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# The Issues Surrounding the Adoption of a Conservative Immigration Policy by the United States Between 1941 to 1980

## How far do you agree that the USA adopted a conservative immigration policy between 1941-80?

Immigration in the USA between 1941 and 1980 went through immense change. Following the years of 1917, 1921 and 1924 the open door that immigrants saw as a beacon of light to their newfound freedom was shut to many; the government and the people did not see the 'new' immigrants as enriching or culturing the USA and therefore the country was stricken with xenophobia and racial persecution, whether it be in the form of exploitation, hostility and/or deportation. The US could have been seen as having taken a conservative approach during this time by shutting out the immigrants that weren't seen as 'useful' to them but Immigrants were also, however, faced with numerous possibilities to escape communism, oppression or war from where they were to find refuge in the USA, whether or not the intentions were liberal, the policies were.

There were a number of different policies placed around immigration. There were eight US presidents between 1941 and 1980, these presidents were a mixture between Republican and Democratic and introduced many different Acts, their enforcement due to economic, social, political positioning. The 1948 Displaced Persons Act was seen as very liberal as altogether it provided for the admission of 410,000 immigrants from central and eastern Europe. As well as the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, as they permitted the entry of 214,000 people, however there is an argument that this was in fact a conservative policy as most of the refugees has escaped from behind the Iron Curtain which would benefit America as people could view it as people escaping communism to America where they are very capitalist, implying that they save people from communism as it's a bad thing. Another conservative Act was the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act), this was trying to implement a new system into America, a system that favoured skills over nationality, by 1968 the average number of annual immigrant arrivals rose to 400,000, it reduced the flow of immigrants from Canada and Mexico and favoured those from the Philippines and South Korea, since Asian immigrants consisted largely of highly trained and professional people. Although many Acts did allow for immigrants to enter the US, the liberal policies that were made were driven by the conservative thoughts behind them.

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The Bracero Program was implemented in 1942 which supplied a migrant workforce for farms in California, Texas, and elsewhere. Around 50,000 Mexicans annually entered the U.S to become permanent citizens. Farm employers often did not abide by the terms of their contracts, underpaying bracero workers and housing them in poor conditions, even legal Mexican-American citizens were subject to discrimination, segregation, and hostility. After a year the bracero program was shut down and Hart-Celler's Western Hemisphere immigration cap passed. The end of the bracero program was supposed to be a liberal reform to put an end to the exploitation of Mexican workers in the system. However, due to the Hart-Celler Act, there were less than half as many visa slots allotted to the entire hemisphere as had been received in some previous years by Mexicans alone. The bracero program has a liberal front but behind closed doors was a much more conservative system.

The treatment of immigrants, especially those from Japan, China etc. can be seen as neither liberal nor conservative. Japanese Americans were interned based on local population concentrations and regional politics. More than 110,000 were forced into interior camps, mainly who resided in the West Coast. In Hawaii, more than 150,000 Japanese Americans composed over one-third of the population, 1,200 to 1,800 were interned. Although there was panic about the loyalties of Japanese Americans and the possibility of assistance that might be given to the Japanese Empire, given the shock and panic that followed the attack on Pearl Harbor. Many consider the internment to have resulted more from racism than from any security risk posed by Japanese Americans. This treatment that was given to the Japanese Americans can be seen as a fascist regime rather than conservative as it was a similar method used by Hitler to persecute the Jews.

It could be argued that there was a mixed approach toward immigration policy during this time period, or that it swayed between conservative and liberal depending on the incumbent President at the time or the economy, social or political factors affecting the US. But it is fair to say that the USA did not adopt an entirely conservative immigration policy between 1941-80 as we can clearly see the liberal aspects of their policies and the actions of the people.

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