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The State of the Nation.  
US 2024 Presidential Election: Voting,  
Present & Impending Domestic Issues,  
Matters of Euro-American Concern.

Augsburg Gymnasium, Week of December 9, 2024. Prof. John Dean, The Catholic University of Paris/ l'Institut Catholique de Paris / & University of Versailles (UVSQ), France.

# Contents

## Preface

- Another odd culture trait -?- from European viewpoint
- Blending domestic & international issues
- USA's three key domestic issues, two that overlap with international.

## I. Choice focus on key Domestic-International Issues.

1. Temper of the times
2. Old Wounds: Civil War Sentiments
3. Understanding the 2024 election & domestic issues by way of polls
4. The Presidential Cabinet & Political Policy
5. Migration, Immigration: A Truly International Issue

## II. Conclusion



# Preface

- 
- Ideology  
v.
  - Culture

\* **US politics:** for the most part are not ideological but function as civic culture.

- *Ideology is usually neither practical, utilitarian, nor democratic -- for it “asserts as a historical fact what it should explain.”*  
-- Karl Mark, “Alienated Labor” (Early Writings)


[caricature right by David Levine]




\* **Civic culture** (*aka*: “political culture”): is a vague set of guiding terms -- **such as liberty self-reliance, equality of opportunity.**

- If pushed to define what they mean, Americans will speak of individual or group principles -- meaning a personal code or what they regard as a general truth (& not ideology).
- **Civic culture**: flourishes by virtue of groups, associations, regions, classes & sometimes political parties -- all activated by occasional causes (like populism!)

# \*\*\*National & International

 Present & Impending Domestic Issues, Matters of Euro-American & “the Americas” & are Concerned herein are presented separately or together as appropriate.

 It's neither easy nor proper, to distinguish one set of national problems from another international set

# \*\*\* US Election's 3 key domestic issues were

👉 1 & 2: neck & neck were the **Economy & Immigration**

-- Biden inherited a post-Covid economy where **the number of available jobs increased, salaries did not, & inflation rose to record highs.**

-- That's the **Gordian Knot** (which Trump inherits)

-- Biden's response was to launch a massive building program of America's infrastructure (roads & bridges) -- as FDR did in the Great Depression.

-- **"Build Back Better"**: a program mainly passed by Congress but poorly promoted in the news. (They gave it no face.)



## Economy & Trade: Domestic Issues

— Inflation: from the “P-C” time ( peak covid time) of January 2020 to present, the **cost of groceries has risen by an average of 25%**

-- An inflation rate matched in varying degrees in other daily, Kitchen-table areas.

— Trump’s main proposal: cut domestic government spending, and...

- Trump promised to impose tariffs on imported goods, ranging from 10% to 60%, spec. with Chinese imports.
- Lower the corporate tax rate from 21% to 15%.

— He will eliminate federal income taxes on Social Security benefits for seniors.

— He will end taxes on tips and overtime pay. Which critics call “chump change”.

#3: Women’s Civil Rights (“Right to Choose”): taken care of mainly by US states.

. **Economy & Immigration** remain the two toughest nits to crack.

# 1. Relying on Polls & US Mass Media

- Did the **polls** shill the public? They promoted the cause of a super-tight race, in a misleading way. The election polls catered to, & and tried to shape, audience expectations, heighten anxiety?
  - \* “shill”: cheat or pander to
- Which will win, Strawberry or Vanilla? It’s a close race, folks!
- Note how the bookies — the hardcore “turf accountant” in an organization that accepts & pays out bets on sporting and other events at agreed-upon odds — saw it. Follow the money, honey.

# Mass media: the law of minimal consequences in the society-mass media relation.

- The media is a report, yes. But it's a reflection.
- —You look in the mirror to put your make up on neatly or to shave correctly & you expect to see what's there. You seek a desired reflection. That's what you get and that's what it gives.
- **US media polls** delivered a promise of change that many people dreamed of. It was a happy product, even if it was unrealistic.
- — Doesn't a **successful product** in a capitalistic democracy have to please the consumer to sell well? **Polls are a commercial product.** Sam Walton of WallMart fame said: "There is only one boss. The customer." **The polls pleased.**

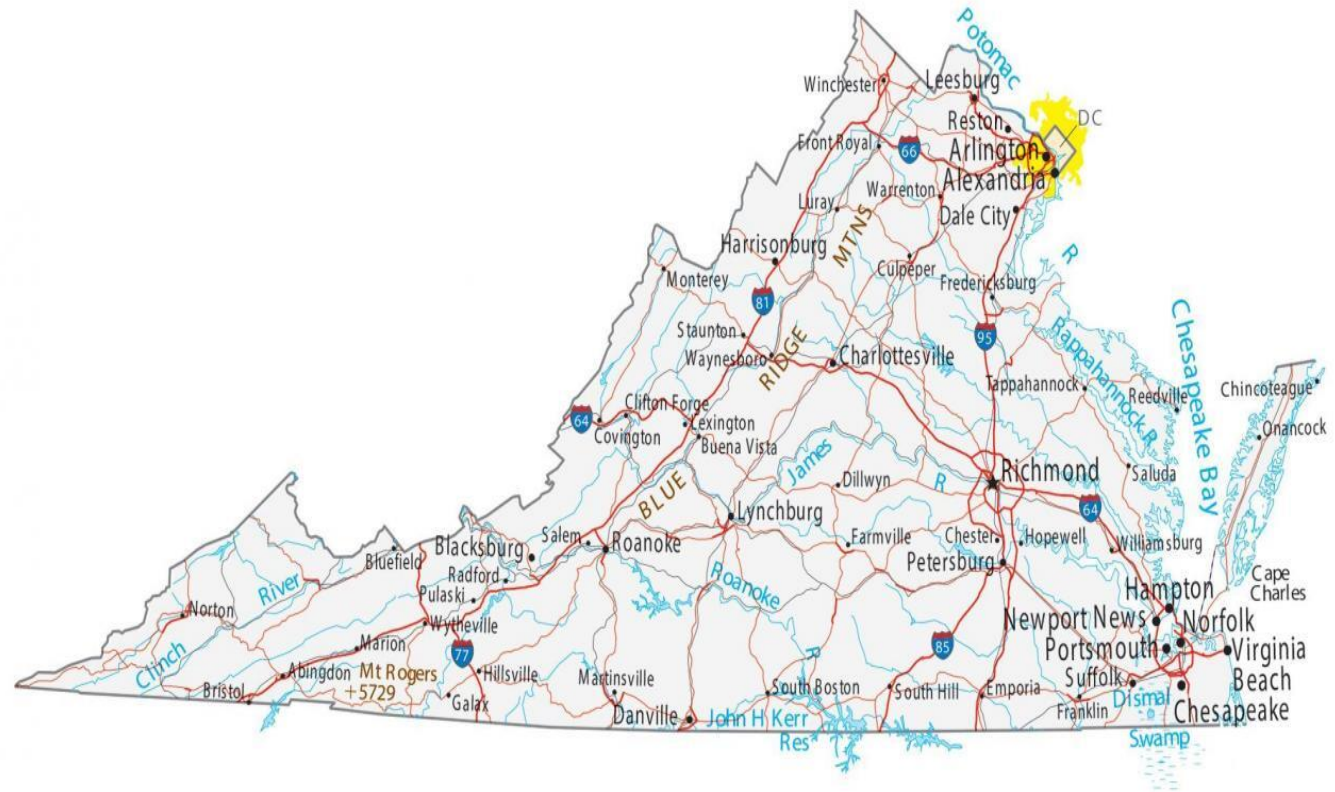
- One way to measure & understand & question is to *listen* to a culture...

First one has to  
do with a place,  
the US South,  
and a time, ***Now.***

# US Culture: Now it's a Time & Place & popular-populist opinion ripe for.....?



Map of the United States with Virginia highlighted



**There's the temper of anger in this** post-pandemic America -- a this grassroots popular-populist expression...

- A song **released August 2023**, in wake of Covid-19.
- Was overnight social media hit (viral hit). Within days topped sales & streaming charts. Quickly debuted at #1 on the Billboard Hot 100. Its singer-songwriter the first artist to debut atop the decisive Billboard chart without any prior hit parade history.

See, hear:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqSA-SY5Hro>

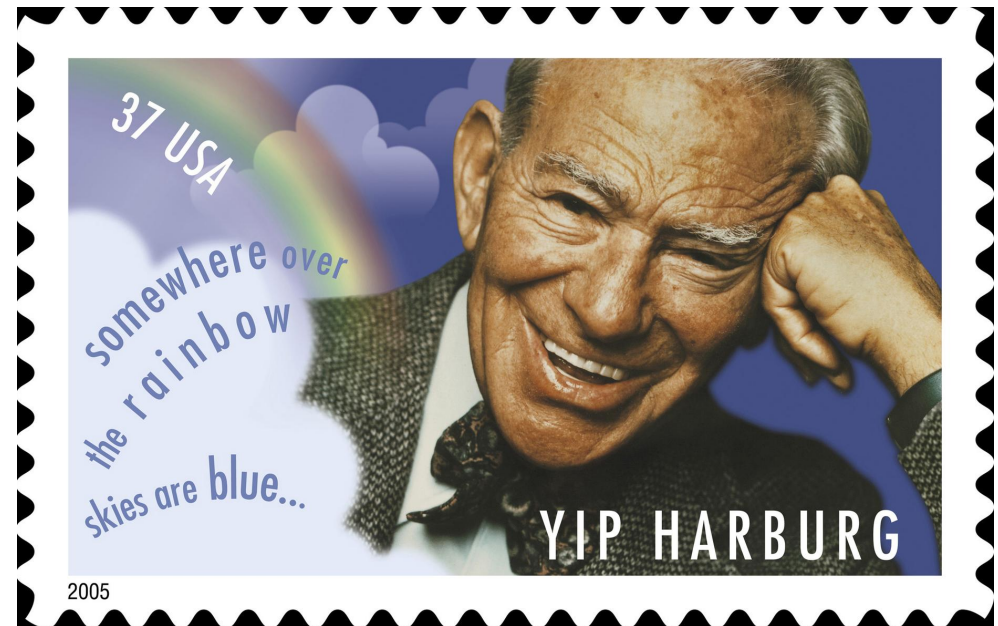


- Questions: keep in mind about the song before you hear it...About its emotive reasoning...
- Who are “the people”?
- What is “true”?
- What’s “the new world”?
- What’s “north of Richmond”?
- What’s “minors on an island somewhere”?
- Who’s “obese milking welfare”?
- What’s wrong with “overtime hours”?

Song of social importance is a mountain peak of significance.

- “Words make you think a thought. Music makes you feel a feeling. A song makes you feel a thought.”

-- E. Y. Harburg (American lyricist, librettist & song writer, 1896-1981)



Questions about the song before you hear it...About its ideas & feelings:

- Who are “the people”?
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# 1. Temper of the Times, Pandemic & post-pandemic America.

- Song: “**Rich Man, North of Richmond**” by Oliver Anthony.
- I've been sellin' my soul, workin' all day  
Overtime hours for bullshit pay  
So I can sit out here and waste my life away  
Drag back home and drown my troubles away
- It's a damn shame what the world's gotten to  
For people like me and people like you  
Wish I could just wake up and it not be true  
But it is, oh, it is
- Livin' in the new world  
With an old soul  
These rich men north of Richmond

Lord knows they all just wanna have total control  
Wanna know what you think, wanna know what you do  
And they don't think you know, but I know that you do  
'Cause your dollar ain't shit and it's taxed to no end  
'Cause of rich men north of Richmond

- I wish politicians would look out for miners  
And not just minors on an island somewhere  
Lord, we got folks in the street, ain't got nothin' to eat  
And the obese milkin' welfare
- God, if you're 5 foot 3 and you're 300 pounds  
Taxes ought not to pay for your bags of fudge rounds  
Young men are puttin' themselves six feet in the ground  
'Cause all this damn country does is keep on kickin' them down

- Lord, it's a damn shame what the world's gotten to  
For people like me and people like you  
Wish I could just wake up and it not be true  
But it is, oh, it is
- Livin' in the new world  
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'Cause of rich men north of Richmond
- I've been sellin' my soul, workin' all day  
Overtime hours for bullshit pay

### 3. Old wounds: Civil War sentiments. Did the US Civil War ever fully heal?



A man carries a Confederate flag outside the Senate chamber while another rioter sits after breaching Capitol.

JIM LO SCALZO/EPA-EFE/REX/SHUT









# 4. The Cabinet. Personnel is Policy -- Choice

## HOW ARE TOP JOBS IN THE US GOVERNMENT FILLED?



### PRESIDENTIAL PICKS

Thousands of people work in a president's administration.

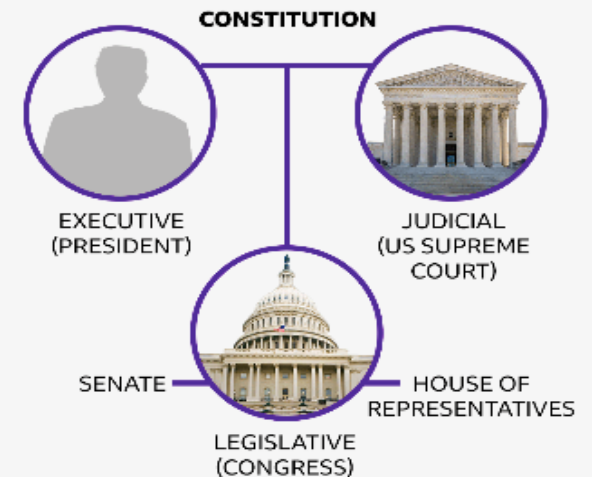
These include the leaders of important departments like Defence and Homeland Security.

The president-elect decides who they would like to hire for the top jobs, called **nominations**, but that is only the first step.



### CHECKS & BALANCES

More than 1000 of these positions, including 15 top officials in the Cabinet, typically require vetting by the Senate.



# Personnel, Policy, Choice, Confirmation (or not)

## VETTING PROCESS

A president's nominee usually goes through financial and background checks - and will testify before a Senate committee.

These **confirmation hearings** are often dramatic as members from both political parties question the nominee.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee votes on whether they will **recommend** the nominee.

Not every candidate is successful. Sometimes a president may withdraw a nomination if it becomes clear that their pick will not be supported.

If the committee approves the candidate, then the full Senate will vote on the appointment.



## THE BIG VOTE

The full Senate relies on the committee's opinion - sometimes with little or no debate before conducting a **final vote**.

If the nominee wins the support of a majority of the chamber, they take their position after a swearing-in ceremony.



Thousands involved...e.g.

## TRUMP'S TEAM

President-elect Donald Trump has nominated several big names to his top team. [You can read the full list here.](#)

STATE



MARCO RUBIO

EDUCATION



LINDA MCMAHON

HOMELAND SECURITY



KRISTI NOEM

DEFENCE



PETE HEGSETH



## THE RECESS METHOD

Trump, however, has pushed to use a backdoor method to get his choices into office.

If Congress is not in session, a president may appoint someone without Senate approval.

But they can only serve for a limited time - usually up to a year.

These are known as “recess appointments”.

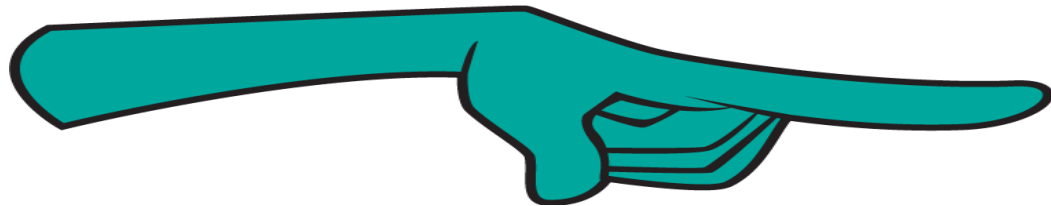


# Migration, Immigration: Global.

- **Migrate:**  
To move from one country or region & settle in another
- **Immigrate:**  
To enter and settle in a country or region to which one is not native.
- — **Migrate:** usually indicates permanent change of settlement when referring to people & implies historical demographic shifts of great magnitude.
- — When referring to birds or other animals, migrate usually indicates a seasonal or other temporary change in habitat.

# Now...

- Hear a song, a cultural expression & explanation, that tries to describe the experience from the viewpoint of immigrants in “the Americas” trying to get to their salvation in the north.....



# Immigration. Freddy Frender's version, “Across the Borderline”

- What is “every street...paved with gold”--
- Why: “just across...” ?
- Why: “take your turn...”
- Why “could lose more than you'll ever hope to find” ?
  
- Why is the place “broken”? .
- Why is it “too late to change your mind”?
- What is the “secret no one can define”?
- Why is it “too late to change your mind”?



# Immigration. Freddy Frender version, “Across the Borderline”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-lb5ZkL3wE>

- There's a place where I've been told  
Every street is paved with gold  
And it's just across the borderline  
And when it's time to take your turn  
Here's one lesson that you must learn  
You could lose more than you'll ever hope to find
- When you reach the broken promised land  
And every dream slips through your hands  
Then you'll know that it's too late to change your mind  
'Cause you've paid the price to come this far  
Just to wind up where you are  
And you're still just across the borderline

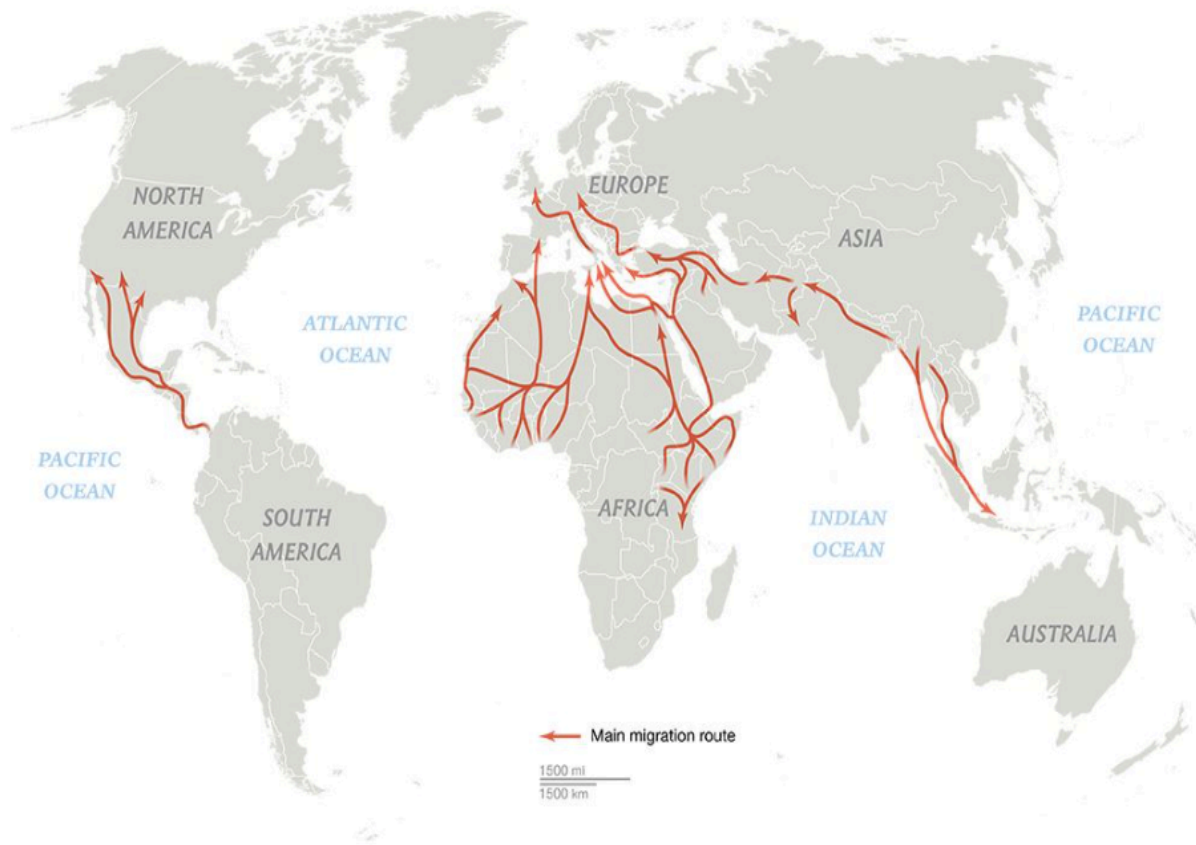
-- riff--

Up and down the Rio Grande  
A thousand footprints in the sand  
Reveal a secret no one can define  
The river flows on like a breath  
In between our life and death  
Tell me who's the next to cross the borderline

And when you reach the broken promised land  
Every dream slips through your hands  
And you'll know it's too late to change your mind  
'Cause you pay the price to come so far  
Just to wind up where you are  
And you're still just across the borderline

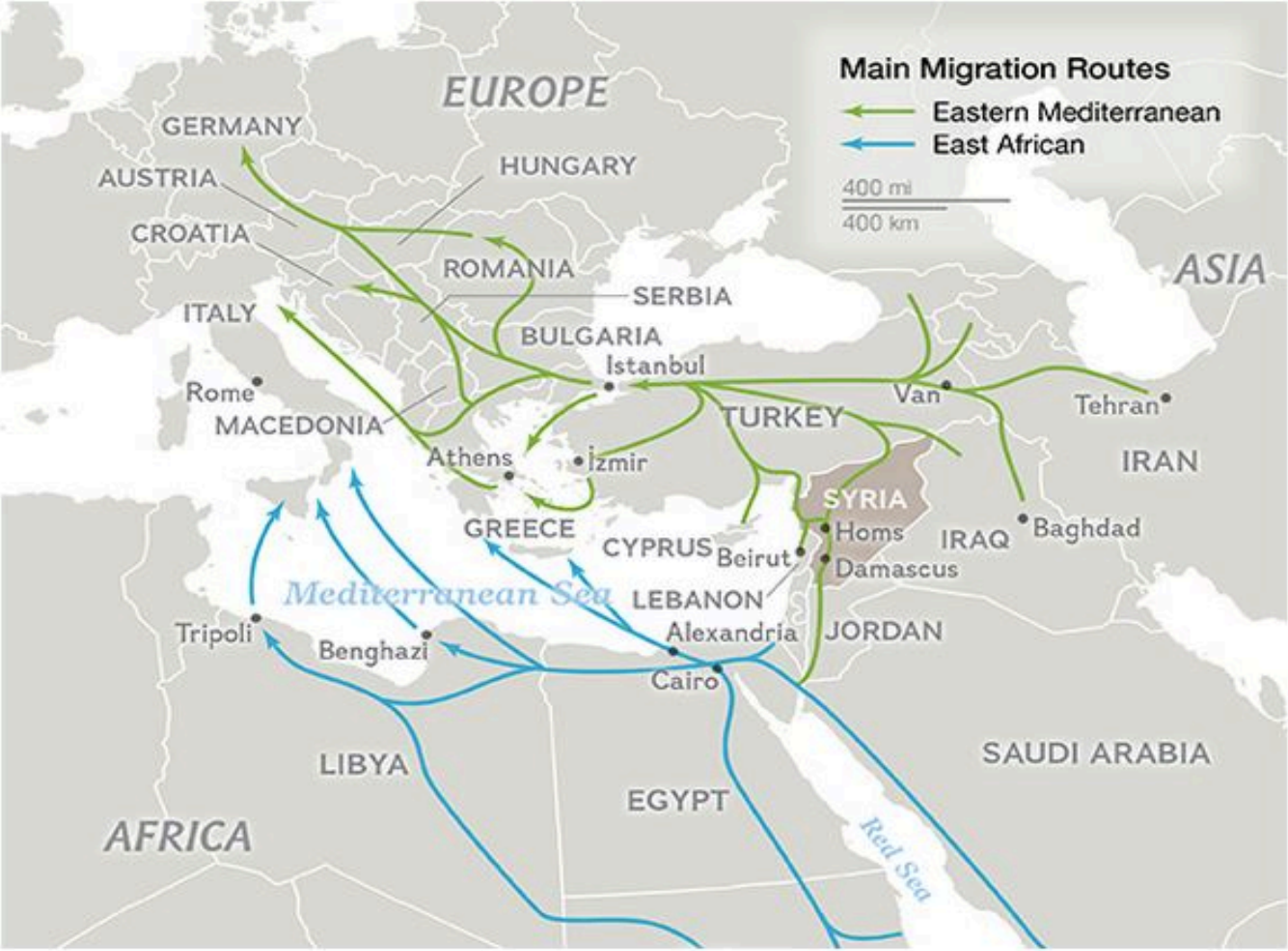
[Songwriters: Ryland Peter Cooder, James Luther Dickinson, John Robert Hiatt in 1982, ©.; version: Freddy Fender (1937-2006) US Tejano singer. A real blender -- with swamp pop, Tex Mex, Country & Rock music]

Migration & immigration now exist on a earth-wide scale; south to north.



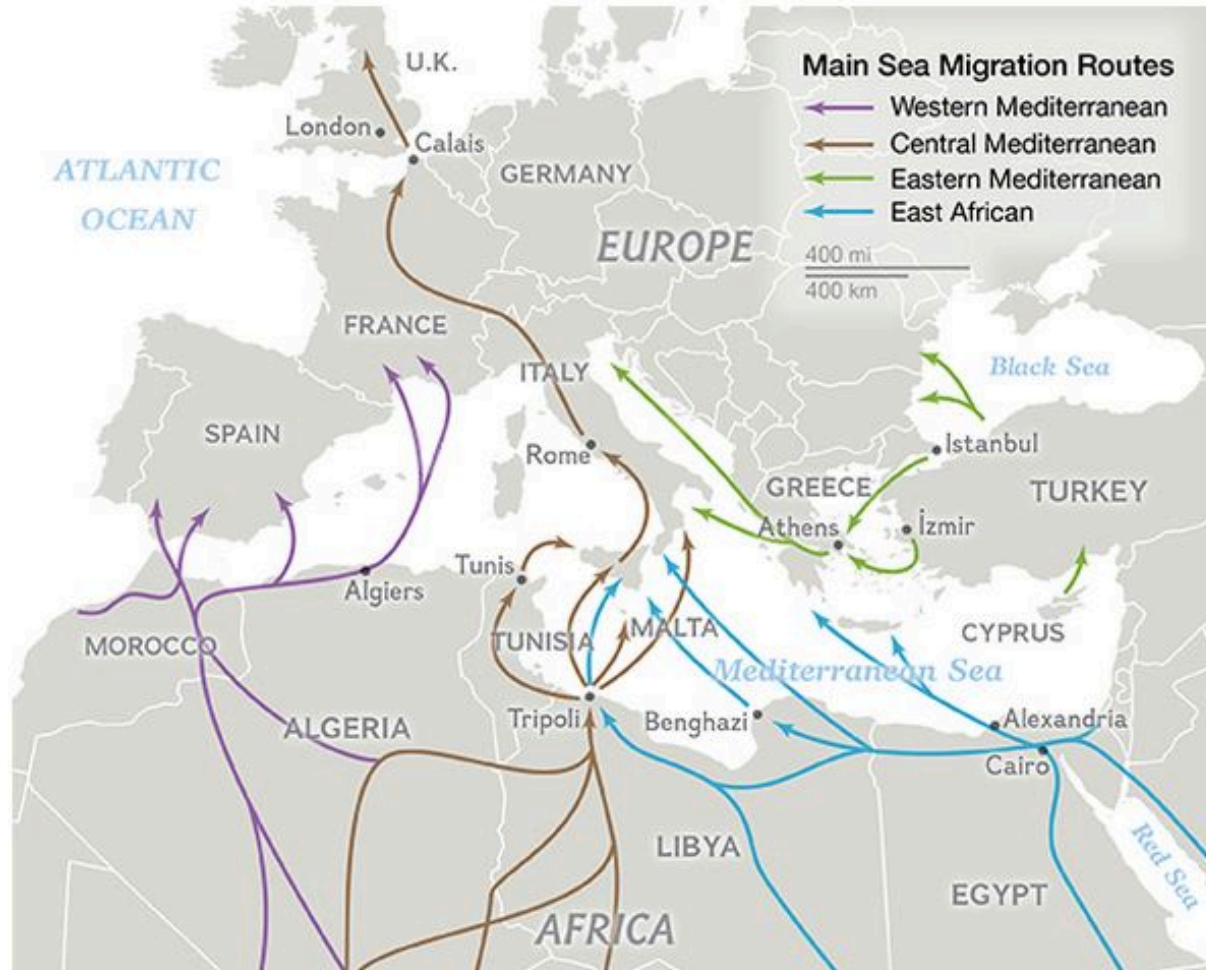
- Map source: UN's current trace of global immigration...
- And then...

# Eastern Mediterranean Route



NG STAFF  
SOURCES: MISSING MIGRANTS PROJECT, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION; UNHCR; I-MAP;  
REGIONAL MIXED MIGRATION SECRETARIAT

## Mediterranean Sea Route



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SOURCES: MISSING MIGRANTS PROJECT, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION; UNHCR; I-MAP; REGIONAL MIXED MIGRATION SECRETARIAT

## Central American Route



NG STAFF

SOURCE: MISSING MIGRANTS PROJECT, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

- You see a particular pattern or design here?

Migration, immigration: key domestic & international starting statistics for US

<b>United States Data</b>	
Number of Immigrants:	<b>46,118,600</b>
Immigrant Share of Population:	<b>13.8%</b>
Immigrant Taxes Paid:	<b>\$579.1B</b>
Immigrant Spending Power:	<b>\$1.6T</b>
Number of Immigrant Entrepreneurs:	<b>3,688,100</b>
Number of Eligible Immigrant Voters:	<b>23,419,100</b>

- Overall current US data & issues



At least two sides to this issue.

Immigration: a **push** & **pull** phenomenon.

- \* Responsibility: — Of nation of origin?. **The \*Push**
- Key problem areas that **push**: Haiti, “Northern Triangle Exodus” (Central America), through Panama’s Darien Gap.
- Along with the Americas, migrants also come into USA from West Africa, India and the Middle East — spec. China.
- More than 37,000 Chinese nationals detained at the US-Mexico border 2023, about 50 times the figure from '21.
- Plus: at border °1,000 Indians per year.
- Also **pushed** by organized crime.

## **\* Pull** of the target or host nation & comparative international conditions

- — Global migration trends. As of 2022, OECD registered global increase of 26%. **We're at levels of displacement never seen before in recorded history**
- \* **An estimated 281 million international migrants worldwide (2024)**
- \*\* What three key reasons why global migration now the worst in all recorded history?
  - UN answer: "conflict, violence, disaster" in nations of migrant origins

## US Results that spec. Obama, Trump, Biden, & Trump deal with in US:

- **No. people granted asylum in 2022 in US** doubled, driven mainly by migrants from Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba. US: second only to Germany in levels of humanitarian migration.
- **From Trump: deterrent-focused" policies**, the largest **deportation program** in history that will target undocumented immigrants; to Biden: migrants paroled into the US to await immigration court dates.
- Biden administration & US lawmakers from both parties failed to pass meaningful immigration reform (due to Trump's block). **There's been no major policy reform for thirty years.**
- Coyotes & cartels increased the smuggling business

Coyotes, cartels, & Organized Crime have increased the smuggling business & intensified migration.

- Below from UN site:  
<https://www.unodc.org/southasia/en/topics/frontpage/2009/combating-transnational-organised-crime.html>

**COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME**



# Migration conundrums: Biden, Trump

- Aren't they all of fresh immigrant stock? What's the battle?
- USA is a nation — *the* nation — of immigrants.
- **Trump**: third generation German on his dad's side, second generation Scottish on his mom's.
- **Joseph Robinette Biden Jr.**: born on November 20, 1942, at St. Mary's Hospital in Scranton, Pennsylvania, to Catherine Eugenia "Jean" Biden (née Finnegan; 1917–2010) and Joseph Robinette Biden Sr. (1915–2002) The oldest child in a Catholic family of mostly Irish descent.
- **K. Harris**: second generation Indian from her mother's Brahmin caste side, and second generation from her father's Jamaican side.
- Say the word: *minority*. There is no returning.
- **Next slide: My own family**.....





- No. of legal immigrants in USA now: **As of 2023**: a record 47.8+ million (U.S. foreign-born population)
  - No. of illegal immigrants in USA now: °11,000,000. (US population now ° 340,000,000)
- 
- \*Obstruction and treatment, asylum and processing
    - How many have crossed US border
  - Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations for Afghanistan, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Ukraine (new under Biden); along with (see TPS Chart)

- \*Main reason given or spike of last few years  
#1. Pent-up demand after lockdown
- US Public Opinion
- — Polls show that **more than two-thirds of Americans disapprove of Biden's handling of the issue.**
- — While **Donald Trump** repeatedly vowed to **restore & expand the hard-line immigration policies of his first term & promised to launch "the largest domestic deportation operation" in US history.**



# Conclusion: open questions

1. Compared to Europe, the USA has a much more rapid rate of change.
  - Hard to tell if that change will be to the left, right, center, or backwards
2. America is a Media State
  - Those who live by the media, die by the media
  - The earlier example of A. Lincoln (in his own time), and later of Jimmy Carter
  - \*\*Unless\*\* they own & control the media -- as in a totalitarian state of (?) via "Truth Social".

**3.** To what extent is the American story a narrative of cliff hangers -- which some

politicians take advantage of, paying it to the edge

**4.** Don't underestimate the change rate & nature of turnover & appointments with the congress men and women, & with judges

**5.** What will become of the US radical Democratic Party Right?

**6.** He's 78. Who could possibly *succeed* Trump?  
Should we pay closer attention to VP Vance?



*"That's all Folks!"*

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- <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/about/our-mission> ]
  
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- "We are experiencing displacement around the world at a level never seen in recorded history, and people are turning up at our southern border for a variety of different reasons," explained Jorge Loweree, managing director of programmes at the American Immigration Council, a Washington-based non-profit and advocacy group."
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