

Remarks for session 2 May 13th 2016

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1. The migration issues – refugees and immigrants – in the United States are quite different from those issues in Europe or in local regions of Europe. For the past 25 years the United States has been accepting approximately 1 million legal immigrants a year. Consequently the U.S. does not have the deeper problem of demographic imbalance that is found in Europe, China, Japan and other Countries.
2. Research has showed that taxes paid by immigrants both unauthorized and legal compensate for the cost of social services provided by state and federal governments.
3. The long standing tradition and history of socio-political and cultural integration of immigrants into public life in the USA has been largely successful and continues today – despite some violent periods of anti-immigrant movements.
4. The catholic church in the USA has been the most important institution for the integration of immigrants into American civic life. This was especially true for Irish, German, Italian and Eastern European immigrants.
5. The large more recent influx of Catholic immigrants from South Korea, the Philippines, Mexico, Central and South America has put increased pressure on catholic parishes, catholic schools and catholic social services to create new and bolder ways of helping the newcomers.
6. Despite the fact that an overwhelming majority of Americans favor continuing large scale legal immigration, there has been a growing resistance to immigrants entering the country illegally. Many citizens feel that the us southern border is too porous and weak. Although illegal immigration has been in decline and is almost net zero at the present time, border control continues to be a major issues in the presidential election.
7. A good example of the continuing problem of illegal immigration is the fact that over 90,000 children have entered the country without authorization and without being accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. This influx of children often escaping severe drug and gang violence in their home countries of Central America has created an unexpected shock to the US government's health and human services system throughout the country, although the issue has deliberately been hidden from the public. The situation in central America could portend an even more massive migration crisis unless issues such as the threatening drought which could push 2 million people into food insecurity. The uncontrolled growth of the drug cartels as well as the violence of the gangs connected to the drug and human trafficking continue to create conditions where children and families must flee the country for protection.
8. Refugees represent another serious political problem in the USA because of terrorism. Traditionally each year the president asks congress to admit between 70,000 and 100,000 refugees. Normally there is a bipartisan liberal and conservative consensus that welcomes the president's request and then congress allocates the necessary money. But because of the threat of

the Islamic State (Isis or Isil) to infiltrate the refugees with terrorists, there has been considerable opposition to admitting Syrian as well as other refugees from the Middle East and Africa. The inability of the us government and the United Nations to screen certain refugees has disrupted the usual refugee resettlement system. In light of the unaccompanied minor influx, the us government has established an in-country processing program for the children so that they can avoid the dangerous journey north to the border. But it has been only partially used because many of the parents have no legal status in the united states.

9. The USA has increasingly recognized that women, because of cultural oppression, domestic violence, rape as a tool of warfare, have important special claims for asylum and protection. This new way of looking at women refugees is clearly evident in the U.S. asylum process.

10. Because of the radical drop in the birth rate in Mexico and the country's generally good economic development we do not anticipate that in the future many young Mexicans will be trying to come to the USA – legally or illegally. That change will create a labor force problem for American agriculture. Foreign workers do most of the harvesting and packing of American grown food.

11. The most important social problems facing the United States at the present time involve the economy, jobs and national security. All three can be closely tied to migration in one form or another. These migration issues point to a need for some sort of a global or even regional “migration management system”. We lack the intergovernmental structures to deal with specific problems when they arise. Economic growth, employment and national security would all improve if migration were managed in a better way.

12. In the area of refugees, there is persistent talk internationally and nationally of opening up the un 1951 refugee convention in order to deal with new problems in the refugee field. Personally I believe that revisiting and revising the convention would be a serious mistake. It would open up the international law on refugees to various government attempts weaken refugee protection and undercut the strategic international standard for protecting at least some types of refugees. Perhaps the answer is having more regional or subsidiary refugee and migration agreements that could complement the refugee convention and offer new approaches to handling migration questions.

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