



BACKGROUND

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Open and Secure: American Immigration in an Age of Terrorism

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America's leadership in the world is due in part to our openness to immigrants and temporary residents who contribute to our economy, the vitality of our society, our understanding of the world, and the world's understanding of America. In an age of terrorism, we must keep the vital national security asset that is our open society, while keeping out those who wish to do us harm.

The Benefits of Openness

America is a nation of immigrants. Our openness gives America a unique allure in the world, and adds to our legitimacy to lead on behalf of universal values like freedom and opportunity. It also offers practical advantages. The experience of immigrants, temporary workers, international students and tourists does more than any speech or public diplomacy program to shape individual views of America around the world. Not everyone who comes here will embrace our ideals, but the vast majority gains a positive understanding of America's democracy and dynamism. In turn, they are less likely to oppose American goals, or to embrace extremist activities that threaten our interests.

Those who experience America first-hand are also better positioned than American diplomats or soldiers to advance democracy, economic development, and civil society in their home countries. Political, economic and personal contacts that are forged provide valuable channels of communication and cooperation at every level of society. Nearly 60 countries have recently been led by a head of state educated in the United States, offering American diplomats an intangible advantage unrivalled

by any other country.

Opening our doors to refugees fleeing hardship also sets a powerful moral example and identifies America as a source of hope. When we have open doors, we provide a safety valve to resolve crises around the world, encourage others to do the same, and often benefit from the development of dynamic diaspora populations. When we welcome those fleeing regions where we have had a stake - from Cuba to Southeast Asia to Central America in - we send a message that we extend a hand to those who stand with us in times of trial. Our openness to Iraqi refugees should be a starting

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point for the renewal of our moral and strategic leadership in the Middle East and around the world.

Openness also provides America with critical skills. In a world shaped by globalization, the cultural and language skills that come with dynamic immigration bear practical benefits for Americans in fields from business to diplomacy. Our national security has also depended in part on America's technological edge: from the atomic bomb to the space program to our emerging era of technology-driven threats, our security has benefited from the knowledge of immigrants. Today, the foreign-born comprise 29 to 32 percent of scientists and engineers with a master's degree, and between 36 and 40 percent holding doctoral degrees. Attracting the best and the brightest must remain a core plank of America's approach to the world.



Safeguarding an Open Society

Just as we must see openness as a critical tool in winning hearts and minds, we must safeguard our immigration system from those who mean to do us harm. If we fail, our open society may become a casualty of our new era, with high barriers to entry that harm America's attractive power worldwide, and turn the best and brightest of the next generation to other shores. The key is not keeping people out - it is barring entry to those who wish to do us harm, while facilitating legitimate travel and immigration. As the 9/11 Commission pointed out, terrorists are uniquely vulnerable in transit. Our current system has three layers - the visa application process, screening at borders and ports of entries, and internal enforcement at workplaces and in communities. Enhancements at each level would improve both our security and our image in the world.

Visas: When people apply for a visa, legitimate travelers have their first face-to-face encounter with America, and those who mean us harm are exposed to their first vetting. We must welcome the former so as not to cause alienation and anti-Americanism, while better targeting the latter. Our visa process has overcome many post-9/11 hiccups. Nevertheless, hefty interview requirements for visa applicants - a necessary security strategy - have contributed to delays at many ports of entry. While intense screening for all might seem like a good strategy, it doesn't increase security: it causes the needles to get lost in the haystack. A dual-track screening system at overtaxed embassies might both reduce appointment wait-times and better target screening. Pre-selected and problematic cases would undergo more careful inspection by senior consular officers in a separate lane, while the vast majority of visa applicants could be facilitated through normal procedures. The advanced review of applications and supplemental forms submitted online could also help expedite visa vetting.

In keeping with the desire to win hearts and minds, policymakers should consider the expansion of the visa waiver program (VWP). Five years since September 11, no new countries have been added to the program, which excludes most new EU member states. While expansion requires careful consideration, reduced visa applications from countries not thought to pose a security threat would alleviate staff pressures and allow for more focused inspections at high risk and busy consulates.

Borders: Our borders require better-targeted screening. The chief priority should be to activate successful biometric technology - despite over \$1 billion already spent, the US-VISIT program is not fully functional. While the program records digital photographs and two-fingerprint scans at 300 ports of entry, only scans of all ten finger-

prints will allow for some relevant security intelligence databases to be cross-checked. Because no comprehensive system tracking exiting passengers has been developed, it is near impossible to prevent visa overstays or to know whether potential security risks have left the country. Tight screening and thorough interviews for first-time entrants should continue. However, electronic tracking systems should make it possible to expedite some of those who have already been screened: particularly tourists, students, and frequent business travelers on multiple entry visas. Individuals already entered into US-VISIT could be randomly rechecked, and, once the system is fully operational, automated exit and re-entry systems could be activated by prints and passport scans.

Internal Enforcement: Screening must continue at high-risk workplaces. However, the most important way to reduce risk is through our local law enforcement. They in turn are dependent on the intelligence provided to them, both by our national intelligence agencies and local communities. To that end, it is of the utmost importance for police and emergency services to retain good relationships with local immigrant populations - for the intelligence and understanding they may bring, and because their successful integration will influence future generations to come.

The greatest asset that America has in our struggle against terror and extremism is who we are: a beacon of hope, opportunity and freedom in the world. To safeguard the power of our example, we must ensure that our open society perseveres. To protect that open society - from predatory terrorists and the peril of over-reaction - we must target our defenses on those who wish to do us harm, and welcome those who seek their own legitimate American dream.

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