

Political Correctness and the Immigration Debate

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There are two contrasting styles of debating an issue: those who prefer normative arguments, and those who choose descriptive line of reasoning. Most intellectuals nowadays adopt the former approach, but the truth unfortunately is generally bitter.

Let me admit at the outset that I do understand race relations are a sensitive issue in the modern world, particularly when millions of skilled and unskilled immigrants from the Third World countries have migrated to the economically prosperous developed countries to find a better future for themselves and their families.

However, instead of bending over backwards and demanding from the natives of their host countries to be more accommodating and totally non-communal, the immigrants need to understand that migration is not the natural order of societies.

In order to elaborate this paradox by way of an analogy, when we uproot a flowering plant from a garden and try to make it grow in a different environment, sometimes the plant flourishes in the new environment, but at other times, it doesn't, depending on the adaptability of the plant and the compatibility of the environment. If we want to change the whole environment to suit the needs of that particular uprooted plant, such an unrealistic approach may not be conducive to native flora and fauna of those habitats.

The right way to tackle the immigration problem is to discourage it by reducing the incentive for prospective immigrants to permanently abandon their homes, families and communities to find a better job in a foreign country and a radically different culture, where they might be materially better off but could find themselves socially isolated and emotionally desolate.

In order to minimize the incentive for immigration, we need to revamp the global economic order. Once the relative imbalance of wealth distribution between the developed and the developing world is narrowed down, then there will be no need for the people of one region and culture to relocate to another, except on a temporary basis for education, traveling and cultural exchange.

Humanism only implies that we should be just and fair in our approach. The human mindsets, attitudes and behaviors are structured and conditioned by their respective cultures and environments. A person born and bred in Pakistan or India generally has more in common with the people of the subcontinent.

For instance: when the first generation Indo-Pakistani immigrants relocate to foreign countries, they find it hard to adjust in a radically different culture initially. It would be unwise to generalize, however, because it depends upon the disposition and inclination of immigrants, their level of education and the value system which they have internalized

during their formative years.

There are many sub-cultures within cultures and numerous family cultures within those sub-cultures. Educated Indo-Pakistani liberals generally integrate well into the Western societies, but many conservative Pakistani and Indian immigrants, particularly from backward rural areas, find it hard to adjust in a radically different Western culture. On the other hand, such immigrants from underprivileged backgrounds find the conservative societies of the Gulf countries more conducive to their social integration and individual well-being.

In any case, the second generation immigrants, who are born and bred in the Western culture, seamlessly blend into their host environments; and they are likely to have more in common with the people and cultures where they have been brought up. Thus, a first generation Pakistani-American is predominantly a Pakistani, while a second generation Pakistani-American is predominantly an American, albeit with an exotic-sounding name and a naturally tanned complexion.

Regardless, the rise of Trump in America, Brexit in the UK and anti-immigration protests all over Europe, North America and Australia are the manifestation of the underlying sentiment against the globalists' normative approach toward the issue of immigration, which generally goes against the interests of the working classes of developed countries.

For instance: while joining the European Union, Britain compromised on the rights of its working class in order to protect the interests of its bankers and industrialists, because free trade with the rest of the EU countries spurred British exports.

The British working classes overwhelmingly voted in favor of Brexit because after Britain's entry into the EU and when the agreements on abolishing internal border checks between the EU member states became effective, the cheaper labor force from the Eastern and Central Europe flooded the markets of Western Europe, and consequently the wages of native British workers dropped and it also became difficult for them to find jobs, because foreigners were willing to do the same job for lesser pays, hence raising the level of unemployment among the British workers and consequent discontentment with the EU.

The subsequent lifting of restrictions on the Romanians and Bulgarians to work in the European Union in January 2014 further exacerbated the problem, and consequently the majority of the British electorate voted in a June 2016 referendum to opt out of the EU. The biggest incentive for the British working class to vote for Brexit was that the East European workers would have to leave Britain after its exit from the EU, and the jobs will once again become available with better wages to the native British workforce.

As I argued earlier that instead of offering band aid solutions, we need to revise the prevailing global economic order and formulate prudent and far-reaching economic and trade policies that can reduce the imbalance of wealth distribution between the developed and the developing nations, hence reducing the incentive for immigrants to seek employment in prosperous developed countries.

Finally, it's a fact that we, as individuals, don't like to revamp our deeply entrenched narratives even when such narratives have been conclusively proven to be erroneous, because our minds are incapable of radically transforming themselves, especially after a certain age. Despite being a mystery of gigantic proportions, the human mind still has its limits, particularly the minds of grownups are quite inflexible.

The reality is always too complex to be accurately perceived by the mind. Our narrative is simply a mental snapshot of objective reality that we have formulated to the best of our humble abilities. But since our minds are highly cluttered, therefore we generally tend to adopt linear narratives; and try to overlook deviations and contradictory evidence as mere anomalies by employing cognitive mechanisms, such as selective perception and confirmation bias.

Moreover, our minds also adopt mental shortcuts, or heuristics, to ease the cognitive load while making a decision. To instantiate this concept, the developing world has numerous problems: like social injustice, corruption, patriarchy, bigotry and oppression of the minorities, to name a few. My individual narrative, however, has mostly been predicated on the social justice aspect; but I do appreciate the activists who are doing commendable work in other areas, too.

My only gripe is that most social and political commentators these days restrict themselves exclusively to denouncing the crime and criminals, without looking into socio-political and socio-cultural root causes that spawn the crime and criminals; such an approach seems facile and lacking in perspective.

As the renowned Indian author Arundhati Roy poignantly explains the idea in these words:

“I don’t see myself as someone who looks at the world through a lens of ‘rights’ and ‘issues’. That is a very narrow, shallow way for a writer to look at the world. If you ask me what is at the core of what I write, it isn’t about ‘rights’, it’s about justice. Justice is a grand, beautiful, revolutionary idea. What should justice look like? If we disaggregate things into issues, then they just remain issues, problematic areas in an otherwise acceptable scenario.”

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