Illegal Immigration Issue in the United States and Its Enlightenment to China

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Keywords: Illegal Immigration, United States, China

Abstract. With increased globalization, illegal immigration rates are increasing, with illegal immigrants settling in a variety of fast developing nations. China is increasingly a destination for illegal immigrants. The following paper suggests the use of United States’ experiences and policies regarding illegal immigration as examples for China.

Introduction

As the most developed country in the world, the United States is a main destination for illegal immigrants from many countries, especially those from Latin America. Illegal immigration in the United States has a long history with a multi-faceted impact including economic development, national security, and employment, among others. Due to this high rate of illegal immigration, the United States is continuously developing and implementing administrative policies for combating illegal immigration. Similarly, China is increasingly a destination for illegal immigrants causing new social issues for the countries.

Illegal Immigration in the United States

The United States is a vast country built largely on past generations emigrating from other countries. The total immigrant population in 2016 was likely 45.6 million [1]. As a share of the U.S. population, immigrants comprised 13.5 percent, or one out of eight U.S. residents in 2016, the highest percentage in 106 years [2]. There were 11.4 million illegal aliens in the United States [3]. A large proportion of illegal immigration stems from Latin countries. Since 2000, Mexico accounted for 62% of this population of immigrants through both illegally entering the United States at the 3,200-kilometer-long border or through not returning to Mexico after expiration of temporary legal means [4]. Many of these individuals choose to settle in big cities within Border States, including Texas, California, or Florida (for those entering the country from Cuba and other Caribbean islands). These individuals are typically young males with relatively low education levels who seek employment through low paying labor positions.

There are many reasons why individuals choose to illegally immigrate from Mexico to the United States. Historically, the first wave of immigration occurred after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in 1848 after the Mexican-American War, which expanded United States territory south. Due to the expansive border, immigrants cite the relative ease in crossing the border into the United States, along with the similarities in climate and general environment. Lastly, due to the significantly lower labor prices in Mexico, there is an expansive income gap between what an individual may earn in the United States versus the same work in Mexico.

Illegal Immigration Policies in the United States

Policies governing immigration in the United States can be classified into two major categories. The first set of policies focuses on punishment and deportation of illegal immigrants currently in the country and increased effort to prevent others from entering the country. The second is less punitive and instead concentrates on how to help current illegal immigrants transition to a legal status within
the United States. Policy reforms have targeted both of these goals and most notably include the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA). The IRCA includes amnesty and pardons for those illegal immigrants who were seasonal workers or had been residing in the United States for a prolonged period of time, along with strengthening border control and increasing penalties for employers who knowingly employed illegal immigrants. The IIRIRA was a more punitive policy, attempting to contain illegal immigration, including increasing penalties for illegal immigrants living in the United States, including specified periods of deportation.

Illegal Immigration in China

China is a similar country to the United States in regard to its fast development and large influx of immigrants, both using China as a transit country and a final destination. While illegal immigrants enter China from a diverse list of countries, the majority are from Africa and Southeast Asian countries, primarily Vietnam, which shares a border of over 1,300 kilometers with China. Similar to those in the United States, illegal immigrants entering China prefer to settle in big cities and provinces with successful economies near the border.

The majority of illegal immigrants entering China from Vietnam are females. These individuals are often referred to as “Vietnamese Brides” and have become one of the growing social issues and concerns of local government. With the arrival of Vietnamese brides, children are increasingly born out of wedlock, marital fraud has increased, and there have been growing safety concerns for all parties, along with other societal worries.

Similarities between Illegal Immigration in the United States and China

Despite the vastly different social, legal, governmental, and historical systems of the United States and China, the two countries are facing similar issues with illegal immigration. Both countries are continuing to develop at a fast pace and experiencing explosion of illegal immigrants from Mexico into the United States and from Vietnam to China. In both of these instances, illegal immigrants are typically young individuals who low levels of education. Both of these countries share long borders and a perception of easy access among the offending countries. Similar to Mexico and the United States, illegal immigrants entering China from Vietnam share the same language, environment, and ethnicity as those in the border cities where they settle. Lastly, illegal immigrants from Vietnam are drawn to China’s rapid development and opportunity as opposed to the agricultural and war-torn country of Vietnam.

Conclusion

Illegal Immigration Administration in the United States’ Enlightenment to China

The United States offers multiple examples that deserve consideration in China. To begin, China should strengthen border control, particularly among the Vietnam border, to reduce the number of illegal immigrants crossing the border. While China may not need to invest the same amount of money in this as the United States, it is necessary to increase general border and patrol of the area.

In 2013, China launched the Exit and Entry Administration Law (EEAL), focusing on systems development and integration of foreign administration resources, such as increased regulations for border exit and entry. Along with policy, China should increase public security efforts to locate and punish employment by and of illegal immigrants, including mandatory detention, residential surveillance, and deportation, among others.

Aside from punitive policies, local governments should provide advertisements and education targeted to citizens living in border areas to expand knowledge of current immigration laws. Currently, the Exit and Entry Administration Law is not commonly used to handle immigration issues in China. Generally, the Chinese government should increase use and enforcement of EEAL, focusing on deportation of illegal immigrants.
Overall, China is being confronted with a severe issue of illegal immigration, similar to that of the United States. China should look to the United States for examples of policies governing illegal immigration and implement continuous policies focused on controlling the border, locating and deporting illegal immigrants within Chinese territories, and improving immigration law.

References


