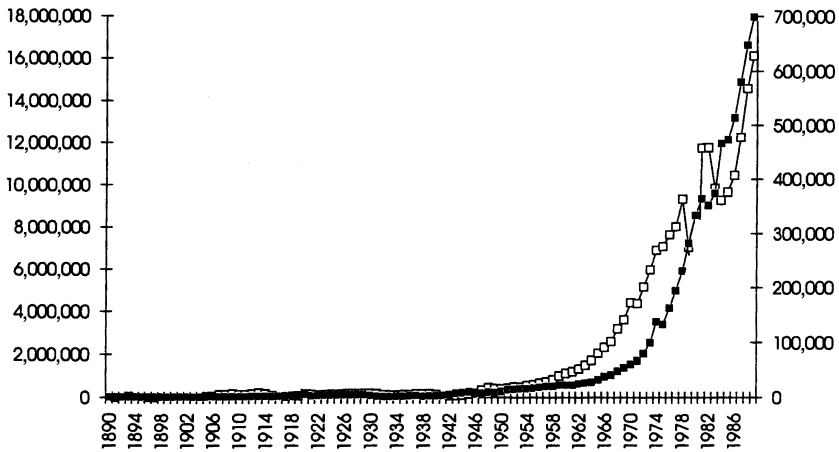


Fig. 10. Nonimmigrants and imports. (Legend: *white boxes*, nonimmigrants; *black boxes*, imports.)

son for the widespread though mistaken belief that economics drives immigration policy.

Unemployment, Public Opinion, and the Public Interest

Another reason for this belief is the conviction that these forces ought to drive immigration policy. Therefore, it is reasoned, they do. This belief persists for two reasons: because some legislators and some parts of the public have an interest in others believing it to be true, or they want it to be true so intensely that they believe it to be true, and because it draws on a shared view that legislators ought to respond to these forces because that is their job; it is in the public interest. Explaining the persistence of many people’s erroneous belief that Jewish lobbies control American policy toward Israel, A. F. K. Organski has argued that “all of the major contributors to the making of American policy . . . find it convenient to believe that it is so.”¹³ The “utility of this illusion” has been great all around. Americans and others viewed Jewish lobbies with additional respect for their skillful use of their power, and legislators gained when their actions were interpreted as responses to their constituencies’ values rather than as duplicitous maneuvers. Lobbyists, legislators, and the public gain in the same way even when they sincerely believe in the positions they espouse, which most must do. If most did not, lying would be irrational because no

one would believe the lies. The analytical mistake is not found in taking people at their word concerning their desires, but in believing that since someone wants change, and change occurs, the desire caused the change. Regarding immigration policy, such could be said not only of organized immigrant groups, who have an interest in receiving credit for American policy toward their countries of origin, but also of a wide selection of individuals, who believe that how they fare personally matters to their elected representatives.

Peers of the unemployed are, however, unlikely to view out-of-work individuals as more powerful because their representatives fight unemployment. Whereas this is a possible motive for an organized group, it is untenable as the explanation for the public's general commitment to the notion that policy ought to take public opinion and unemployment levels into account. Legislators can gain from lip service to this view only if people believe responsiveness to these forces is laudable. Both sincere and insincere appeals to the public interest depend on broad agreement on particular public interest values. In order for hypocrisy to be rational, let alone effective, what one lies about has to be viewed as good. Legislators do not give the reason that they were taking bribes as a defense against accusations of vote trading. There is, also, no reason to believe that the majority with a belief in the public interest excludes elected representatives. Given this, we need to ask why many legislators and members of the public believe that immigration policy should change in response to unemployment and public opinion. Why is this belief enduring and widespread?

Public interest arguments in the United States share certain attributes; that is, while they can be inconsistent, each shares some of a set of characteristics. Some involve democratic norms, some involve loyalty to the Constitution or to statutes qua laws, and some involve an image or myth about the central message of American history or the role of the federal government. Invoking public opinion clearly draws on all three. Representatives are not just supposed to take public opinion into account; pursuing the public good, which is supposedly expressed through public opinion, justifies their jobs. Voting mechanisms force them to listen to their constituents, and American history has been one of broadening equality, in which individual interests and values are good, while "special" or group interests are bad. For all its complexity and qualifications, the injunction to do the public's bidding is so strong that it is assumed to be a motive. Explicitly stating it draws attention to one's involvement at the center of American democracy, the maintenance of which is in the public interest.

Legislators are supposed to pay attention to public opinion, regardless of its content. They are also supposed to care for the common interests

of their constituents, even if the constituents themselves are unaware of those interests. Defense has been justified in this way; so have education and common transportation networks. Employment is another substantive area in which Americans are assumed to have an interest and an opinion, even if they do not express it. As T. H. Marshall has argued, the public has expanded its notion of the government's role in defending the public interest as it has changed its understanding of that interest's content. Having once been predominantly concerned with securing negative liberties, then with positive liberties, governments now are expected to provide substantive goods such as economic welfare; citizens now judge governments in terms of how well they provide material benefits.¹⁴ Among the economic measures that could be used to judge government performance, unemployment stands out as the popular, democratic measure. Efforts to save particular industries can be controversial since doing so might harm other parts of the public, and there is no consensus that protectionism serves the public good, but efforts to bolster general employment receive universal support. When one claims to be working to increase employment, one claims to be serving a public interest in which everyone agrees.

To claim to be acting in these interests is, then, not to describe one's motivations but to connect one's actions with the common interest. Persons advocating a specific change in immigration policy must link either its consequences or the process it requires to public values. This requirement, a familiar one, can be seen operating in the public debate on immigration policy throughout the twentieth century. The arguments that were made usually invoked common values, and the ones that succeeded—or emerged, since the process changed them—always did so. What dominates the public debate before the late 1970s are values articulated normatively. They can be general ethical principles: we must treat all persons alike, persons should be distinguished based only on their past acts, actions should be judged only in terms of their consequences, and so forth. They also can be statements of political value. Sovereignty allows us to realize our essential selves; purity secures the country's place in history; allies and alien soldiers earn inclusion. In both types of case, the central point obviously involves duty and obligation, "value" topics.

But we see that the distinction between interests and values does not differentiate private from public goods. When an interest is invoked, the person doing so engages in the same ritual of identifying with or helping to create a shared definition of the public interest. This has been obscured because of the tendency not only to separate interests and values, but to assume that when an interest is named, it is the real motivation, whereas when a value is named, it is a smoke screen: interests describe, values pre-

scribe. But in neither case does one necessarily describe one's original motivation or indicate one's ideal. In fact, one's true motivations, if they be known, do not matter. They will not influence publicly debated policy unless their fulfillment can be expressed as something demonstrably in the public interest. Whether this requirement simply facilitates the fulfillment of interests that were consistent with the social good when conceived or forces persons whose interests were selfish and narrow to reshape them, the outcome is the same. To accomplish anything, arguments have to connect a policy with common interests. What the phenomenon of invoking immigrant pressure groups, public opinion, and unemployment reveals is that while many "values," such as democratic participation, are in individuals' interests, some "interests," such as employment, are common values. This might be why they orbit the immigration debate so closely.

A final reason for the persistence of the belief that domestic forces drive immigration policy change is the conviction that immigration policy is a domestic policy. Issues thought to be the concern only of local governments are also thought to be influenced only by local circumstances, by pressure groups, processes, and institutions that are essentially domestic. There are two reasons to question this perspective. First, that domestic policies have domestic influences does not follow logically; small countries are dependent on and easily influenced by events beyond their borders, and the large countries able to be self-sufficient seem often precisely because of their power to create connections to others. These conduits become mutually influential. Second, even were the domestic/foreign policy split to be respected, immigration policy is (like trade policy) a "foreign" policy in that it is directed toward—and indeed would make no sense without—an international system lying beyond a country's borders. For all of these reasons, it should be no surprise that explanations grounded in the view that a purely local politics drives immigration policies fare badly in explaining actual change.