

# Globalization and its Consequences: Illegal Immigration in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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With the increasing flow of goods, services and citizens, globalization has significantly altered the dynamics of the world economy, creating a much more integrated and interdependent international community. James H. Mittelman, defines this phenomenon as the “increase of interconnections or growing interdependence on a world scale, [...] a surge in global flows such as investment, migration, and consumer goods, facilitated by new technologies, especially in communication and transportation.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the benefits of this new economic system go far beyond the simple exchange of cultural practices, goods and capital. They are also embedded in the sharing of certain values and ideologies, helping maintain social order as well as a peaceful international community. Globalization has brought upon international actors a greater degree of political and economic cooperation, which has also contributed significantly to the socio-economic development of several countries. In addition globalization has encouraged the development of new technologies and means of transportation, which have greatly benefited society, particularly in the global north, broadly defined as “developed” nations.

Nonetheless, the negative consequences of globalization cannot be overshadowed by positive impacts of exchange between groups and countries, having severe implications on the global community, particularly in developing countries. As the former president of Brazil Fernando Henrique Cardoso points out “Globalization is inevitable and so are its consequences, its disasters, exclusion and social regression.”<sup>2</sup> Although this new economic regime has been in many ways beneficial to the international community, globalization is far from bringing equal development and opportunities across the globe. According to several world leaders and scholars, while responsible for an increasing flow of information, capital, and business, globalization is also the cause of numerous socio-economic and political problems currently faced by the international community. Critics attribute severe cultural and environmental degradation, heightened state repression in some areas of the world, as well as the intensification of class struggles to the spread of liberal practices

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1 Richard Stubbs and Geoffrey R.D. Underhill, *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.64.

2 Richard Stubbs and Geoffrey R.D. Underhill, *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 66.

under globalization. Among these so-called "high costs" is the reduction of state power and sovereignty, which may be becoming obsolete, considering our increasingly globalized and interdependent international community.

Above all of these, one of the most severe consequences of this new economic regime is the unequal development brought upon by liberal practices, which make globalization an extremely exclusive system. Globalized economic practices today disproportionately concentrate gains in the hands of the global north, usually the same nations that create and advocate new policies, while imposing losses on governments, economies, and populations of the global south. Consequently, the latter's consolidation the international community has faced high chronic levels of unemployment and increasing inequality, which have led to severe problems concerning poverty, famine and unequal distribution of land and resources. Socio-economic disparities have also increased tremendously, not only between the global north and south, but mostly within developing countries, where several local businesses struggle to compete with major multinational companies under the free market principles of liberalism. As a result, poverty, violence, and disregard for worker's rights have increased tremendously in developing countries, leading many critics to refer to globalization as a new form of imperialism. Therefore, inequality has become one of the most pressing issues under globalization, as it is not only significantly damaging on its own, but also leads to numerous severe socio-economic problems, such as illegal immigration, one of the main current challenges faced by nation-states in the global north. Unauthorized entrance of foreigners in global north countries has direct links to the inequality and social issues brought upon globalization. Illegal immigration has increased exponentially over the past few decades, as men and women of distinct age groups and nationalities abandon their countries in the search for better working and living conditions. According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), over 40% of immigrants who entered the United States from 1980 to 2005 were unauthorized<sup>3</sup>, while in most Western European countries, the foreign-born population accounted for between 7 and 15% of the entire population,<sup>4</sup> and this rate is only expected to increase.

There are several root causes behind the recent increase in both le-

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3 Migration Policy Institute, available at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/usimmigration.php>, accessed December 5th, 2008.

4 Migration Policy Institute, available at <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=402>, accessed December 5th, 2008.

gal and illegal immigration to the global north, particularly to Western European countries such as England and Spain, as well as to the United States. Among the sources of this phenomenon are wars, political repression, poverty and unemployment—all of which are directly and indirectly brought upon or intensified as a result of globalization. This issue has severe socio-economic implications, not only to the countries involved, but also when it comes to the lives of those migrating and their families, as it is not only costly but extremely dangerous to attempt to cross borders illegally. Most immigrants face extremely dangerous situations when attempting to reach the United States or Europe illegally, and in addition to the risks of the actual trip, most have no guarantee that they will be able to find adequate jobs or a place to live, or even if they will make it across the border alive and without being deported. According to the U.S. border patrol, 472 people died in 2005 attempting to cross the Mexico-United States border illegally,<sup>5</sup> and millions are deported upon reaching the country. These numbers represent the importance of properly addressing this issue, which causes disruption for both the countries receiving such a great flow of foreigners, but mostly to developing countries. When citizens are forced to leave their families behind in order to seek better work and living opportunities, there is a severe disruption within society, as well as in the local economy, which only further increases the problems faced by developing countries. In addition, if able to reach a developed country, illegal immigrants normally live and work in extremely unsafe conditions, often in exchange for low salaries in unregulated facilities. Most have very little or no access to healthcare whatsoever, and they usually avoid seeking medical attention due to high costs and fears of being forcibly deported. Another serious issue, particularly in Europe, is the mistreatment and virtual enslavement of illegal immigrants, predominantly women who are brought to countries such as Portugal and Spain and forced to engage in prostitution, as approximately 500,000 women are trafficked into Europe annually.

Above all, one of the most serious implications of the increase of both legal and illegal immigration is the xenophobic response on behalf of many citizens within developed countries, concerned with their jobs, safety, culture, and economic conditions. In the United States this is a particularly serious issue, considering the proximity with Mexico and other countries in Latin American that face severe inequality and social

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5 Leslie Berestein, at "Sign on San Diego," available at <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/mexico/tijuana/20060722-9999-1n22crossers.html>, accessed on December 5th, 2008.

problems. The sheer size of the Mexico-U.S. border makes it impossible to seal off, and the presence of over eleven million immigrants in the United States contributes to the increase of prejudice and discrimination against foreigners. Although the United States was a country formed by immigrants from several distinct nationalities and backgrounds, recent waves of immigration have not been as easily accepted, and immigrants (particularly those from Latin America) are often not well-integrated in society, constantly being victims of discrimination, suspicion and prejudice—something experienced by immigrants in several regions of Europe as well. Several authors and scholars negatively refer to the recent increase in illegal immigration as a severe threat to American culture and values. According to Samuel P. Huntington, “the persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States in two peoples, two cultures, and two languages.”<sup>6</sup> This notion that immigrants represent a degradation of the local culture well illustrates the social problems exacerbated by illegal immigration, particularly in terms of discrimination.

When it comes to the actual impact of illegal immigration on developed countries such as the United States, there is very little consensus and facts are often times replaced by xenophobic and nationalist rhetoric. One of the main threats posed by illegal immigration concerns national security, as it is crucial for a nation-state to be able to control and regulate the entrance of visitors. A state’s inability to effectively protect its borders has serious implications, not only in terms of security and sovereignty, but also when it comes to issues such as drug trafficking. In addition, the increasing flow of immigrants leads to a certain dilemma in developed countries, as leaders are often unsure of how to address the issue and whether or not to deport illegal foreigners already in the country. Though many citizens demand harsher legal actions against unauthorized immigrants, arguing that they are responsible for economic crises and persistent unemployment, these claims are often based on xenophobic assumptions rather than on actual facts. In the case of the United States, illegal immigrants represent nearly 5% of the labor force in the country<sup>7</sup>, and work mostly in sectors in which extensive education or training is not required. According to Tim Kane and Kirk Johnson, leaders must learn to discern “illusory immigration problems from real ones [...] and the real problem presented by illegal immigration, is security, not the

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6 Samuel P. Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge,” *Foreign Affairs* (April 2004).

7 Denise Bacoccina, *Folha de Sao Paulo*, available at <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/bbc/ult272u52059.shtml>, accessed on December 5th, 2008.

supposed threat to the economy.”<sup>8</sup> As described by the scholars, although many American citizens and leaders claim that illegal immigration is detrimental to the economy, immigrants add over \$88,000 dollars annually in tax revenues, and social security payroll taxes from undocumented workers have amounted to a \$463 billion funding surplus.<sup>9</sup> Even if seen as detrimental and costly by many, immigrants represent a significantly large share of the US economy and generally work undesirable jobs that most Americans will not.

Although illegal immigration has severe consequences and impacts on the entire international community, little has been done to efficiently address this phenomenon or the causes behind it. Both in the United States and in European countries measures taken by leaders represent more of a palliative than comprehensive solution. In the case of the United States much has been done recently to improve security along the US-Mexican border in an effort to reduce the flow of people attempting to cross it illegally, as thousands of immigrants are deported and each year over one million immigrants are kept from reaching the United States. In addition, Mexico was included in the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993, in an attempt to promote growth within the country and reduce the socio-economic inequality vis-à-vis the United States. Nonetheless, few measures efficiently address root causes of immigration, such as poverty, inequality and political instability. Instead, most immigration laws created over the years establish a quota for legal immigrants and prioritize the enhancement of border security and the development of adequate legislation to address illegal immigrants within the United States. In 1952 the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) was created to restrict immigration into the country and has been modified throughout the years, particularly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.<sup>10</sup>

This bill, also known as the McCarran-Walter act, established a quota of immigrants based mostly on ethnicity and country of origin, the quota for

8 Tim Kane and Kirk A. Johnson, The Heritage Foundation: The Real Problem with Immigration, and the Real Solution, available at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Immigration/bg1913.cfm>, accessed on December 5th, 2008.

9 Tim Kane and Kirk A. Johnson, The Heritage Foundation: The Real Problem with Immigration, and the Real Solution, available at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Immigration/bg1913.cfm>, accessed on December 5th, 2008.

10 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, available at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/>

which was later abolished. In the United States under George W. Bush, similar measures were taken to avoid illegal immigration to the country, including the creation of the Secure Fence Act of 2006, authorizing the creation of over 700 miles of double-reinforced fence along the national border from California to Texas<sup>11</sup>. However, some additional legislation seeking to improve the quality of lives of illegal immigrants has been proposed, such as the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors act (DREAM act) of 2001, attempting to provide the opportunity of residency for undocumented high school students.<sup>12</sup>

European leaders have taken a similar approach and have recently strengthened immigration laws and increased border security, particularly in Italy, Spain, United Kingdom and France. The latter nation receives over 100,000 new entries per year, and continues to focus primarily on policies of deterrence when it comes to immigration.<sup>13</sup> In the case of the UK, several immigration laws have also been implemented recently, particularly in preventing the employment of illegal workers through new requirements and punishments for employers, a system known as the Work Permit Regime.<sup>14</sup> In 2008 Italy also began strengthening immigration restrictions, and the government has alluded to a new policy which would allow the state to confiscate property rented to illegal immigrants, restrict granting of asylum, and increase police search for undocumented immigrants within the country.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, the European Union has recently announced plans of addressing more efficiently the causes behind immigration by allocating resources to African countries such as Morocco and Libya in order to increase job creation and quality of life within the

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?vgnextoid=f3829c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD&vgnnextchannel=f3829c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD, accessed on December 6th, 2008.

11 The White House, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061026.html>, accessed on December 6th, 2008.

12 Dream Act Portal, available at <http://dreamact.info/>, accessed on December 6th, 2008.

13 Virginie Guiraudon, Brookings Institution: Immigration Policy in France, available at [http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2002/0101france\\_guiraudon.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2002/0101france_guiraudon.aspx), accessed on December 6th, 2008.

14 Morgan Lewis, The New UK Immigration System: What Employees Need to Know Now, available at <http://www.morganlewis.com/index.cfm/publicationID/670d18c6-60a6-4256-b785-569ecf6d1ed6/fuseaction/publication.detail>, accessed on December 6th, 2008.

15 The Economist: Rome V Roma, available at [http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11412932](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11412932), accessed on December 6th, 2008.

countries. In addition to increasing patrols on the coast, the EU also seeks to develop a program called the "European Job Mobility Portals" in Africa, in order to increase communication and discuss the opportunities of jobs in Europe.<sup>16</sup>

American and European anti-immigration policies have been widely controversial not only within these regions, but also in the international community as a whole, as the inability to properly address illegal immigration and inequality has severe consequences both to developed and developing countries. The increase of border patrol in the United States, as well as the additional miles of double fences approved by the government have contributed to a sense of American isolationism from the rest of the world and an increasing differentiation between first and third world. These radical measures have been widely criticized not only on account of human rights but also for encouraging the spread of xenophobic and racist feelings towards immigrants within the United States. As a result, prejudice against Latin American foreigners has increased tremendously in the past decade, contributing to the dissemination of a new form of racism within the United States. In addition to severe impact of these measures on unauthorized immigrants, increases in border control also significantly affect the U.S., as they are extremely costly and due to the size of the border, have limited efficacy in reducing flow. Increasing security along the borders to this extent has another negative externality: more immigrants choose to remain in the country, therefore attempting to cross the borders only once rather than leaving their home countries seasonally for short periods of time. Recent anti-immigration measures are also quite detrimental to undocumented immigrants and their home countries, particularly due to the impact on their societies and on their families, who are often only able to survive on remittance money sent by those who have illegally crossed the border. Society within developing countries which have experienced a constant flow of emigration are often disrupted and since anti-immigration policies fail to address the root causes of this increasing flow of citizens, there is little improvement for the population of the developing world.

Although criminal, illegal immigration must be addressed with a certain amount of caution, as drastic measures only exacerbate the global north-south divide, as well as inequality within developing countries. In order to efficiently address the issue of illegal immigration, a new level of cooperation must be established between developing and developed

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16 Europa: The European Job Mobility Portal, available at <http://www.europa.eu.int/eures/home.jsp>, accessed on December 6th, 2008.

countries, creating the proper mechanisms to address root causes. Countries such as the United States need to improve their policies on the issue, especially when it comes to dealing with illegal immigrants that are already on the country. Though perhaps widespread amnesty would not be the solution, certain measures such as the creation of temporary or seasonal work permits as well as the establishment of easier access to legal citizenship would allow the state to engage more directly and effectively. In addition, immigrants and their children should be granted access to good education and healthcare, and there should be more government programs to integrate these foreigners within society, with the goal of eradicating prejudice and discrimination. More measures to reduce inequality in the international community should also be put to practice, as the reduction of the gap between the global north and south would not only address the root causes behind immigration but would also gradually reduce the flow of unauthorized immigrants to developed countries. Governments of developing countries should also seek to improve quality of life for their citizens, create more jobs and provide more equal opportunities in order to ensure that it remains profitable for them to remain in their homeland. Different groups within society, such as NGOs and humanitarian organizations should also attempt to work together with local governments in order to provide support to illegal immigrants and their families and in order to improve the living conditions in their own countries. Finally, if developed countries continue to adopt isolationist policies, issues concerning inequality and illegal immigration will never be effectively addressed and may lead to increasing animosity between the global north and south. This may result in serious social consequences for the local population of both developed and developing countries, resulting in a conflictive and uncooperative international community.