

Democratic pundits demand harsh immigration crackdown

Eric London
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Though not two weeks have passed since the Supreme Court's unanimous June 26 decision allowing Donald Trump's travel ban to take effect, numerous xenophobic articles by liberal commentators and pro-Democratic media pundits express the strengthening of vicious anti-immigrant tendencies in the American ruling class.

In the July/August version of the *Atlantic*, columnist Peter Beinart wrote an article titled, "How the Democrats Lost Their Way on Immigration."

"The next Democratic presidential candidate should say again and again that because Americans are one people, who must abide by one law, his or her goal is to reduce America's undocumented population to zero."

Beinart, a frequent contributor to the *New York Times*, *New York Review of Books*, *Haaretz*, and former editor of the *New Republic*, blames immigration for deteriorating social conditions for the American working class: The supposed "costs" of immigration, he says, "strain the very welfare state that liberals want to expand in order to help those native-born Americans with whom immigrants compete."

To block the rise of the far right, Beinart argues, the Democratic Party must orient itself explicitly to its anti-immigrant positions. "To deride the liberal order and stave off complete defeat at the hands of populists, however, traditional parties must do more than rebrand themselves and their ideas." In other words, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Former Bill and Hillary Clinton advisers Mark Penn and Andrew Stein write in a July 6 *New York Times* op-ed, headlined "Back to the Center, Democrats," that Democrats lost the 2016 election because working class voters "feel abandoned" by Democratic support for "policies offering more help to undocumented immigrants than to the heartland."

"Immigration is also ripe for a solution from the center," the Democratic politicians claim. "Washington should restore the sanctity of America's borders, create a path to work permits and possibly citizenship, and give up on both building walls and defending sanctuary cities."

CNN's Fareed Zakaria, an Indian immigrant, wrote in a June 29 *Washington Post* column that "the Democrats need to talk about America's national identity in a way that stresses the common elements that bind, not the particular ones that divide. Policies in these areas do matter. The party should take a position on immigration that is less absolutist and recognizes both the cultural and economic costs of large-scale immigration."

Zakaria's former mentor and current Woodrow Wilson School professor, Robert Keohane, penned an essay in the May/June issue of *Foreign Affairs* with ex-Wilson School fellow Jeff D. Colgan, titled, "The Liberal Order Is Rigged: Fix It Now or Watch It Wither."

"Almost everyone agrees that there is some limit to how rapidly a country can absorb immigrants," the authors note, "and that implies a need for tough decisions about how fast people can come in and how many resources should be devoted to their integration."

The authors then indicate their support for quotas and bans like those imposed by Trump: "It is not bigotry to calibrate immigration levels to the ability of immigrants to assimilate and to society's ability to adjust. Proponents of a global liberal order must find ways of seeking greater national consensus on this issue. To be politically sustainable, their ideas will have to respect the importance of national solidarity."

Thus do the liberal academics, media personalities and journalists propose to "save" liberalism with the

language of Mussolini: “Americans are one people, who must abide by one law,” “the sanctity of America’s borders,” “the importance of national solidarity,” “America’s national identity,” etc. These lines, plus Beinart’s *volkish* argument that American social programs can only be saved by launching a renewed political offensive against immigrants, expose the extremely reactionary implications of this adaptation to the Trump administration.

First, the authors’ claims that the Democratic Party has somehow taken a pro-immigrant turn in recent decades are false. In the 1990s, President Bill Clinton signed two of the most onerous anti-immigrant laws, passed with the votes of Democratic congresspersons. President Barack Obama deported 2.7 million undocumented people and built a network of immigrant prisons across the country to confine tens of thousands of migrants each night.

In January 2017, 37 of 48 Democratic senators voted for Trump’s pick to lead the Department of Homeland Security, John Kelly, who has since arrested 70,000 immigrants for deportation. Democratic leadership gave its congressional members the green light to support a reactionary Republican measure known as “Kate’s Law,” which will raise mandatory sentences for some previously deported immigrants attempting to re-enter to reunite with their families in the US. The measure passed the House of Representatives with 24 Democratic “yes” votes and now heads to the Senate where the Democrats may not exercise their committee power to block a vote.

It is in the context of the Democratic Party’s move even further to the right that the four members of the Supreme Court nominated by Democratic presidents, Kagan, Breyer, Sotomayor, and Ginsburg, voted to allow Trump’s travel ban to take effect.

Second, the decision and its aftermath is a powerful indication of the right-wing domestic political implications of the Democrats’ anti-Russian campaign.

The Democratic Party’s opposition to Trump has been based entirely on anti-Russian insinuations and inventions, aimed ultimately at forcing a more aggressive imperialist foreign policy to encircle Russia in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

The campaign is directed by and has further empowered the most reactionary elements of American society: the CIA, the FBI and the extremely hawkish

sections of the foreign policy establishment. Meanwhile, all of the official institutions of so-called American liberalism, including the *Times*, the *Post*, CNN, and the Democratic Party, have exhausted their political capital on efforts to pass off the unfounded allegations to a skeptical public, damaging themselves in the process and creating a hysterical climate dominated by the alleged threat of foreign conspiracies.

The primary beneficiaries of this situation are the extreme right, including Trump’s fascistic advisers Steven Bannon and Stephen Miller, as well as a host of xenophobic right-wing radicals occupying leadership positions in Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). Over the past several months, these forces have quietly entrenched themselves within the immigration and homeland security apparatus and are setting up the framework for the mass deportation of millions of immigrants.

It is toward these backward elements that the Democratic Party pundits are now oriented, all in the name of making the party more palatable to the more backward sentiments of the population for electoral purposes. This has profound implications not just for the rights of immigrants, but for all democratic rights, including those associated with gay marriage, abortion, and transgendered people. None of these fundamental rights are safe under the stewardship of the Democratic Party, which will turn to the right on a dime, if expedient, to advance the interests of American capitalism.



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