Illegal Immigration and U.S. National Security Annotated Research Paper

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Summary

Illegal immigration has always been at the heart of the national security of the United States. This research paper examines its implications for the security and safety of American society. Furthermore, the policy on immigration is also analyzed, and its relationship to the United States Department of Homeland Security is established. Its impact on national security mandates that it be critically evaluated by the authorities of the United States to implement strategies to mitigate undocumented immigration. The issue is also of the utmost importance for the current U.S. President, highlighted by his emphasis on immigration reform.

A Public Issue

Illegal immigration holds considerable significance for the American public, as these immigrants have contributed significantly to the development of the United States. In fact, these people have made the United States the global power of today's world through their presence in the world market. United States society is composed of a combination of the traditions and cultures of these immigrants. Therefore, the American identity is not just limited to a single ethnicity or race. Instead, it is a purely geographical and patriotic concept. The people from various backgrounds (either cultural, religious or racial) are bound together by their self-identification as Americans. Keeping in mind the above-stated facts, it becomes clear that the issue of immigration forms the basis of American society. The policy regarding migration, as well as the subject of illegal or undocumented immigration, is an issue at the very heart of the American community, politics and national security.

Importance

The issue of illegal immigration has historically been a point of significant concern for the national security of the United States. These immigrants are perceived as significant threats to the safety of American citizens as they may harbour feelings of hatred towards American principles and ways of life. It is an issue of immediate as well as future concern. If illegal immigration goes unchecked, it may result in devastating terrorist attacks in the future. U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to erect a

wall on the border between the U.S. and Mexico demonstrates the importance of the issue.

Annotated Bibliography

Anderson, Leigh R. “Assessing the Interactions between Native American Tribes and the US Government in Homeland Security and Emergency Management Policy.” Developing Next-Generation Countermeasures for Homeland Security Threat Prevention (2016): 51.

This article identifies the issue of illegal immigration as of utmost importance to the national security of the United States. According to the author, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the issue has gained more significance. The author states that illegal immigrants benefit from the lack of adequate security on the U.S. borders and infiltrate the United States. These immigrants may be terrorists or extremists and engage in terrorist activities upon entering American territory. Therefore, the issue of illegal immigration plays a vital role in shaping the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Beckman, J. (2016). *Comparative Legal Approaches to Homeland Security and Anti-Terrorism*. Routledge.

The author suggests the implementation of strict policies regarding the process of immigration. According to him, it would play a pivotal role in the reduction of the terrorist activities faced by today’s America. A strict immigration policy is the most logical way to curb this phenomenon. As per the author, the contemporary era is characterized by an unprecedented increase in terrorism and other extremist activities. All this results from an immigration policy that is inadequate and does not efficiently prevent illegal immigration.

Hewitt, K. (2017). Disaster Risk Reduction in the Era of “Homeland Security”: The Struggle for Precautionary, Preventive, and Non-violent Approaches. In *Identifying Emerging Issues in Disaster Risk Reduction, Migration, Climate Change and Sustainable Development* (pp. 35–51). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-33880-4_3

In his article, Hewitt acknowledges the significance of the issue. According to him, the commission created in the wake of the horrible disaster of 9/11 was established to analyze the immigration issue. It recommended a strict check on people who are illicitly entering the United States. The commission regarded the terrorist attacks as a direct failure of the Homeland Security Department. Furthermore, it also highlighted the inadequacy of the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). Hewitt has emphasized that the two agencies should enhance their functioning to ensure that the issue is eliminated and that American citizens are secure and safe.

Lakoff, G. (2006). The framing of immigration.

The author highlights the duty of the Department of Homeland Security to mitigate illegal immigration. According to him, it is the responsibility of the DHS to protect the American people from disasters, either natural or human-generated. The government of the United States has mandated the DHS with this responsibility. Illegal immigration has a direct effect on national security. Therefore, it is prudent for the DHS to review the current immigration policy to cater for any loopholes or shortcomings.

Manheim, J. B., Rich, R. C., Willnat, L., Brians, C. L., & Babb, J. (2012). Empirical political analysis. Pearson Higher Ed.

The authors regard the Customs and Border Patrol as the principal agency responsible for checking illegal immigration. Furthermore, they must ensure that legal immigrants whose visas have expired leave the United States efficiently. The efficient fulfilment of these responsibilities would facilitate the U.S. armed forces as they would only have to focus on the external threats instead of a double battle on the foreign as well as internal fronts.

Miller, D. S., & Chtouris, S. (2017). Borderland Security and Migration: Balancing Humanitarian Response with Crisis Preparedness & Emergency Management—The Social and Cultural Challenges to Homeland Security. *Journal of Applied Security Research*, *12*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361610.2017.1

The authors of the literature attempt to formulate a relationship between the various terrorist attacks faced by the United States and the ineffectiveness of the regulations and policies about immigration. The issue of illegal immigration has risen due to the failures of the current legislation. The authors have presented the example of the bombing that took place at the Boston Marathon and regard it as the consequence of the porous nature of the American borders. According to them, the Al Qaeda militants took advantage of the porous borders and infiltrated the U.S. soil to execute the devastating plan.

Morgan, G. (2016). *Global Islamophobia: Muslims and Moral Panic in the West*. Routledge.

The author considers that the United States is facing the constant threat of extremism and terrorism. They suggest the United States follow the example of France by implementing an immigration ban on specific groups of people deemed dangerous to U.S. national security. However, he mainly focuses on

the discrimination towards Muslims and states that the main reason behind such bias is the prevalence of terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda and ISIS. These circumstances have led to the creation of Islamophobia among the Western nations.

Walters, W. (2016). Border/Control. In *An Anthology of Migration and Social Transformation* (pp. 151–165). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23666-7_10

The article considers the illegal immigrants a potential threat to U.S. national security. The DHS and CBP should be prepared in advance for any terrorist threats or activities. According to the author, the CBP is at the forefront of the prevention of illegal and undocumented immigration. It is present on the ground and deals with immigration issues in the field. Therefore, unchecked and undocumented immigration is a direct representative of the failure of the CBP as well as the DHS.

Historical Perspective of Immigration

The laws regarding immigration into the United States go as far as the 1790s. The first American immigration legislation was the Sedition and Alien Act of 1798. This act granted American citizenship to an individual only after fourteen years of U.S. residency. Furthermore, it also mandated that the immigrants be deported if they were deemed a threat. However, the minimum requirements for residency were decreased to a period of five years by the arrival of the 1800s.

The 1800s witnessed a rapid increase in immigration to the United States. These immigrants contributed to the rise of the American population, which rose by 5.2 million. Therefore, the number of policies on immigration was increased to regulate the phenomenon. An example of such a measure is the Exclusion of the Chinese Act. It was introduced in 1882 and prohibited the immigration of Chinese people to the United States for ten years. Moreover, this act also banned Chinese residents of the United States from gaining citizenship in America. It also focused on the immigrants unable to care for themselves, either due to deteriorated mental and psychological health or a criminal record. It denied their entry into the United States. The legislation further imposed a head tax on the people who entered the United States of America.

However, the 1900s were characterized by the reformation of American policies, which also included the immigration policy. Several quotas were also altered, and new and improved legislation was implemented. Furthermore, the number of factors that led to deportation also increased. One of the most significant developments of this century was the elimination of race or ethnicity in the determination of eligibility for immigration or U.S. citizenship. Therefore, as a result, the Immigration Act of 1990 came into being.

Legal Immigration

To better understand the concept of illegal immigration, it is necessary first to analyze the procedures of immigration that are considered legitimate by the United States. The Immigration Act of 1990 is the most important in this regard as it is still in effect today. Of all the legal methods of immigration, the first one is based on family. This technique further incorporates two separate categories, i.e., the immediate family and the system of family preference. The government of the United States lays great emphasis on the unification of the family. Therefore, it has allowed people to immigrate to the United States legally based on family. The U.S. allows people to bring their family members to the U.S. However, these relatives must meet the criteria of immigration to be eligible. These requirements include various aspects, such as financial conditions and age requirements. Among the relatives that are recognized as immediate are the spouses, the minor children who are not married yet and the parents of the citizens of the United States. However, a person can only petition for the immigration of her parents if she is at least older than twenty-one years. The U.S. Congress monitors migration and limits the number of immigrants receiving American visas through the family preference system. This system involves certain relatives, like the adult children (either unmarried or married) and the siblings (both female and male) of the citizens of the United States. However, just as in the case of parents, an individual has to be at least twenty-one years old to petition for the immigration of her siblings. Furthermore, this system also allows the spouses or minor and adult children of the people possessing legal permanent residency status (LPR).

Immigrants can also legally enter the United States through immigration based on employment. The United States provides various opportunities to people possessing specific skills. Such people may be granted temporary American visas. Such visas create employment opportunities for skilled individuals, albeit for a specified limited period. However, the most significant flaw in this system is that it binds the worker to an employer and they cannot gain any other employment, even if they get a better offer.

Temporary visas are not just limited to employment-based immigration. In fact, there are twenty different types of such permits, incorporating people from various fields, like athletics or specific skill sets. Furthermore, it is also possible to gain a permanent visa to the United States based on employment. However, the number of such visas is limited to an annual 140,000, as per the American Immigration Council.

Also, the process of per-country ceilings also provides a legal way to immigrate to the United States. According to this method, the number of immigrants coming from each country of the world is specified. The present system prohibits the entry of more than seven immigrants from any single country in a single year. The American Immigration Council regards the limit as an essential measure to prevent any nation from dominating any other group of immigrants.

Moreover, the United States also considers the destitute people who are unable to immigrate due to

financial constraints by the Diversity Visa Lottery. The system was established in 1990 and grants 55,000 visas to people belonging to countries that have had less than 50,000 immigrants for the previous five-year period.

Apart from the immigrants, the United States also accepts and welcomes refugees. These people, attempting to escape persecution, sanctions or other conditions that may threaten their lives, are granted safe passage into the United States. However, this process is hazardous, as it cannot judge which of these people are hostile towards the American concepts of liberty and freedom. Also, the number of refugees belonging to a single country is also set in advance.

Impact of Illegal Immigration on National Security

All the immigrants that come to the United States by any means other than the above-stated ones are considered illegal. Illegal and undocumented immigration has a severe and profound impact on the national security of the United States. This fact is reiterated by numerous internationally recognized geopolitical analysts, as well as the critical official figures of the United States. They have acknowledged that the current situation of the immigration policy is inadequate and the American borders are compromised due to their porous nature. These pores serve as a point of the passing of various drugs, weapons, contraband and even people. These facts have resulted in the national security of the United States being compromised (Anderson, 2016; Beckman, 2016; Miller & Chtouris, 2017; Walters, 2016).

Furthermore, the United States citizens and the government are now increasingly becoming aware of the significance of this issue and are united in the emphasis on the necessity of vigorous vetting procedures for immigrants to ensure that they do not pose any possible threat to America. Such concerns have risen manifold after the 9/11 incidents. In fact, the Department of Homeland Security was established due to these attacks. These events resulted in its creation in November of 2002 to monitor the immigration process and to enforce immigration policies. Now, illegal immigration is viewed by Americans in direct relation to its implications for the national security of the United States (Hewitt, 2017; Lakoff, 2006).

The issue of illegal immigration is highlighted further by the massive funding of immigration laws and their implementation by the United States government. The government has also called the Department of Homeland Security to create new and improved immigration databases. Therefore, it has resulted in the establishment of an improved database that is based on entry and exit. This system works through the registration of the fingerprints of the individuals entering the country. Furthermore, it also records the people who have left the United States. In this way, all the people who have entered the U.S. are accounted for, and it ensures that no immigrant stays in the U.S. after the expiration of her visa (Manheim et al., 2012).

Another advantage of this system is that it efficiently stores every bit of data and information on each

immigrant. This information is stored and maintained in the DHS database. Therefore, if an immigrant is stopped due to a violation of traffic rules by a cop, all information regarding her immigration status is readily available to the police. If the immigrant is illegal, she may be arrested.

Illegal immigration is of particular importance when it comes to the long 3145-kilometre border between Mexico and the United States. It has always been the subject of a high rate of illegal immigration from Mexico. It has been the cause of great concern, and the vast amounts of money spent on this border highlight the issue. Although all these measures have decreased illegal immigration through the border, it has not been eliminated.

Therefore, the issue of illegal immigration has always been at the centre of national security concerns. It has achieved a political status. It is undoubtedly the failure of the government of the United States not to be able to formulate a cohesive and effective immigration policy reform. It is imperative to develop a reform that is bipartisan. Although U.S. President George W. Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox agreed on a bipartisan framework just before the attacks of 9/11, nothing concrete was accomplished.

Since the end of WWII, the world has witnessed a rise in immigration. The main reason behind this is the dire conditions of the developing nations. People try to escape these countries that may be in civil wars. The primary concern of these people is to find better environments, freedom and better opportunities. It is no surprise that such people turn towards the United States, which is a symbol of freedom and opportunity. However, it also creates an enabling atmosphere for terrorists, wanting to harm the United States. This is where homeland security comes into play.

In this regard, President Trump's decision to erect a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border is excellent. Its importance would be reiterated by any patriotic American who understands the gravity of the situation. The call by Trump to ban the entry of all Muslims to the United States in the wake of the Paris attacks demonstrates the effect illegal immigration has on national security (Morgan, 2016).

Although the United States has always been the land of immigrants, the current times have made illegal immigration a primary concern for the United States' national security. The Department of Homeland Security is now entirely focused on this issue through policies and other measures. The Homeland Security statistics cite the number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. at 11.1 million in 2014. Although this figure is not 100 per cent accurate, as it is not easy to assess the exact number of people living illegally in the U.S., it certainly gives an idea of the severity of the situation. Several research studies have identified the United States borders as porous. It may be an indication of the importance laid by the United States on international commerce and trade, but in the end, it poses a significant threat to the security, stability, and integrity of the American nation.

Conclusion

Therefore, illegal immigration has always been a cause of great concern for the national security of the United States. The inadequate monitoring of the borders and the immigration process resulted in the illegal entry of several people into the United States. These illegal immigrants act as a potential threat to the U.S. They may engage in terrorist activities. It is the most critical issue of concern for national security. The Massachusetts bombing and the Boston Marathon incident in 2013 are just a few examples of the devastating effects of illegal immigration.