Introduction to the American Political Process

Class 25: Immigration

Asya Magazinnik (Professor)
1. Readings

Tichenor, “Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America”
Readings
Immigration Policy Over Time

Cohn, D’Vera. "How U.S. Immigration Laws and Rules Have Changed Through History." Pew Research Center. September 30, 2015. © Pew Research Center. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/.
# Immigration Attitudes Over Time

## Table 2.1
Opposition to Expanded Immigrant Admissions under Restrictive Regime, 1938–1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage Opposing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Opposition to emergency increases in immigration quotas to help “German, Austrian, and other political refugees”</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Opposition to “a bill to open the doors . . . to a larger number of European refugees than are now admitted under our immigration quota”</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Opposition to permitting “more persons from Europe to come to this country each year than we did before the war”</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Opposition to “a bill in Congress to let 100,000 selected European refugees come to this country in each of the next four years”</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Disagreement with the statement that “the United States is not letting enough immigrants come into this country”</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Disagreement with the statement that immigration should be “increased”</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard Explanations for Changes in Policy Regime

1. Economy
   - Theory: stable and prosperous economy $\rightarrow$ liberal and expansive policy
   - But, empirically it has gone both ways

2. Special interests
   - Theory: pluralism
   - But why do powerful interests sometimes lose?

3. National values
   - But how do values explain policy shifts?

Tichenor, Daniel J. In *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America*. Princeton University Press, 2002. © Princeton University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see [https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/](https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/).
Tichenor’s Explanation: A Historical Institutionalist Approach

Elements of the theory:

- Institutional dynamism
  - Changing veto points: president, committee chairs, Senate majority leader, Speaker of the House, bureaucrats (e.g. State Department)...
  - Creation and destruction of institutions: committees created, laws passed and repealed
- Party system
- Institutions change power dynamics between interest groups
- Successful groups shape public narratives
- Influence of global pressures and events

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