



Research Paper

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Similar or Different?

The Migration Crisis in Greece and the USA

Ross S. Mitchamore

(Security Analyst based in USA and RIEAS 2023 Internship Program)

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1, Kalavryton Street, Alimos, Athens, 17456, Greece

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Introduction

This paper aims to discuss migration issues facing Greece and other European nations as well as the United States of America. These countries are being greatly affected by illegal migration in particular, causing societal tensions with citizens and posing significant national security threats. This paper does not intend to compare the countries, rather to discuss migration issues of each one and uncover similar issues.

Overview of Migration – What is it?

Migration, in the global context, is defined as the movement of a person either across an international border (international migration) or within a state (internal migration) for more than one year. The definition of migration is irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and

the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate.¹ This definition, provided by the European Commission, essentially states that migration is the movement of people around the world, both within a country and from one country to another.

Illegal migration, defined by the European Commission, is the movement of people to a “new place of residence or transit that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit, and receiving countries”.² This type of unlawful migration is a serious issue for countries in Europe and for the United States. Illegal migration is not only against the law, but it brings with it a vast majority of other issues.

Illegal Migration in Greece

One of the main entry countries in Europe for illegal migrants is Greece. Greece is ideal for those coming by boat as Greece has the longest coastline in Europe and provides a myriad of landing spots.

Especially during the last decade, Greece has faced a considerable increase in the number of illegal, or irregular, migrants trying to come into the country to either stay or move into other parts of Europe. These migrants often come from the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa due to the close proximity of Greece. While some access points by land are used mostly by migrants coming from or through Turkey, the majority of migration is accomplished by sea for Middle Eastern, North African and Asian migrants. Italy is also a popular landing site for these passages of illegal migrants.

The vast Greek coastline provides more opportunities to secretly slip into Greece and move through Europe. Since Greece is a member of the European Union (EU), where travel between EU countries is less controlled, it will be almost effortless for illegal migrants to move into other European countries without a passport or any form of identification. While some illegal migrants choose to stay in Greece, many move on into other nations in Europe and choose to settle.

¹ *Migration*. Migration and Home Affairs. (n.d.). https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/migration_en

² *Irregular migration*. Migration and Home Affairs. (n.d.-a). https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/irregular-migration_en

The Business of Illegal Migration

Illegal migration is a business. It is smuggling. Only instead of smuggling goods such as drugs or guns, it is smuggling people. The smuggling of migrants a crime perpetrated by criminal organizations that are active in the Mediterranean targeting coastline access with countries like Greece and Italy. These criminal organizations bring migrants into Europe for money and often disguise themselves as commercial vessels such as fishing boats.

While some might not think that these boats carrying migrants are part of a criminal network and are isolated incidents, these organizations are very connected and have many facets and resources. These migrant smuggling networks and organizations have been shown to be quick, agile, and able to adapt to changes or challenges fast and effectively to evade law enforcement. Criminal networks diversify routes, prices and modes of transport based on the demand for facilitation services, logistical needs, and the emergence of new migratory hubs. Intensified law enforcement controls also prompt criminal networks to shift to alternative routes and modi operandi.³

These migrant smuggling operations are well-connected and often collaborate with one another. A report from Europol states that “criminal networks often cooperate with each other on various legs of the smuggling routes. Some large and multi-location criminal networks are able to provide facilitation services across the entire journey. Some collaborations between networks are based on a crime-as-a-service business model, with criminals offering document fraud or the provision of nautical equipment, for example”.⁴ This shows that these illegal migrant smuggling

³ Europol Spotlight Criminal Networks in migrant smuggling. (n.d.).
<https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Europol%20Spotlight%20Report%20-%20Criminal%20networks%20in%20migrant%20smuggling.pdf>

⁴ Europol Spotlight Criminal Networks in migrant smuggling. (n.d.).
<https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Europol%20Spotlight%20Report%20-%20Criminal%20networks%20in%20migrant%20smuggling.pdf>

operations are more than simply migrants paying a person with a boat to take them to Europe. Migrant smuggling is a lucrative criminal business that is on par with those of gun smuggling, drug smuggling, and human trafficking.

Migrant smuggling is not just a business conducted outside the EU, but inside as well. A Europol report states that “most migrant smuggling networks active in the EU are composed of both EU and non-EU nationals, with the majority of individuals being non-EU adult males”.⁵ The report then goes on to state that many who are non-EU nationals legally reside in the EU. This makes migrant smuggling a serious security threat to not only countries like Greece, but to all of Europe.

Threats of Illegal Migration

Illegal migrants don’t simply show up and ask to be taken to Europe, there is a recruiting process. The recruitment of migrants often happens where large concentrations of aspiring illegal migrants have been directed to, such as in reception centers and makeshift camps. A Europol report writes that in these core areas, certain activities of recruitment take place:

“Advertisements of routes and prices on social media platforms is a widely used recruiting method. Criminal networks known to have a higher degree of success in their smuggling activities are able to attract irregular migrants and, in turn, to demand higher fees. Indeed, irregular migrants usually contact smugglers based on recommendations and positive reviews made by previous clients. Other factors that increase the attractiveness of criminal networks are the linguistic and ethnic ties shared between smugglers and irregular migrants.”⁶

After the recruitment of illegal migrants, the criminal network then moves to transport and smuggle the migrants into Greece and other Mediterranean countries. Upon landing in Europe, the migrants either stay where they land or head to other European countries.

⁵ Europol Spotlight Criminal Networks in migrant smuggling. (n.d.). <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Europol%20Spotlight%20Report%20-%20Criminal%20networks%20in%20migrant%20smuggling.pdf>

⁶ Europol Spotlight Criminal Networks in migrant smuggling. (n.d.). <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Europol%20Spotlight%20Report%20-%20Criminal%20networks%20in%20migrant%20smuggling.pdf>

Next, one must look at what groups of people are migrating into Europe. According to the Hellenic Coast Guard in Greece, as of now, the number one nationality of people migrating illegally into Greece are Palestinians. For example, on Wednesday, June 14th, 2023, a fishing trawler carrying illegal migrants heading for Greece was immensely overcrowded and sank, killing many. It was reported that there were about 750 migrants on the boat. Of those killed, more than 300 of them were Pakistani.⁷

The question then becomes: Why has there been such an increase in Pakistani migrants? To answer this question, one must look at the driving force of these migrants. According to the Greek Hellenic Coast Guard, Iran is providing the funding for these migrants to travel and settle in Europe. This bears repeating and understanding what this means for EU citizens. Iran, a notorious state-sponsor of terrorism, is paying for these Pakistani migrants to come into to Europe to set up terrorist sleeper cells throughout Europe. The Hellenic Coast Guard has stated that this is the greatest threat facing the Greek Coast Guard and poses a serious threat to Greece and all of Europe.

Terrorism is a very serious security issue to any country, especially Western nations. Many Western nations have become targets for radical Muslims and have experienced an increase in terrorist attacks in the last several decades. With the majority of irregular migrants coming from Muslim countries, and the EU's lack of ability to control the illegal smuggling of migrants, this problem could only grow worse in the coming years and decades and the impact could be disastrous.

Societal Effects of Illegal Migration

Migration and illegal migration can affect societal norms and the way of life in countries. For example, Western countries that have seen an immense increase in migrants settle in their country have become more susceptible to racial and ethnic tensions. Countries such as France and Germany are prime examples. France has had several race riots in the year 2023 alone.

⁷ Saifi, S., Mogul, R., & Yee, L. (2023, June 19). *Hundreds of Pakistanis dead in Mediterranean migrant boat disaster, official says*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/06/18/asia/pakistan-deaths-migrant-boat-disaster-greece-intl-hnk/index.html>

Germany has a large migrant population that abuses the welfare program, receiving benefits from the government for food, clothing, shelter, and housing. As a result, you have a system that encourages illegal immigrants to migrate to Germany and live off government benefits paid by hard working German citizens while the immigrants add no support to the country.

Another factor that countries experience with migrants that could lead to problems is the lack of willingness to assimilate in the country to which they migrate. Many migrants (both legal and illegal) don't assimilate to the culture of the country that they migrate to, causing tensions between them and native citizens. Nations like Germany and France have large Muslim migrants living in the country that behave as if they are still in their home country which is predominantly Muslim and has a different way of life in general.

Religious conflict is also a possible issue between migrants and natives of Western countries. Many citizens of Western nations practice some form of Christianity, which has been dominant in the West for centuries. The fact that many Western people are primarily Christian, and many migrants are Muslim opens the door for a conflict regarding religion to take place. Combining these differing religions with migrants' refusal to assimilate into European culture could result in a serious concern to the security and well-being of European nations.

Illegal Migration in Europe

The consequences of migration and illegal migration not only affect Greece, but all of Europe as well. Once they break the border into Greece, many illegal migrants move into European nations with welfare systems and programs to be exploited. Germany is a prime example of such locations as the German welfare system is very lenient and prone to exploitation, as noted above. Many illegal migrants (especially Albanians and other former Yugoslav people), in most cases, are bound for Germany where "colonies" of their compatriots already exist. Of the illegal migrants from Albania and former Yugoslavia, 72.2% have Germany as their final destination.⁸

⁸ Bort, E. (2003). Illegal migration and cross-border crime: Challenges at the eastern frontier of the European Union. In *Europe Unbound* (pp. 191-212). Routledge.

This rapid influx of migrants, especially illegal ones, puts a strain on European systems as well as relations between native Europeans and migrants. With many migrants exploiting the systems in European nations, like Germany, and collecting payments while not contributing to society, tensions between natives and migrants are on the rise. In Germany, the government provides a subsidy per child to assist in the cost of raising that child. Illegal migrants are abusing this system and having a large number of children in order to live off of the government subsidies. This angers the natives who are paying taxes to provide these subsidies.

As stated before, many migrants, once they have arrived in a European country, move into “colonies” made up of migrants from their same home country. This leads to the creation of ethnic ghettos and can lead to increased criminal activity. Many youths in these areas form gangs and engage in criminal activity with gangs from other “colonies”, or even natives. These divided groups and gangs could be exploited to carry out terroristic acts by bad actors, which would increase ethnic and racial violence in countries all across Europe.

Europe’s Response to Illegal Migration

Illegal migration is certainly a serious problem that must be addressed by the EU. Even though some people who are participating in illegal migration are simply looking for a better life, it is still illegal, a crime, and must be dealt with. In his article, Paul Collier gives two ways to handle illegal migration – it must either be legalized or the incentive to migrate must be reduced.⁹ Collier goes on to state “Unfortunately, an open immigration policy is not a viable option. Given the much higher living standards offered by the EU than most other regions, lifting controls would rapidly induce an unmanageably large influx. The only reason that illegal immigration is still in the hundreds of thousands, and not the millions, is that it is so hazardous and expensive. Only risk-takers with thousands of dollars in cash can undertake it.”¹⁰

If the EU wants to take on and tackle illegal migration, the incentives to migrate into Europe must be greatly reduced. Recent years have seen an avalanche of policy measures aimed at

⁹ Collier, P. (2014). Illegal migration to Europe: What should be done. *Social Europe*. Available at: <https://www.socialeurope.eu/2014/09/illegal-migration/>(accessed 19 April 2017).

¹⁰ Collier, P. (2014). Illegal migration to Europe: What should be done. *Social Europe*. Available at: <https://www.socialeurope.eu/2014/09/illegal-migration/>(accessed 19 April 2017).

controlling and countering the presence of irregular migrants, especially in the northern European states.¹¹ However, despite funding and political backing for the “fight against illegal immigration,” the presence of irregular migrants remains a fact of life for most EU countries. The EU’s unsuccessful attempts to control and deter illegal migration is an issue that could have devastating consequences. In order to combat the immigrant invasion of European nations, the EU must take more drastic and harsh actions in order to maintain their Western way of life.

The United States and Illegal Immigration

Illegal migration is not isolated to EU countries, but is a problem in many Western nations, including the United States of America. In recent years, the failure of the Biden administration to control the southern border of the country has led to record-breaking amounts of migrants coming into the United States.

Many of these migrants are from Mexico, and many more come from farther down in South America. Migrants from South America travel through Mexico and into the US. Mexico is the most significant source country for U.S. immigration, accounting for 34% of total immigrant arrivals since 1990.¹² Beyond its size, the distinguishing feature of Mexican immigration is that most new arrivals enter the United States illegally.

Large-scale illegal immigration in the United States is a relatively new phenomenon, however. It has provoked political debate about whether to provide public services to illegal immigrants, grant them status as legal residents, or militarize U.S. borders to prevent further illegal inflows.¹³ In the Trump administration, the solution to the border crisis was the construction of a wall on the US - Mexico border. However, when Joe Biden took the presidential office, the construction was halted and illegal migrants began pouring through the gaps of the wall where no border guards were present to stop them.

¹¹ Broeders, D., & Engbersen, G. (2007). The fight against illegal migration: identification policies and immigrants' counterstrategies. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50(12), 1592-1609.

¹² Hanson, G. H. (2006). Illegal migration from Mexico to the United States. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 44(4), 869-924.

¹³ Hanson, G. H. (2006). Illegal migration from Mexico to the United States. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 44(4), 869-924.

These gaps in the border wall have allowed millions of illegal migrants to enter the United States, many undetected. The effects of this surge at the border are overwhelming. Small border towns are being overrun by illegal migrants and private property is being damaged or stolen. The migration to the US is not an easy one and many migrants have perished through drowning in the Rio Grande River or passing away on land due to the arduous journey. Many ranchers report finding dead bodies on their property. There have also been some US Border Patrol agents who have drowned trying to save immigrants from drowning.

Just as in Europe, there are organizations profiting significantly from illegal immigration. These organizations charge exorbitant fees for smuggling illegal immigrants to the US. If the immigrant does not have the funds, they can “pay” for their passage by acting as mules to bring drugs, children, and other items into the country to pay for assistance in entering the US illegally. Even children are being dropped over the border wall or left on the US side of the Rio Grande River alone to be cared for by the US Government agency Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), who is working to contact family members of the children in the US or placing the children in a sponsor home. These efforts to help these children have failed miserably with the agency being overwhelmed with the needs of the children and failure to fully vet those individuals given custody of the children. Tragically, the ORR has lost contact and does not know the location of 85,000 immigrant children.¹⁴ This leads many to believe that there were human trafficking networks set up in the US to obtain custody of the children who may now be suffering the hands of those with nefarious intentions.

According to an article by the Washington Post, the amount of fentanyl being seized by CBP (Customs and Border Protection) has increased in the past few years. In the third quarter of calendar year 2019, some 668 pounds of fentanyl were seized by the Border Patrol, the Office of Field Operations (which manages border checkpoints, including at airports) and AMO. In the third quarter of 2020, that surged to 2,357 pounds. In the third quarter of 2021, the figure was

¹⁴ *Hearing wrap up: Orr director fails to answer questions about 85,000 lost unaccompanied alien children, flawed vetting of sponsors, and more.* United States House Committee on Oversight and Accountability. (2023, April 19). <https://oversight.house.gov/release/hearing-wrap-up-orr-director-fails-to-answer-questions-about-85000-lost-unaccompanied-alien-children-flawed-vetting-of-sponsors-and-more%E2%99%BC/>

2,921 pounds.¹⁵ At the time this article was written, the full data for the third quarter of 2022 was not available, but based on the data that was available, the amount of fentanyl seized almost doubled from the previous year to a staggering 4,400 pounds. This number has only increased with the crisis at the border. Tragically, there has been a four-fold increase in the amount of deaths in the US due to fentanyl over the last 5 years.¹⁶

US border patrol is stretched too thin and is denied the appropriate resources to contain the migrants. This refusal to secure the border by the Biden administration is a massive security risk to the United States. Drugs, terrorist crossings, and many more issues put the security and lives of the American people at risk. With illegal migrants rapidly flowing into the country from the border, the government is unable to identify all individuals crossing the border. This is serious for national security as these unidentified individuals could be terrorists or bad actors coming into the US to attack from the inside. Many Chinese and Middle Eastern individuals (mostly male) have been seen coming across the border, leading some to suspect that they might be spying for the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) or setting up terrorist cells. This lack of identification is extremely dangerous as terrorists, cartel members, human traffickers, foreign spies, and many more bad actors could be freely walking into the United States to exploit and harm the citizens of the nation. Fears of terrorists immigrating to the US have been realized as known or suspected terrorists have been arrested at the US-Mexican border. In April 2023, 16 illegal immigrants on the FBI's Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) were arrested, with even more suspected terrorists arrested since that time.¹⁷ Of course, this begs the question of how many terrorists have slipped through the cracks in the failing US immigration control system.

¹⁵ Bump, P. (2022, October 5). *Analysis | most fentanyl is seized at border crossings - often from U.S. citizens*. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/04/border-fentanyl-seizures-americans/>

¹⁶ McPhillips, D. (2023, May 3). *New report details the deadly rise of fentanyl in the US*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/03/health/fentanyl-overdose-cdc-report/index.html#:~:text=Nearly%2070%2C000%20people%20in%20the,fold%20increase%20over%20five%20years.>

¹⁷ *Homeland Republicans probe admin handling of Afghan, Pakistani nationals on Terrorist Watchlist Crossing Southwest Border – Committee on Homeland Security*. Committee on Homeland Security Homeland Republicans Probe Admin Handling of Afghan Pakistani Nationals on Terrorist Watchlist Crossing Southwest Border Comments. (2023, May 24). <https://homeland.house.gov/2023/05/24/homeland-republicans-probe-admin-handling-of-afghan-pakistani-nationals-on-terrorist-watchlist-crossing-southwest-border/>

This influx of illegal migrants has led to outcry and anger from US citizens over the inability and unwillingness of the Biden administration to act upon the issue. Like Germany, many illegal immigrants are also abusing benefits and programs paid for by the hard-working American citizens as well as those legally migrating to the US. This abuse of benefits as well as the violence and destruction perpetrated by some illegal immigration groups further adds tension between the US and illegal migrants. These tensions between US citizens and illegal migrants could turn violent if ignored. However, some politicians seem keen to stoke the flames and actively race-bait many people in the US in an attempt to gain political power.

The 2024 US Presidential Election is an immensely important election not just for the United States, but also for the world. Many countries are hopeful that a strong US president can restore power and peace in the world. Americans are hopeful that a stronger president can resolve the border crisis and restore American prosperity throughout the nation. America is the leader of the free world and, as such, requires a strong leader to lead the nation and the free world.

Similarities Between Countries

Common effects of illegal migration can be seen among countries dealing with migration issues. The United States and Germany share many commonalities, such as vast amounts of migrants, tensions between migrants and natives or citizens, and governments unable or unwilling to act in curtailing the inflow. Greece and the USA have a common threat as they both have large borders that are easily susceptible to migrant smuggling. While certain issues might only pertain to certain countries, such as the significant impact of drugs being smuggled in with migrants in the US, illegal immigration is prevalent in many Western countries.

Conclusion

Western nations have some of the best standards of living and many people are willing to put themselves in danger to live in these countries and acquire these standards of living. These desperate people are an easy target to be taken advantage of and exploited. There are many others not looking to assimilate into a better way of life, but to destroy the way of life for the citizens of the receiving country or take advantage of those aspiring to migrate. There are also many who profit greatly from smuggling drugs, weapons, and humans into other countries and in

doing so, harm the peaceful citizens. There are more similarities than differences in illegal immigration issues EU nations and the US.

Regardless of the country experiencing the influx of migrants, illegal migration is a serious national security issue to any nation that experiences it and must be dealt with, or the consequences could be considerable. The beginning of such consequences have been seen in Germany and the US already. Continuing to downplay or ignore the crisis of illegal immigration could lead to further and more dire consequences, such as riots and terror attacks. The EU countries and the US must make illegal immigration and border control a top priority in national security. With known terrorists penetrating borders, failure to control national borders could result in disastrous consequences and destruction, changing the face of the Western world forever.

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