

A critical assessment of a student policy paper –
Policy on Immigration from the Southwest and Resulting Border Control Security
Implications

Overall, the nature of this policy paper corresponds to the requirement in the course in the sense that it does not include in-depth research but rather uses public data and information. The structure of the paper also fits the requirements. However, the paper significantly lacks systematic elaboration and the use of models and analytical tools. In the following there is an assessment of the various components of the paper.

Introduction

The introduction presents the problem in general terms presenting data and figures in order to demonstrate why the phenomena is a public problem. The authors even go little deeper into the problem identification – e.g., dealing with the economic costs of the phenomena meaning negative externalities.

The authors do not present their methodology in the introduction or later on. This is a requirement in a systematic policy paper but is absent here (Point 4 in the outline guide). The authors do not present explicitly what are the goals of their plan, what are exactly the criteria to evaluate the alternatives and in general what are the guiding principles for the evaluation. This should appear immediately after the introduction.

Points 1-3 in the outline guide are presented well.

Points 4-5 in the outline guide are not discussed. Point 4 does not appear at all. Point 5 is very implicit and is very difficult to find throughout the paper.

SUMMARY OF POLICY ACTIONS TO DATE AND THE CURRENT POLICY ENVIRONMENT

This and the following section are supposed to cover points 6-8 in the outline guide. Practically, this section maps the players and the policies undertaken. It helps understand the problems but does not use professional/theoretical models that can help derive policy alternatives. For example, tables 2 and 3 and especially the text after each one of them should be presented, or translated into, professional terms. After Table 3 the authors write "Some of the effects of these policies have been good and have increased border security; however others have met unintended consequences that the policy alternatives within this paper seek to that some of the measures were good and others not". Yet, it is not clear what exactly "good" means and how it is measured, why increased border security is good and at what price it has been achieved, what are the unintended consequences and how to evaluate them and so forth.

SYNTHESIS OF THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF FACTORS

This section continues the former one attempting to integrate the various aspects of the problem. However, what is actually presented is the debate and the different views regarding the various aspects in a way that raise more questions than answers. It more a description than an analysis. If it supposed to correspond to point 8 in the guiding outline, it is entirely not in the direction. We do not get clear idea of the main barriers, key players, policy feedbacks, lock-in effect and so forth.

SCOPE OF ALTERNATIVES TO ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

This section identifies the policy alternative while the next section evaluates them. These two sections correspond to point 9 in the outline guide.

In this section, it is not clear what are exactly the alternative, where do they come from and how they are connected to the problems. It seems that the alternatives are simply those that already exist and debated.

The correct way to identify the alternatives is looking systematically at the models that describe the problem (absent in this paper) and use their solution logic to trace policy alternatives. These can be tools in the context of market and government failures, new institutionalism, game theory, strategic planning.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES, ANALYSIS, AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

This section includes the evaluation of alternatives through presenting their positive and negative consequences. This is the correct way to work, yet, unlike what is done here, the evaluation should be based on models and professional tools.

The evaluation also tries to consider the barriers and hence the practicality of each alternative (part of point 10 in the outline guide). Yet, since previous stages were ill-defined, this aspect of the evaluation is also problematic because it is not systematic and clearly defined. For example, in the text after Figure 3 the authors refer to a Senator and specific population. It is not clear however why to consider the attitudes of this specific Senator and not others, what about the President position and so forth.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

This section presents the policy recommendation that corresponds to the last component of point 10 in the outline guide. Yet, it is quite superficial ignoring the complexity of the issue. Specifically, at this stage we should consider potential combinations of strategies, building gradual policy change and so forth.

Conclusion

Too general without connecting the solutions to the problems.