

US IMMIGRATION POLICY AND THE ASIAN AMERICANS

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper concerns a public policy. It looks at how the present US immigration policy affects the influx of Asians to the US. Further, the study also looks into the contribution of Asian Americans to US development.

This paper was written in an attempt to understand the observation that Asian Americans today have assumed a stereotyped image that draws both the respect and contempt of some people in the United States. As an input to this study, the author relied much on information from different publications. Personal observations and interviews with Asians in the United States were also conducted.

The so called "economic miracles" sweeping some Southeast Asian and Far Eastern countries have presented opportunities to thousands of intelligent and highly motivated young Asians to study in the United States. Their excellent academic performances in some of the best US schools have drawn the impression that Asians are a smart people.

The inflow of inexpensive but good quality Asian products into the US market has also generated mixed reactions. While this has benefited American consumers, it has also spawned unfavorable responses from a great number of workers and firm owners who face the threat of being eased out from business in the ensuing competition.

Japan is today's Asian Trojan horse in the US market. What the *Kamikaze* fighters failed to achieve in the past Pacific war of more than forty years ago is now being realized by Japanese corporate executives who have embarked on a buying spree of real estate in the United States as a part of the continuing expansion of the Japanese economic empire.

The Japanese, the Koreans and some other Asians are not only beating some US firms in the world market but they are also winning the war right in the US domestic market where their cars, electronics products and textiles are favored by American consumers. This phenomenon has helped to build up the image of the Asians as hardworking, versatile and over-achieving workers.

Aside from being known for their impressive achievements, Asians in the United States are also notorious for engaging in gangsterism and illicit activities. Some Filipinos and Vietnamese for example are known drug traffickers. Chinese syndicates are also known for smuggling illegal aliens into the US. Many Filipinos are perennial headaches of the US immigration with their talent for playing a never-ending game of "hide and seek" with immigration agents.

The Asian community in the US is still small and well dispersed in different states to constitute a political power to reckon with. But the cumulative impact of some Asian countries on the US economy and the Asian's conspicuous competitive activities in the academe, the various professions and the business arena are contributory factors in the building up of the Asian image in the US.

The present US immigration policy favors an increase of the Asian population in the US. As a country of immigrants, the United States can still absorb many immigrants in the future. Any change in the immigration policy can have a tremendous impact on the Asian population in the US and consequently on the US economy. It is therefore important that any amendment to the immigration policy should consider the potential and actual contribution of Asians on the US economy. This is very important if the United States is to remain equal to the challenge to continue to be a superpower in the 21st century.

II. *The Development of the US Immigration Policy*

The United States is a country of immigrants. Due to the opportunities it offers, there are more immigrants who enter the US annually than in all other countries combined.¹ The unabated influx of immigrants has prompted the US Congress to pass immigration laws that make up today's statutory mandates of the US immigration policy.

Since the birth of the United States, policy-makers had been concerned with the nagging issue of who should be allowed into the country and become its citizens. Although the issue has persisted through the years, policy-makers tackled it at a given time against different backdrops of related problems. As a result, the emphasis of the immigration policy changed with time.

The US immigration policy is a result of incremental decision-making. As such, it was not a single-shot answer to an issue but a reflection of mutual adjustments emerging from wide varieties of interests involved and from multiple pressures from various sectors.² The preference for European immigrants formalized by the 1924 "national origin" system reflected the bias of the members of Congress at a particular time.

The interests and biases of policy-makers have left lasting imprints on a policy. The 1965 amendment to the immigration law that favored family reunification had its beginning with John F. Kennedy, while he was still a member of the Senate, when he sought to amend the US immigration policy. Allowing the entry of more Irish immigrants and skilled workers into the US was the main goal of the 1989 Kennedy-Simpson proposed amendment to the immigration law which mirrors the perceptions and interests of the authors of the bill.

The exclusion of Chinese and other Asians from 1882 to 1952 was brought about mainly by the pressure exerted by organized labor which feared that the influx of Asians will depress wages due to the latter's willingness to take jobs for lower pay. But the continuing arrival of Filipinos despite the imposition of the "Asiatic barred zone" was the result of a compromise with plantation owners who were perennially in need of farm workers. Every harvest season, around 50% to 80% of the crops on the Pacific Northwest was reaped by migrant workers.³

An incremental policy is a succession of choices with the policy amended only modestly or slightly by each choice.⁴ The immigration policy had shifted thrusts from quality control in terms of individual criteria for minimal health and moral character then, to ethnic and racial exclusion with the creation of the "Asian barred zone" and, finally, to the institution of numerical limitation and family reunification which remain as features of the policy until today.⁵

The Nationality Act of 1952 (McCarran-Walter Act) eliminated the "Asiatic barred zone". Aside from reaffirming the 1924 national origin quota, it also provided the preference system which became a main feature of the present immigration policy. These incremental amendments to the immigration policy manifest the propensity of policy-makers to respond to new demands put forth by changing circumstances in the socio-economic and political atmosphere. But their responses were generally cautious and intended for changes minor enough not to cause much tension among competing interests.

Incremental policy is shaped by constraints of imperfect knowledge and information, limited human ability to conceive all the possibilities latent in a complex social problem, and by compromises among policy-makers. The then prevailing unscientific belief that human quality is racially- and nationality-related largely shaped the early thrusts of the immigration policy. The belief that prostitutes and ex-convicts produce prostitute and criminal offspring guided the Congress' decision to ban the entry of criminals and prostitutes in 1875.

The short-range perspectives of legislators limited their grasps on problems related to the immigration policy. Their tendency to calculate the impact of their decisions into their political career, reduced them into "firefighters" rather than visionary leaders who deal with a given problem within a comprehensive framework. This lack of boldness among elected leaders to make comprehensive and conclusive decisions is partially the reason why democracies change their policies almost entirely through incremental adjustments.⁶

At various times, the contours of a problem are redefined by a variety of inter-related factors. Economic expansion and rapid industrialization in the US in the last quarter of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century created an enormous demand for immigrant labor.⁷ But the Great Depression made jobs scarce and organized labor agitated for the stop of the inflow of immigrants into the US. As the economy began to expand again, immigrants became more acceptable once more. The growing need for more skilled workers in the US was soon reflected in the third and sixth preferences set forth in the 1965 amendment to the immigration act. Said amendment introduced a new preference system and it allowed the conditional entry of refugees in response to the increasing number of people who were persecuted in their own countries. The national origin quota was abolished in 1965 thus giving way for more Asians to immigrate to the US. The seemingly uncontrollable influx of illegal aliens to the US revealed a weak point in the immigration policy. But an attempt to curb the entry of illegal aliens needs to be balanced with the interests of some states that are dependent on migrant labor to do some seasonal jobs. Cognizant of these interrelated problems, the Congress passed the Immigration and Control Act of 1986. Basically, this act did not alter the 1965 immigration law but it did provide a solution to the problem of illegal aliens by giving them the opportunity to regularize their status so that they can become permanent or temporary residents.⁸ It also provided sanctions against employers hiring illegal aliens, thereby granting them a share in the responsibility of policing illegals.

Like the need to reunify American citizens with their relatives which was addressed by the War Brides Act of 1946 and the 1965 amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act, the need to curb the inflow of illegal aliens was an impetus that led to the further amendment of the immigration policy. All amendments since 1952 were favorable to the increased entry of Asians through legal immigration, as refugees, and by amnesty through the 1986 amendment.

III. EVALUATING THE US IMMIGRATION POLICY

The US immigration policy is regulatory because it puts limits or restrictions upon aliens who would like to enter the US and eventually become American citizens. It is also a procedural policy because its 1952 amendment provided the preference system, and the 1986 amendment allowed the regularization of the status of illegal aliens. In both amendments, procedures were established on how to determine who will be allowed to immigrate and how one can become a US citizen.

Evaluation is an examination of the effects of a policy on its targets in terms of the goals it intended to achieve.⁹ Some policy-makers believe that immigration policy should serve US interests by allowing more entry of those who have the skill to offer to the labor market. But there are those who argue that the main goals of the policy should be to allow the relatives of US citizens to join them, and to allow the coming of those people who are repressed in their countries and who are seeking to be free.¹⁰ The differing views of policy-makers make the task of determining the goals of the immigration policy difficult. Notwithstanding the continuing debate on which goal should be emphasized, however the differing concerns of policy-makers were already accommodated in the policy through compromises.

Consequently, there are three categories of new immigrants in the US today: those who were admitted by virtue of their skills, those who come to join their relatives, and the refugees.

Aside from being too comprehensive to manage, it is also less interesting to evaluate the immigration policy in terms of its impact on the coming of the three categories of immigrants in the US. What is more interesting to look into is the policy outcome which according to Koenig, "encompasses all the consequences of a policy including changes in the environment or the courses of events that it affects".¹¹ The consequences of the immigration policy that is evaluated here are the demographic and economic effects of the policy to Asian Americans who in turn define their contributions to the US economy.

IV. THE ASIAN AMERICANS

There are almost seven million Asian Americans today. Of the total, around 90% are from six groups: Filipinos, Chinese, Vietnamese, Koreans, Japanese and Indians. The contribution of Asian Americans to the US economy is determined through five indicators: population profile, education, income, entrepreneurship, and rate of poverty and welfare use.

a. Population Profile

Along with the Hispanics, the Asians are the fastest growing community in the US today.¹² Of the 601,500 total US immigrants in 1987, for example, 43% were from Asia.¹³

Asian Americans represent only about 2% of the US population, but their tendency to cluster in a few areas make them highly visible and appear more numerous than they actually are.¹⁴ Although California is no longer the most preferred destination, more recent arrivals prefer to flock into big cities, where they turn sections into their enclaves. In any place where they go, the Asians, exhibit the common ten-

ency of excelling in whatever they do.¹⁵ One reason for their high rate of success is the fact that except in the case of most Indochinese who came as refugees, they do not make up a random sample of their countries of origin but they are a self-selected group, hence, they are highly competitive.¹⁶ Their mainly middle class and highly educated background make them better prepared to join the labor market than other groups of immigrants.

The thrust on the reunification of US citizens with their relatives, provided by the 1965 amendment to the immigration act led to the dramatic rise in the number of Asian immigrants in the US. From 6.8% of the total immigrants in 1965, they rose to 44.3% of the total immigrants in 1981.¹⁷ The increase of Asians relative to the total number of immigrants is also due to the corresponding decrease of European immigrants caused by the increasing prosperity in Europe.¹⁸ The same trend is largely the reason why the Japanese, the third biggest Asian group in 1950, became the slowest growing Asian group of immigrants with only a 12% increase from 1950 to 1990 as compared with 251% for the Vietnamese, 131% for the Koreans, 79% for the Filipinos, and 56% for the Chinese in the same period.

From 1981 to 1988, Asians comprised 48.6% of the total number of people naturalized in the US.¹⁹ With the consistent growth of Asian immigration in the US since 1951, Asians will certainly become the majority among those that will be naturalized every year. The fact that 47.4% of legal immigrants in 1981-1986 came from Asia and 48.6% of those naturalized in 1981-1988 were Asians, shows that most (if not all) Asian immigrants eventually become US citizens.²⁰ The backlog in the demand for family reunification visas by Asians already residing in the US, the availability of few skilled based visas, and the economic incentives provided by relatively low income levels of most Asian countries generated the right condition for the immigration market to initiate the flow of large numbers of Asian immigrants soon after the 1965 amendments of the immigration law.²¹

Table 1. USA's Ethnic Population, ('000)

Group	Year		
	1950	1990	2000*
Filipinos	780	1400	2080
Chinese	810	1260	1680
Vietnamese	245	860	1580
Koreans	355	820	1320
Japanese	715	800	860
Indians	385	680	1000
Laotians	55	260	500
Cambodians	15	180	380
All Asians	3465	6550	9850

* Projections.

Source: *The Economist*, vol. 311, June 3, 1989, p. 23

Table II. Persons Naturalized by Decade
and Selected Regions of Birth, Fiscal Years, 1951-1988

Region of Birth	Decade (by %)			
	1950-1960	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1988
Europe	72.3	62.4	30.8	16.1
Asia	7.8	12.9	33.5	48.6
North America	17.9	20.9	28.1	26.2
South America	-	2.2	5.3	6.2
Others	2	1.5	2.3	2.9

Source: *Congressional Digest*, vol. 68, no. 10 (October 1989), p. 229.

Table III. Origin of Legal Immigrant Flows, 1931-1986

Period	Percentage of Immigrant Flow Originating in:			
	Africa	Asia	America	Europe
1931 - 1940	.3	3.0	30.3	65.8
1941 - 1950	.7	3.1	34.3	60.0
1951 - 1960	.6	6.1	39.6	52.7
1961 - 1970	.9	12.9	51.6	33.8
1971 - 1980	1.8	35.3	44.1	17.8
1981 - 1986	2.7	47.4	38.1	11.1

Source: George J. Borjas, *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants in US Economy*. (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1990), p. 36.

b. Education

Asians do better compared with other groups of immigrants because on the average, they are better educated.²² Most of them had invested much to obtain a good education before they came to the US. Even those who were born in the US, continue to hold on to the tradition that a child has the responsibility to study hard.²³ The importance placed on education by Asian Americans is shown by the performance of their children in school. Asian parents demand much from their children and as a result their children work so hard that in some schools, they are criticized for curve-busting on grade scales and raising the level of competition for jobs in such fields as mathematics, sciences, and engineering.²⁴

The traditional close family ties among Asians is an important determining factor on the educational success of their children. Unlike some white Americans whose children are allowed to be independent upon reaching the age of majority, Asians consider the education of children as a parental obligation and impose no age limit. In some cases, it is not only the parents who would provide funds for the education of their own children. Some relatives may also chip in. For Asians, success is viewed more than a mere individual achievement—it is a family and, in most cases, a clan achievement.

The propensity of Asian-Americans to seek better education is manifested in the case of the University of California at Berkeley. Despite the fact that less than 10% of California's school age population is of Asian ancestry, about a quarter of UC Berkeley freshman class in the past ten years were Asians.²⁵

Although Asians make up only around 2% of the US population, their contribution in some professions is exceptional. A 1987 figure, for example, shows that 22% of the total physician population in the US are foreign medical graduates and almost one half of them are from Asia particularly from India, the Philippines and South Korea.²⁶ The preference system made India and the Philippines the major suppliers of nurses to fill the perennial nursing shortage in the US.

Generally, Asian immigrants have a high educational attainment. For the Indians who have the highest average education, almost 2/3 of the adults have completed a 4-year college and nearly half had graduate training.²⁷ Interestingly, even among the Korean greengrocers in New York City, 78% of them are college educated.²⁸ Even the Vietnamese who have the lowest average education among Asian immigrants are better educated than Hispanic immigrants and some American minorities.

The better compensation and marketability of good educational training had tempted the best and the brightest among the Asians to migrate to the US. The immigration policy, the cost of immigration, and the prospect of competing in unfamiliar cultural and economic environment discouraged those less educationally prepared.

Table IV. Average Education of Immigrant Men From Selected Countries

Country of Birth	Average Education of Group as of 1980
a. Europe:	
France	13.9
Germany	13.7
Greece	10.9
Italy	9.9
Sweden	14.1
Switzerland	14.7
UK	14.1
USSR	12.8
b. Asia:	
China	13.0
India	17.3
Japan	15.3
Korea	15.3
Philippines	14.2
Vietnam	12.8
c. Americas:	
Argentina	13.1
Brazil	13.6
Canada	12.9
Cuba	11.6
Dom Rep.	9.2
Mexico	7.2

Source. George JJ Borjas, *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants in U.S. Economy* (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1990), p. 231.

c. Income

Asian-Americans earn more than most Americans. The 1980 census shows that Asian-American families had a median income of \$23,000 as compared with \$20,000 for white families.²⁹ However this does not reflect the fact that Asian Americans still earn less than whites with similar qualifications.³⁰ The reason why they still earn more by family despite the discrepancy in earnings relative to white Americans of similar qualifications is that Asians tend to work more. In addition, more members of Asian families go out to work. In the case of Filipino families for example, 68% of their women work while only 49% of white women go out to earn.³¹ Even the women of Indians in California learned to work outside their homes to augment the family income. In India, it is traditional for a man who belongs at least to the middle class not to allow his wife to work. Among the Vietnamese, women tend to manage little family businesses while the men seek outside employment. This arrangement has been found to provide a wider safety net for the family in case the men get laid-off from their jobs.

The Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Filipinos are considered to be America's most affluent ethnic group with half of all households earning at least at \$24,000 a year.³² Their total annual buying power is estimated at \$60 billion on the conservative side which makes them a growing economic power in the US.³³

Since 1969, Asians had the highest mean earned income among immigrants. They, too, had the lowest unemployment rate and they are among those with the lowest poverty rate.³⁴ The future prospect may even be brighter for Asians since more professionals are coming and their children are receiving better education in the U.S. Even those who come as a part of family reunification were found to be more skilled than single or unattached immigrants.³⁵ The present trend shows that U.S. immigration policy attracts more those Asians who are better prepared educationally or professionally.

Second generation Asians who will be finishing their studies in the U.S. are bound to be more competitive than their parents and relatives who studied in Asia. Their wider exposure to the U.S. social and economic environment, their proficiency in English, and their deeper cultural and economic roots, will make them more competitive than their Asian-educated parents.

Table V. 1979 Mean Family Income by Selected Ethnic Groups in U.S.

Group:	Mean Family Income (Yearly)
Asians	\$23,686
Whites	\$20,073
Hispanics	\$15,018
Blacks	\$13,111

Source: Leif Jensen, "Patterns of Immigration and Public Assistance Utilization, 1970-1980," *International Migration Review* vol. 22, no. 1, p. 55.

Table VI. Employment Characteristics of Immigrant Men in 1980

Country of Origin	Labor Force Participation Rate	Unemployment Rate
<u>a. Europe</u>		
France	92.5	3.7
Germany	93.4	3.0
Greece	91.6	4.4
Italy	84.9	5.8
Sweden	87.8	3.0
Switzerland	93.5	2.1
UK	92.0	2.9
USSR	84.8	6.4
<u>b. Asia</u>		
China	90.2	2.5
India	95.5	3.2
Japan	90.4	2.1
Korea	90.1	3.3
Philippines	92.4	3.3
Vietnamese	77.7	7.1
<u>c. Americas</u>		
Argentina	93.7	4.2
Brazil	86.9	3.7
Canada	87.7	3.8
Cuba	92.0	4.0
Dom. Rep.	88.6	9.0
Mexico	92.1	7.7

Source: George J. Borjas, *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants in U.S. Economy* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1990), p. 235

d. Entrepreneurship

One study found that foreign-born males in the US are significantly more likely to be self-employed than native-born males with similar skills.³⁶ It was also found that self-employed workers have higher income than salaried workers because self-employment offers greater potentials for more work effort.

Self-employment among Asian immigrants is high. The pattern of entry into business vary according to the country of origin. The Indochinese in California for example tend to begin with doughnut stores. The Chinese in any place where they settle tend to open up restaurants. Some Indians started as farmers in California but recent immigrants among them are practicing physicians and in the case of New York, they have become news agents. The Japanese are among the earliest successful Asian businessmen but the Koreans are fast catching up. The case of New York City shows the pattern of entrepreneurship among Koreans. Of the more than 3,000 fruit and vegetable stores in New York City, 2,500 are now in Korean hands.³⁷ Unlike the Chinese who tend to be hooked on their restaurants, the Koreans take more varied kinds of business. Their business pattern starts from selling vegetables, fruits, and fish. As they accumulate more capital, they turn over their groceries to newcomers and they venture into a more capital intensive and more profitable business.

The Koreans are well known for their *keh* clubs, a sort of savings and loan association where members contribute and from which they can draw loans for capitals.³⁸ Self-help associations however are not confined to Korean communities. Other Asian groups have their own associations where members could depend on for help in time of need.

There were some Asian immigrants who came with sufficient capital to start their businesses, but the high rate of success and the rapid growth of self employment through small scale business is due to community organizations and patronage among themselves. The importance of community organizations in business is demonstrated in the case of Filipinos. Among the Asians they are the most culturally fragmented. For example in San Francisco there are many Filipino associations as there are Philippine tribes represented in the city. Each association is independently operating from the others. Consequently, the Filipinos appear to be the least entrepreneurial group among the Asians. Most Filipino entrepreneurs are those who can stand on their own or those who have the wherewithal to engage in business. The good side of this, however is that among the few who went into business, their success rate is very high. This is corroborated by 1980 figures showing that self-employed Filipinos have the highest average annual income among Asians.

Among the Vietnamese, business is a clan venture where relatives try to give their share in terms of money or labor. Despite low profits, their businesses have an admirable capability to hang on because family members contribute their labor without expecting any pay. This same characteristic is also observed among other Asian groups. While the community may help to put up the needed capital in terms of loans, family members try to contribute additional money and also provide the needed labor. Moreover, the tendency to cluster into enclaves also provides stable clients or customers and in some cases, low cost labor.

Newcomers in enclaves tend to work for comparatively low pay which authorities may consider exploitative. But for Asians, this is a mutual effort to survive their transitional life in the US. While the pay may be low, the newcomers are compensated by the insurance upon which they will subsist while looking for a better job or while studying what business to put up. The enclaves as a whole serve as a school for newcomers who undertake the process of orientation and adaptation to their new environment.

New York City is where the Asians are currently proving their business acumen. Many of the old Jewish businesses along Broadway from Greenwich Village to 42nd Street are now in Asian hands.³⁹ The Chinese have gentrified Sunset Park and now the crime rate has gone down; the once empty streets are thriving again.⁴⁰ Because Asians are known to be law abiding they became acceptable in white neighborhoods who are not as happy if Puerto Ricans or blacks would be the ones moving next door. Family courts in New York recorded virtually no juvenile crimes among the Asians. This is because of their strong tradition of parental authority and obedience among the children. Furthermore, Asians have an intricate family-based conflict management machinery where juvenile problems are sorted out early. For Asians, the home is the court where disputes are settled; it is also the banking institution or even the welfare institution that responds to the economic needs of the members.

Table VII. Self Employment Sector in 1980

Group	Fraction of Workers who are Self-employed	Average Annual income of Self-employed Workers in 1,000	Average Annual Income of Salaried Workers in 1,000
Native men	11.4	23.2	18.0
All immigrants	12.2	23.9	16.2
Immigrants Born in Europe	16.1	27.3	21.9
Germany	29.5	19.6	15.3
Greece	18.2	19.8	16.7
Italy	15.6	25.6	18.2
Poland	10.2	23.9	23.4
UK			
Immigrants Born in Asia:	16.2	19.7	15.3
China	11.1	37.1	20.8
Japan	10.0	20.8	21.6
India	24.6	23.0	16.0
Korea	6.3	43.5	14.8
Philippines			
Immigrants Born in the Americas:	15.5	27.2	21.2
Canada	14.7	21.2	15.0
Cuba	5.9	19.5	9.6
Dom. Rep.	5.9	16.5	11.4
Jamaica			

Source: George J. Borjas, *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants in US Economy* (New York, Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1990). p. 164.

e. Rate of Poverty and Welfare Use

Traditionally, Asians have accepted jobs for less than the prevailing wage just to survive in a labor market that was once hostile to them. Even today, although giving hints of success, they still carry on a marginal economic activity within the labor market.⁴¹ But whatever difficulties they met were not in most cases sufficient to deny them success. In terms of living condition, they are generally better than other immigrants except those from Europe. It is interesting to note however, that the Filipinos and Indians have lower percentage of individuals who earn below the poverty line than any group from Europe.⁴² The reasons why most Asians stay above the poverty line are because they are better educated and they are willing to take whatever jobs are available for them. Many of them are also self-employed.

Next to the whites the Asians also have the lowest public assistance reciprocity rate.⁴³ The reason why Asians are less inclined to rely on public assistance is due to the role that the family and the community play in solving financial problems. For Asians, it is culturally inappropriate for a member of the family to seek other sources of support before the family or community is tapped for assistance. Generally, an Asian family, whether Filipino, Vietnamese or Korean is adaptable and multi-faceted. As already stated, it can assume the function of a welfare institution if the need arises. Unlike the individualistic attitude of most white Americans, the Asians act collectively in dealing with both political and economic problems. This is one of the reasons why they tend to cluster into enclaves.

Table VIII. Poverty Rates Differences Among
National Origin Groups in 1980

Nation of Origin	Fractions of Individuals Below the Poverty Line
<u>Europe:</u>	
Germany	8.2
Greece	10.4
Italy	8.2
Poland	8.1
UK	7.2
<u>Asia:</u>	
China	12.5
India	6.0
Japan	13.0
Korea	13.5
Philippines	5.8
<u>Americas:</u>	
Canada	7.7
Cuba	12.2
Dom. Rep.	33.7
Jamaica	14.4
Mexico	26.0

Source: George J. Borjas, *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants in US Economy* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1990). p. 148.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION FOR POLICY

There is no doubt that the increase of Asian immigrants is favorable to the U.S. economy. Their growing contribution to the U.S. economy comes at a time when the United States is beset by unfavorable developments. In the economic field, it can no longer claim unquestioned leadership because Japan had long surpassed its performance in many areas. Korea and Singapore had already surpassed its level of efficiency in the manufacture of some products. Economic challenges are also rising from Europe with the European Economic Community consolidating its economic position and flexing more muscle in the global market. However, the U.S. is still a formidable economic giant and still maintains supremacy in basic research. But with regard to the question of how long it could maintain this lead, is today a burning issue because the academic performance of young Americans is now on the decline.⁴⁴ Their low performance is traceable to the many factors that erode the American value of hard work. The marriage institution is now threatened by the high rate of divorce that leaves children with no stable role models. Generally, at least 40% of the marriage of those born between 1940 and 1945 ends up in divorce.⁴⁵ This figure continued to rise and it is now much higher for the younger generations. For some blacks, the normal structure of the American society had virtually collapsed.⁴⁶ In Central Harlem for example, 4/5 of black babies are illegitimate: as many as 70% of black children drop out of high school.⁴⁷ Hispanic communities are not far behind in terms of the deterioration of discipline and social institutions. In Los Angeles, if a young gangster is not a black, he is more likely a Latino.⁴⁸ Child abuse and neglect also ravage the foundation in the development

of young Americans. For 1989, the US Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect reported that at least 900,000 children were mistreated by stressed and troubled families.⁴⁹ The breakdown of urban family is considered by sociologists to be one of the major causes of the high rate of crime in the US today.⁵⁰ The coming of the Asians with their attributes earlier discussed, brings to the fore model communities which others could emulate. They also provide a high level of competition in the academe and in the labor market which could stimulate dynamism in the U.S. economy. Asian immigrants may therefore be deemed important in any attempt to maintain the status of the U.S. as a superpower in the next century.

Contrary to the belief that immigrants would significantly reduce the income of native workers, it was found out that there is no labor displacement attributable to immigration.⁵¹ In fact, the influx of immigrant workers makes the economy grow.⁵² A 10% increase in the number of immigrants decreases the average wage of the natives by a mere .2% and has little effect on the labor force participation rates and employment opportunities of practically all native groups.⁵³ Considering the economic contribution of Asians, the negative impact of their presence in the U.S. economy is nil.

Since the present policy on immigration favors the entry of more Asians, any future amendment to the policy should prevent any change that would reduce Asian percentage to future immigrants' total. Asian population in the U.S. is still way below the number of other minorities (e.g. blacks and Hispanics). The increase of the Asian population in the U.S. generates a more dynamic population mix. When President Johnson signed the 1965 amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act, he was optimistic that it "repairs a deep and painful flaw in the fabric of American justice."⁵⁴ The Immigration Reform Act of 1990 which was passed by the U.S. Congress in October 1990 allowing Filipino veterans to be naturalized is a grant of a long-delayed justice to Filipinos who fought under the American command. Although said immigration reform gives more opportunities to Europeans (e.g. Irish, Italians, Polish) to immigrate to the U.S., the provisions for skilled workers and for immigrants from Hongkong will still tip the balance of U.S. immigration in favor of Asians. Aside from its economic benefits the U.S. immigration also gives a boost to the U.S. image by providing an alternative place for Asians who leave their countries due to ideological reasons.

American immigration policy attempts to balance a number of economic, political, and humanitarian tradeoffs.⁵⁵ The argument goes that if the policy emphasizes on taking in more skilled workers, then the reunification of families may be sacrificed. But if it shall stress on the admission of relatives, then, the government might lose control of the effects of immigration on the U.S. labor market. In addition, the admission of highly skilled immigrants may hurt their home countries and the less privileged Americans. But if the U.S. fails to admit highly skilled immigrants, then, it may be deprived of badly needed talents. The present debate on immigration policy centers on what appears to be a dilemma on reunification as against skill. An attempt to settle the issue was presented by Senators Alan Simpson and Edward Kennedy who sponsored the Kennedy-Simpson Act that was passed by the Senate in 1989. Senator Simpson who was representing business wanted immigration to alleviate the shortage of skilled manpower while Senator Kennedy wanted more Irish to come.⁵⁶ The Kennedy-Simpson proposal favors skilled manpower over reunification of relatives so that the net effect of their proposal is the eventual stoppage of the coming of relatives of U.S. citizens. If this proposal will be approved, it will hurt the Asians more than any other group. As already stated here, the skills

requirement will not put the Asians at a disadvantage because their capability and high level of educational training make them competitive against other groups. However, a large majority of Asian immigrants are in the first and second generations and therefore have identifiable close relatives who can qualify for the reunification requirement. In contrast, Europeans who had been in the U.S. for centuries have the problem of claiming any close relative from Europe. The point system of identifying immigrants which is stipulated in the Kennedy-Simpson proposal may be fair to all groups. The net effect however, is the perpetuation of the low percentage of Asians in the U.S. population. Inadvertently, therefore, it could produce the same effects of past discriminatory immigration policies that were responsible for the relatively small Asian population in the U.S. today. It also overlooked the finding that immigrants coming under the reunification program are more skilled than those who come here independently. An improvement to the 1965 amendment is not to alter the reunification provision but simply increase the ceiling for skilled immigrants. The 1990 immigration reform fits smoothly into this requirement. While it satisfies the objectives of Kennedy and Simpson, it continues to favor the reunification of American relatives. As a compromise, it increased the ceiling of the annual total of immigrants to the U.S.

Through the reunification of families, the U.S. is actually getting the needed skills from Asians. As to whether or not this will constitute a loss on the part of the country of origin is debatable. In the case of the Philippines and India for example, they have an excess of doctors and nurses. By immigrating to the US, people who are otherwise unemployed or may be underemployed in their country of origin can find jobs and their departure relieves their countries' labor market from the pressure of an oversupply of labor. It is also a practice among some Vietnamese and Filipinos to send a portion of their earnings to support immediate relatives, thus their immigration is not actually a total loss on the part of their country of origin.

An emphasis on skilled labor will also hurt the US economy. As already stated here, low-wage jobs particularly in the agricultural sector are filled up by unskilled migrant labor. Because these unskilled workers take up jobs with low pay, the price of agricultural products are kept low in effect increasing the real income of American consumers.

The rapid changes in the USSR and Eastern Europe today have caused the influx of at least 2,000 PhD-level scientists and engineers who have come to the US permanently as a part of the recent influx of Soviet Jews.⁵⁷ Due to the inability of the U.S. to employ these top-notch intellectuals in jobs commensurate to their qualifications, many of them are working as taxi drivers and gasoline salesmen today.⁵⁸ This means that the U.S. at present may already have more skilled people than it could efficiently use. So, the immigration policy need not focus on skill because it may even drain the USSR and Eastern Europe of people whose contributions are vital to the development of their countries toward democracy and open economy.

The U.S. has to develop its own brain power. The Asian-Americans who show academic excellence can be of great help in the U.S. attempt to upgrade its intellectual base. If the U.S. has to meet the so called "Asian challenge," then Asian Americans with their high motivation and competitiveness could become the workhorses for this purpose. And if the U.S. is committed to the reconstruction of Europe then it should prevent the adoption of an immigration policy that may take away skilled people from where they are needed most at present. It is, therefore, in the interest of the United States in particular and the world in general for the U.S. to maintain the present thrust of its immigration policy.

As a public policy, the U.S. immigration policy has achieved most of the goals of U.S. immigration scheme. As a public policy therefore, it is responsive and beneficial to the U.S. interests.

NOTES

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