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Gérard-François Dumont

To cite this version:

Gérard-François Dumont. “ The United States : A “ State-World ” ?,. Population et avenir, 2013, 713, pp.3. 10.3917/popav.714.0003 . halshs-01110506

HAL Id: halshs-01110506

https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01110506v1

Submitted on 28 Jan 2015

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The United States: a "State-World"?

(Source : "Population & Avenir" ("Population and the Future") N° 714, September-October 2013.
www.population-demographie.org/revue03.htm; http://www.cairn.info/revue-population-et-avenir.htm)

The increase in the number of Hispanics in the United States[1] is an undeniable phenomenon which has become the subject of heated controversies, especially following the publication of Samuel Huntington's latest book[2]. However, isn't the future of the United States less in its "Hispanisation" than in the progressive formation of a "State-World"?

By Gérard-François **Dumont**

Professor at the University of Paris IV-Sorbonne ; President of the journal *Population & Avenir.*

The number of Americans who consider that they or their forebears[3] originally came from Europe still form a majority of the population. Classed by decreasing order, they come from: Germany, Ireland, Great Britain, Italy, and Poland, followed by France. Mexico is the most important non-European country of immigration in the U.S., with a diaspora[4] (that is, those persons residing in the U.S. who are either born in Mexico, or who are born in the U.S. of Mexican descent[5]) which accounts for 34,000,000 people, more than 1/10th of the American population, according to the latest available figures (2011).

Facilitated Immigration

The size of the Mexican diaspora is explained not only by its geographic proximity but also by a long history. In 1848, with the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico was obliged to cede New Mexico, Texas, and Alta California to the United States. In exchange, Mexico retained the right to maintain the resident Hispanic population and open circulation between the two countries.

Despite the fluctuating application of the terms of this treaty, which varied according to the U.S.'s needs of immigrant labor, the Mexican immigration has a plurisecular character which is one of the causes of its importance.

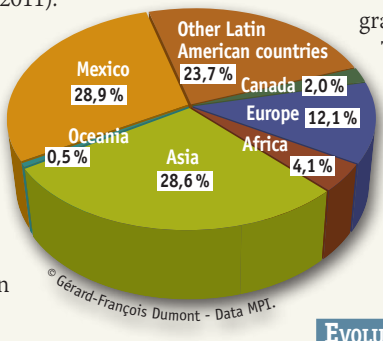
Long Controlled Immigration

On the other hand, for a long time the United States has carefully controlled immigration from other regions. For example, in 1882, considering that Asians refused to assimilate and had no intention of becoming Americans, the U.S voted the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited definitively all entry to people from the Far East. In 1917, the law on immigration confirmed the closing of the frontiers to the quasi-totality of Asian countries and the Pacific islands by instituting the Asiatic Barred Zone. In 1921, the Quota Act instored a policy of quotas to prevent modifications in the repartition of countries by ethnic groups.

These policies were challenged only by the Immigration Act of October 3, 1965, which decided, as of July 1, 1968, to end the apportioning of quotas by nationality which had been created in 1921.

The legislative changes were followed by profound geopolitical evolutions. China decided on an "openness policy" while, after several decades of tension, India and the United States reached a rapprochement. At the same time, the demographic growth of the southern countries created an important potential of migrants, in proportion to the insatisfactions due to insufficient economic development (as in Mexico or Pakistan), during periods of civil war (as in Salvador or Lebanon) or due to repressive regimes (as in Cuba and Vietnam).

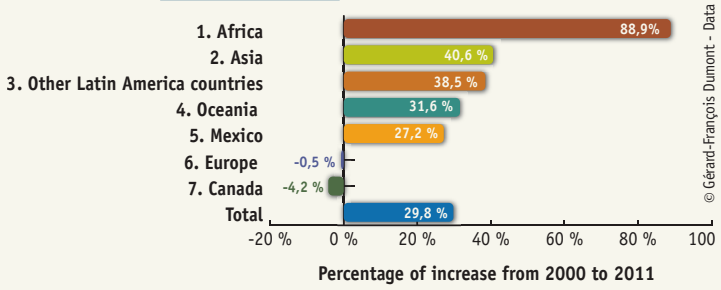
1. Geographical distribution of immigrants in the United States



Growing diversity of the population

The combination of the legislative changements of the U.S.immigration policy and the factors spurring emigration has resulted in a growing diversification of the geographic origin of the immigrants to the United States. Thus, for the last several decades the number of immigrants from Africa has almost doubled, whereas those from Asia[6] have increased more than those from Mexico. At the same time, the number of immigrants from Europe and Canada has decreased, in a context where their own aging demography has limited the number of potential immigrants.

Evolution of immigrants to the U.S. by place of birth



As a consequence, the evolution of the United States justifies the proposal of the concept of a "State-World", defined as a State composed of an ensemble of minorities originating from all the continents and sub-continents. The challenge[7] which the United States now faces will be that of preserving their national cohesion, supported in particular by their institutional model which is founded on federalism.

(translation: C. Knutson-Beveraggi)

1. "Etats-Unis : la montée des Hispaniques", *Population & Avenir*, n° 678, mai-juin 2006.

2. Huntington, Samuel, "Who Are We ? The Challenges to America's National Identity", Simon and Schuster Ltd. (2004).

3. See the studies in Migration Policy Institute and The 2011 ACS microdata.

4. On the question of diasporas, see: Dumont, Gérard-François, "Démographie politique. Les lois de la géopolitique des populations" ("Political demography. The laws of the geopolitics of populations"), Paris, Ellipses, 2007.

5. The U.S. census contains a question asking if the respondent is Hispanic or not ; see : Dumont, Gérard-François, "Une question éminemment géopolitique : le recensement décennal aux États-Unis" ("A highly geopolitical question: the 10-year census in the U.S.)" *Géostratégiques*, n° 29, 4° trimestre 2010.

6. The rise of number of immigrants from 2000 to 2011 from the Indian union is 82%, and of China, 67%.

7. See Dumont, Gérard-François, "La diversification du peuplement et la géopolitique interne des Etats-Unis" ("The diversification of population and internal geopolitics in the U.S."), *Géostratégiques*, n° 23, 2009.