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The Intersection of Migration and State Power

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December, 2011

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are owed to Gary Freeman for supervising this project and for his frequent guidance for my research in my time at the University of Texas. Additionally, thank you to Terri Givens for acting as the second reader for this project and for her comments and mentoring. Also, thank you to Terry Chapman for his valuable comments on this project and others. Finally, thank you to my wife for her patience and for the Jeanette Cunningham Rottas Scholarship, which has been invaluable to my research.

Abstract

The Intersection of Migration and State Power

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

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This project attempts to identify the various ways in which the projection of state power on the international scene can be affected by global migration patterns. It begins by examining some key aspects of state power that might be influenced by migration, and then assessing the impact that migration might have on those aspects. It closes by analyzing the ways in which these changes might alter state power and behavior, and proposing some areas for future research in this topic.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Migration between states has been an understudied aspect of the modern global political system. The number of people who move from one state to another, whether permanently or temporarily, has skyrocketed – over the last century, and even over the last decade. The International Organisation for Migration estimates that the number of global migrants has increased from approximately 150 million in 2000 to 214 million in 2011. These movements are likely of major consequence for international relations and it is important that scholars attempt to understand these consequences. At the least, it seems likely that increased flows of people would have an impact similar to the increased flows of goods and capital brought on by globalization. However, while there has been a great deal of study into the impact of these latter two flows on international relations, there has been little theorizing about the ways in which increased migration might be altering relations between states. Furthermore, the already limited existing research into migration has focused far more closely on its potential global economic, rather than political, impacts.

This paper will examine a number of possible avenues through which immigration into developed states might alter the ability of that state to achieve its goals on the international scene, a concept which will be aggregated as 'state power.' I will begin by examining the key aspects of state power, and then by analyzing the ways in which migration could be expected to affect these aspects, whether positively or

negatively. Finally, I will discuss potential avenues for future research springing from these observations.

Specifically, these areas for future research will point to several questions that are central to understanding the relationship between migration and state power relationships. Perhaps the most important question is whether migration patterns can be expected to consistently alter the ability of a state to project power internationally in predictable ways. Assuming that such an impact does exist, it raises the question of why some states are better at controlling or harnessing the impacts of migration on international power than are others. Additionally, any predictable results would raise the question of why different states opt in or out of attempts to use migration strategically as a tool in international relations. Finally, I will examine whether changes in state power forecast by migration patterns could serve as a source of commitment problems in bargaining by making the future strength, or even the motivations, of a state subject to change in the future.

Chapter 2: Components of State Power Projection

There are a wide variety of factors that impact the ability of a state to accomplish their goals in the international system. For the purposes of this paper, I will divide these factors into five categories: economic, security, demographic, social structural, and technological. I will offer a brief defense of the inclusion of each of these categories as components of state power before moving onto the ways in which migration might alter state capabilities on each of these fronts.

A state's relative economic health can provide an important source of its power on the international scene. A strong economic base is essential to a state's ability to thrive in the international system. Money forms the "sinews of power"¹ - the ability of a state to draw upon sufficient financial resources is essential both in traditional military conflict, but also in power competitions that fall short of war.² A classic example of the latter comes from the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, in which the winner was eventually determined by the relative ability of each state to finance a global competition for power without wrecking its domestic economy. The economic power of a state extends beyond direct competitions, however. The influence provided by trading networks can greatly increase a state's ability to achieve its goals on the international scene, and a larger, more international economy is likely to further increase the relative size of both influence and trade networks.³ Additionally, relative economic size can greatly increase the affectiveness of economic tools like market access and sanctions which states can use to leverage preferred outcomes from other states.⁴

Traditional security concerns can be subdivided into two additional categories: military strength and the safety of the domestic population, most strongly seen in state concerns about vulnerability to terrorism. Military strength, of course, is a fairly uncontroversial source of state power. For much of the history of the discipline of international relations, the ability to ensure security through military force was seen as the sole currency of international power. The most important role of the state was to be able to defend itself from predation in the international environment – any other concern was relegated to secondary status, at best.⁵ While more recent work is more open to the existence of alternate state goals or means of achieving international influence, few would dispute that increased martial power benefits a state in achieving its international ends. Concerns about terrorism, meanwhile, have been at the center of what little recent literature examines the intersection of state security and migration. While there is some debate about whether the connection between migration and terrorism has been empirically overblown, it has unquestionably served as an important factor in shaping state security decision-making and therefore is worthy of consideration.

Demographic characteristics are another important source of state power, and have also enjoyed some substantial discussion within the literature on power dynamics in international relations. In 1971, Myron Weiner coined the term “political demography” in an NSF study that analyzed the ways in which population changes can affect security concerns.⁶ While that study and others inspired by it have had mixed results in determining whether population shifts cause conflict between states (absent conflict resulting from resulting domestic conflicts) there are reasons, independent from the

likelihood of conflict, to expect a role for state power relations. Though related to the military strength category – questions about what the potential military service-age population looks like, and is expected to look like in coming years, could be reasonably expected to alter a state's bargaining capabilities. Birth rates, workforce participation rates, and shifting age ratios could also determine projections about state capability internationally both in the near and long term.

For clarity, I want to keep these demographic characteristics distinct from what I will call “social structural” aspects of international power. This focuses more on the social cohesion of the state and the ways in which its ability to maintain domestic consensus alters its ability to project its power abroad. As mentioned above, one of the early areas of focus for the import of demography for international relations was the destabilizing domestic consequences of major demographic changes.⁷ Domestic troubles, in turn, would be likely to make it more difficult for a state to project its power internationally. Additionally, demographic changes could change the ways in which, or ends to which, a state will apply itself internationally.⁸ Also, demographic change could alter the positions that a state will be expected to take on an international scene. Any state which is responsive to its citizens could be reasonably expected to alter its foreign policy positions following major changes in the composition of its citizenry.

One final variable that influences state power projection and bargaining leverage on the international scene is the state of science and technology. Technological innovation is often cited as an exogenous source of change in relative power between states, perhaps the most common example being the American development of the atomic bomb.⁹

Furthermore, the development of new technology can alter what features of state power projection are advantaged or disadvantaged, in conflict or beyond.¹⁰ Additionally, technological innovation has been cited as an important source of “soft power” in modern state relationships.¹¹

Chapter 3: The Intersection of Migration and Factors Altering State Power

Each of the above factors affecting a state's ability to achieve its goals in the international environment could in turn be impacted, often in numerous ways and either positively or negatively, by the migration flows that increasingly characterize the international system. The purpose of this paper is not to test the wide variety of possible relationships that will be discussed below, nor to prove that each relationship functions in any particular way. In some cases, alternate hypotheses will be presented. Where possible, I will turn to existing scholarship to reinforce possible relationships or to weigh the relative likelihood of different relationships between types of migration or changes in state power. I will not, though, be attempting to definitively answer the degree or direction of these impacts at this time

With that in mind, the primary purpose of this section is merely to lay out many of the possible consequences for migration on these variables affecting state power. This will lay the groundwork for testing and further analysis in future work. After detailing the different ways in which migration might increase or decrease state power, I will offer a brief discussion of the relative weight of the “state-power-strengthening” and “state-power-weakening” impacts of migration. I will then consider some of the different ways in which states might attempt to maximize the positive benefits while minimizing the costs associated with migration within the different components of state power.

MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC POWER

The relationship between migration and the economy has been a center of the international relations scholarship on migration produced thus far. The distribution of the benefits of immigration is a contested question, but fairly convincing evidence exists that immigration, as a whole, provides an overall economic boost to developed, receiving states. The magnitude of these benefits has been found to depend on a number of factors, for example, the relative factor endowments of native workers and immigrants, the ages of both groups, or cohort effects.¹² However, putting aside these relative gains and losses within society (which will be revisited in the section on social structural impacts), there is evidence that a fairly laissez-faire immigration program will provide a net benefit to the economy of the receiving state. Given that fact, maintaining a relatively open immigration regime would seem to provide at least some degree of international influence benefit to a state.

However, there are additional factors to consider before declaring immigration a net economic positive. All modern states attempt to control immigration inflows in some way – whether for economic, domestic political, or security reasons. These control regimes come at some cost, which must be weighed against any economic boost that immigration provides. And, given that the cost of these control regimes has ballooned in recent years, they are not to be dismissed out of hand. Also, while the potential importance of maintaining social cohesion is a concern for a later section, the costs associated with doing so are relevant here. If political acceptance of increased migration flows requires social welfare payments, whether in the form of unemployment, job

training, or otherwise, those costs must be balanced against the benefits to society as a whole. So, while the national economic benefits of immigration are clear, the type of immigration regime can be expected to have a significant affect on how meaningful those benefits are.

Even with these potential costs, there remains another potential benefit for immigrant-receiving countries. Maintaining immigration flows with other states could be expected to work in a similar fashion as maintaining trade flows: providing an additional lever for influence. Because emigration can serve as an essential “release valve” for sending countries, helping to relieve political and economic pressure on the sending government, there could be a strong incentive for sending states to maintain these flows.¹³ Increased migration flows (or threats against existing migration flows) could help receiving states to apply pressure on sending countries, and thus achieve other international goals.

MIGRATION AND SECURITY

Terrorism and Migration

One aspect of the intersection between migration and security that has received significant scholarly attention is the interaction of immigration and the threat of terrorist attack. Christopher Rudolph has discussed the implications of this threat (and the consequences of the September 11th terrorist attack on the United States specifically) in great detail.¹⁴ There is little question that such concerns have played a significant role in helping to determine immigration policy altered public perception and impacted the debate about migration in receiving states.¹⁵ While the increased attention paid to this

phenomenon as a determinant of state migration policy is certainly understandable, the direct impact of the migration/terrorism nexus on a state's international influence is less clear. Rarely, if ever, do the direct consequences of a terrorist attack rise to a level that disrupts the state's capacity to a degree that would alter its achieve its goals internationally.¹⁶ While it is conceivable that a constant stream of terrorist incidents could conceivably hamper a state significantly, that sort of threat has empirically been associated with homegrown or separatist, rather than foreign or immigration-based, terrorism.

Of course, it is clear that the attacks of September 11th had a long-term impact on the United States' ability to project power internationally. However, these negative impacts were largely a result of the American response to the attacks, especially the high cost of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan which eventually caused significant damage to America's international capabilities. Similarly, the American security response at the border came at a high cost in terms of both trade and immigration. However, to assign these costs entirely to "immigration" likely strains credulity. In essence, a meaningful calculation of this cost requires taking whatever portion of the blame for the September 11th attacks can be laid on immigration. Then, one would need to further divine what portion of the American response was a inevitable or reasonable, and apply that portion of the cost against the benefits of immigration.

Given all of this, the impact of terrorism on this particularly analysis of immigration is quite different than in the literature as a whole. There can be no doubt that there might be a significant domestic political cost associated with terrorist events, and

thus that they are extremely likely to alter the domestic price paid to achieve an open immigration policy. However, within the specific confines of the question of how the interaction between migration and terrorism is likely to change the implications of migration for a state's capabilities in international relations, the likely answer seems to be: very little.

Migration and Military Power

Migration could be expected to influence a state's military capabilities in a variety of ways. The first is by altering the pool of potential soldiers available to the state. Most directly, a state can use immigrants as soldiers. The impact of this pool is not insignificant. For example, as of June 30, 2009, roughly 7.91 percent of active-duty soldiers in the United States were foreign-born.¹⁷ Additionally, these foreign-born recruits are often especially valuable to today's military, bringing language and cultural skills that are essential to the tasks facing modern militaries. The American military's 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report specifically highlighted the importance of increasing the available pool of immigrant recruits to the successful maintenance of the U.S. Military.

However, even in states which are reluctant to rely on foreign-born soldiers, immigration can fill a valuable role in maintaining a standing army. There is not yet a scholarly consensus over the affect that immigrants have on wages for working-class citizens.¹⁸ However, for the purposes of this paper, it suffices to observe that low-skilled immigration increases the available labor pool from which the military can draw recruits. Even without immigrants joining the military, this would increase competition

for military positions, allowing the state to increase the quality and decrease the costs of new recruits. Even if the long-term economic growth caused by immigration eventually increases the wages of workers, the increasing tax base of the state would mitigate much of that impact. Additionally, for the purposes of this discussion we are focusing on developed, receiving states. The labor markets in these states skew towards educated, high-skilled workers – and the workforce, left to its own devices, continues to move in that direction. Replenishing the pool of workers available to the military through migration can become essential to providing the recruits needed to field an army.

MIGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC SOURCES OF POWER

Migration is an obvious source of demographic change in developed states, and these changes could affect state power in a number of ways. One clear benefit of migration in developed states has been on the age of the population in these states. Keeping the average age of a state's population low can bring a number of potential benefits to a state. It can keep economic productivity high by maintaining a high ratio of working-age citizens to dependent citizens. This is especially important in developed states, where state pension systems often depend on greater inputs from workers relative to the requirements for payouts from retired workers. This effect is further reinforced by the fact that birth rates among native-born citizens of developed states tend to be quite low, often below the replacement rate. Because immigrants often have higher birth rates, they can help to neutralize the slowing birth rate among natives, thus lowering the average age.¹⁹

Additionally, the presence of an affective immigration system can be expected to increase the efficiency of population distribution in a state. George Borjas demonstrated that immigration can help to increase efficiency in the labor market by allowing workers to redistribute, both within and between states, to the location where they are most needed.²⁰ This benefit can be expected to apply to state population as a whole.

Immigration provides an affective way for a state to overcome demographic weaknesses and to fill in needed gaps. This allows the state to compete more efficiently on the international stage – as well as providing the ability for the state to adapt quickly to major changes in the global system or economy. While affective state direction would be beneficial to ensuring that migration flows work in this way to benefit a state's competitiveness, they are not necessary. So long as migration is able to respond to the market, these benefits should accrue. However, there are demographic risks to migration as well. Where state management of migration does not respond to changes in the labor market, it could find itself making a bad situation worse by importing workers against market demands.

MIGRATION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURAL SOURCES OF POWER

Migration alters the population of a state in ways that transcend common demographic measures, however. These changes could have important implications for that state's international power. One area that has received significant attention in the study of migration is the increased risks of social conflict. There are likely at least some costs to these conflicts coming from state resources wasted on conflicts between nativists and immigrants and squandered potential from immigrants who lack access to state

resources or become ghettoized. However, perhaps more intriguing is the implication that this division might have for national unity, and its subsequent effect on the state capacity to achieve its goals in international relations. If a state's international position is understood to be determined by an aggregate of state interests, then a failure to assimilate immigrants and corresponding division over foreign policy choices holds a serious risk of paralysis for the state on the international scene. Samuel Huntington argued that an example of this affect could be seen in the increasing Hispanic presence in the United States.²¹ While others have challenged the empirical claims Huntington makes about the uniqueness of Mexican migrants into the United States²², the question of whether increased division along ethnic lines is likely to disturb a state's unity on the international scene is a fair one. This is especially true given that ample research shows that increasing ethnic division within a state is can lead to suboptimal policy outcomes.²³ Questions of distribution between migrants and natives, and amongst different ethnic groups more generally, can make coordination and the provision of public goods difficult.

Additionally, changes in social structure due to immigration could cause significant changes in foreign policy outcomes. Studies have shown that migrant populations, especially concentrated and politically active diaspora groups, can substantially alter the foreign policy outcomes of the host state.²⁴ This potential variable for change could make it difficult for states to adhere to, and as a result negotiate counting on, long-term foreign policy plans.

MIGRATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL SOURCES OF POWER

One final component of state power related to migration flows is the ability of a state to develop new technologies, and the military, soft power, and economic advantages that these technologies provide. As mentioned above, the classic example of a technological innovation that altered state power on the international scene was the American development of the atomic bomb, a research project led by foreign-born scientists. Companies including Google, Intel, and Yahoo were founded by immigrants. A study by the Partnership for a New American Economy showed that 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children.²⁵ The ability of states to recruit highly skilled immigrants has been essential to maintaining technological advantages in both private industry and military technologies. In short, one would expect to see a multiplier affect for the other advantages of migration power on state power based on the ability to attract high-skilled immigrants, specifically.

Chapter 4: Migration and State Power

PREDICTIONS

Considering the cumulative details above, several patterns emerge. There are a number of potentially testable conclusions that could be drawn. Though I will not test them at this stage, I have prepared a list of five hypotheses that I believe may be implied by the confluence of the information discussed in the previous section. Further developing and testing these hypotheses would make a valuable project.

- States with high migration flows will generally see a net benefit to their ability to achieve international goals and project power internationally.
- States that maintain a high level of high-skilled immigration will see a higher rate of benefit than states with relatively lower levels of high-skilled immigration.
- States that do a better job of coordinating the integration of immigrants will see higher relative benefits in international power from immigration flows. Additionally, states that do a better job of avoiding societal friction when dealing with immigration will see relatively higher benefits. However, expensive methods of addressing either of these problems may detract from the economic benefits that immigration can bring.
- States that incorporate immigrants into the military will see higher relative benefits from immigration on state power.
- States with high migration levels will be less susceptible to demographic peaks and valleys than are states with less migration. This would be conditional, however, on regulation that allows for migration flows to be sufficiently responsive.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Capacity and Willingness to Use Migration

Why are different states relatively more or less inclined (or able) to take advantage of migration as a tool of international power?

Given that the above predictions are borne out, the obvious question becomes: why do so many states fail to take advantage of the ways in which migration can strengthen a state on the international stage? A number of theories attempt to explain suboptimal outcomes in immigration via the interference of domestic coalitions. However, the international benefits of migration might present an interesting additional factor: one could reasonably expect to see states depend more heavily on migration when international security is scarce. This is consistent with what Christopher Rudolph describes as the “threat hypothesis.” In short, that acute international threats will cause states to value the military and economic benefits of immigration over the less tangible societal threats.²⁶ The appearance of this pattern of decision-making would also challenge classical realist thought, in that it would argue that states are willing to cede chances to gain internationally in terms of security in exchange for other benefits in the form of “low politics.”

Additionally, if low-skilled migration does indeed increase the ease with which a state can field troops, a separate question arises. Do states in need of troops consistently turn to migration to alleviate the problem? If not, what alternative solutions have states chosen? Comparing the relative effectiveness of alternatives could provide insight into the reasons that states pass up the opportunity to capitalize on migrations benefits, or

point to the reasons certain states have more readily concerned themselves with adapting that ability.

Migration as a Source of Interstate Conflict

What might be the implications of these factors on the likelihood of conflict between states?

One potential cause of conflict between states are disagreements about the relative levels of power between states.²⁷ If the capacity to handle migration, and channel its benefits to productive outcomes is a meaningful source of state power, it could be a ready source of conflict. Because a state's ability to harness this power is a considerably more opaque resource than the number of soldiers, or geographic positioning, it could easily lead to disagreement between states about what the long-term power relationships between the two nations will look like.

Another common explanation for conflict between states are the occurrence of shifts in relative power.²⁸ These shifts are often “black-boxed,” or written up to exogenous phenomena such as technological innovation. However, as the factors above have shown, migration could be an important potential source of these shifts in power. The ability of one state to successfully boost its capabilities through immigration, sometimes even at the cost of a rival via emigration, could provide an important window into the potentially dangerous times during which relative power is changing. Additionally, the fact that these changes occur over time and can be predicted might present an additional complication for state relations.

Migration and International Bargaining

How is migration likely to alter bargaining between states?

One of the recurring themes of the various implications for migration regarding state power is that they often create serious questions about whether a state will maintain its future path, in terms of both power and preferences. In short, some of these factors could serve as serious causes of commitment problems in attempts to make bargains between states. As discussed above, the changes in power presented by migration are predictable and often relatively easy to foresee. This can create a classic commitment problem in bargaining. Imagine, for example, that a turn-of-the-20th-century Britain is negotiating with the United States. Knowing that the United States is growing rapidly and drawing in massive new population resources with each year, Britain is essentially incapable of creating conditions that could keep the United States contained within an agreement. Both states are well aware that, given sufficient time, the United States will surpass Britain's strength and resources. This could cause Britain, or any state looking at the losing end of this proposition, to consider preemptive war to disrupt the other state's growth as the best option.

Another way in which migration presents a possible commitment problem in international bargaining is by threatening to change the goals of one of the bargaining states. Imagine two states attempting to come to an agreement, with dissatisfied refugees fleeing State A for State B. As discussed above, empirical evidence has shown that diaspora communities of dissidents from the sending state have been able to agitate receiving countries to take international action against that sending state fairly

successfully. State A knows, then, that any agreement with State B runs the risk of eventually being undermined by increasing political influence of the diaspora community. Essentially, State B cannot credibly commit to a bargain when the domestic cost that it will have to pay to maintain that bargain could vary wildly in the future.

This problem is not limited to extreme situations such as this. A key element of the modern relationship between the United States and Britain has been based upon a rhetoric of a “special relationship.” These shared aspects of history and culture, and the resulting belief that these powers would have loosely aligned interests, have been cited as a reason for the successful transition of power between the two empires. However, increased immigration from countries or societies seen as maintaining different values or priorities could cause the United Kingdom to question America's commitment to their alliance, and its willingness to act on previously shared interests. In summary – so long as the sources of state behavior at the international level are understood to be at least partly susceptible to the desires of the population, the potential for major changes in that population could make avoiding commitment problems in any sort of long-term international bargaining quite difficult.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

A more complete understanding of the ways in which migration can alter a state's position in the international system is an essential first step to unraveling the potential role of migration in international relations. By confirming the ways in which migration can strengthen or weaken a state, we can understand the ways in which states can maximize the benefits and decrease the associated costs. Furthermore, this knowledge can illustrate the reasons that certain states have been better at taking advantage of the benefits presented by migration, and why others have been reluctant to do so. Finally, exploring this topic will present a clearer picture of the ways in which migration can be expected to impact international relations as a whole. International migration flows represent a likely source of confusion about state capabilities, changes in relative state power, and commitment problems in state bargaining. Understanding the ways in which migration can lead to these outcomes can help minimize their affects, and to better predict where these problems may arise. This area of research would be helpful in understanding the topic and import of international migration, explaining a phenomenon that has largely been ignored in international relations, and exploring an empirical case of several classically accepted causes of conflict and failures in bargaining.

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- ⁸Any theory which sees international political outcomes as a product, at least in part, of domestic political alignments would be wise to consider the impacts immigration might have upon the structures. Though I will go into greater detail in the next section, it is easy to imagine ways in which migration flows could alter, for one example, the relative power of groups representing Rogowski's various factors of production and, in doing so, alter the international outcomes Rogowski would project for that state. See: Rogowski, Ronald. *Commerce And Coalitions, How Trade Affects Domestic Political Alignments*. Princeton Univ Pr, 1990.
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- ¹⁰An obvious example in conflict comes from Van Evera's theory of offense/defense balance, wherein exogenous technological changes influence whether offense or defense has an advantage in warfare, which in turn alters the type of state and strategy that is advantaged in international conflict. *See:*
Van Evera, Stephen. "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War." *International Security*. MIT Pr, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Spring, 1998), pp. 5-43.
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- ¹⁶Nitsch and Schumacher demonstrate that a doubling of terrorist attacks causes roughly a 4 percent drop in bilateral trade. While this is not an insignificant number, given the relatively low percentage of terrorist attacks that occur from non-domestic sources, it is unlikely that these attacks have had, even at their most prominent, a significant affect on global trade, or most developed economies. *See:*
"Terrorism and International Trade: An Empirical Investigation." *European Journal of Political Economy*, Volume 20(2), pp. 423-433, June 2004.
- ¹⁷Stock, Margaret D. "Essential to the Fight: Immigrants in the Military Eight Years After 9/11." *Immigration Policy Center Special Report*, November 2009.
- ¹⁸In the introduction to this book *Heaven's Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy*, George J. Borjas summarizes the back and forth about whether (and if so, in what ways) immigration decreases wages in the American economy. *See:*
Borjas, George J. *Heaven's Door, Immigration Policy And The American Economy*. Princeton Univ Pr, 2003.

¹⁹ This claim is not without controversy, however. At the very least, it is certainly dependent on the way in which the state manages migration and the type of migrants it attracts. For an excellent review of arguments for against the efficiency of migration as a response to an aging population *see*:

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