

When Refugee Resettlement Proceeds, What Comes Next?

- **Castles and Miller's Model of Resettlement and Some Policy Implications** -

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This paper aims to illustrate how Indo-Chinese refugee resettlement has proceeded in Japan, by referring Castles and Miller's (1993) model of resettlement. In doing so, the paper also attempts to show some policy implication on refugee acceptance. Although more than 30 years have passed since a first group of Indo-Chinese refugees was accepted in Japan, the debates on refugee's problem still tend to focus on how we accept refugees, not on how refugees have resettled in Japan. However, in considering how we receive refugees, to understand the process of refugee resettlement, and what kind of social phenomena we should expect is essential. As refugees are more likely to be permanent residents or citizens in Japan, changes and dynamics of their economic/social situations in longer period should be much more focused than ever.

In order to achieve this, this paper will apply Castles and Miller's model of immigrant resettlement to illustrate the process of Indo-Chinese refugee resettlement. Although their model originally applied to grasp immigrant resettlement, it is also partly applicable to understand refugee resettlement.

They argue that immigrant resettlement process can be summarized in a "four-stage model". These "four-stage" are as follows:

"stage 1: temporary labour migration of young workers, remittance of earnings and continued orientation to the homeland; stage 2: prolonging of stay and the development of social networks based on kinship or common area of origin and the need for mutual help in the new environment; stage 3: family reunion, growing consciousness of long term settlement, increasing orientation towards the receiving country, and emergence of ethnic communities with their own institutions (associations, shops, cafes, agencies, professions); stage 4: permanent settlement which, depending on the policies of the government and the behavior of the population of the receiving

country, leads either to legal status and eventual citizenship, or to political exclusion, socioeconomic marginalization and the formation of permanent ethnic minorities.” (Castles and Miller, 1993: 25)

By showing the graphs on changes in the number of new entry as well as in the number of permanent residents from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the paper firstly examine to what extent the “Castles and Miller”’s model is applicable to analyse the socioeconomic situation of Indo-Chinese refugees.

The changes in the number of new entry among three countries shows quite similar pattern. First peak came in 1978 and kept on until 1982. After that, new entry moderately continued until the 1990 revision of Immigration Control Law. Especially, the number of new entry from these three countries has mostly increased during 1981 to 1983. It is worth saying that the year 1981 to 1983 overlapped with the period when the number of refugee admission has sharply increased. The paper will also show the changes in the number of refugee admissions. And around this period, the increase in the number of new entry can be said to be intertwined with the increase in the number of refugee admissions. The increase in the number of new entry from Cambodia can be seen in 1992, and from Laos in 1990, and these increases also overlapped with the increase in number of refugee admissions.

This paper then shows the sharp increase in the number of new entry whose visa is short visit including “visiting relatives” from above three countries after 1995. For example, the number of “short visit” new entry from Vietnam more than doubled from 1995 to 1996. From Cambodia, the number of “short visit” new entry tripled from 1995 to 1996. Different from the period from 1981 to 1983, however, the number of refugee admissions has sharply decreased since 1995. This means that the increase in the number of new entry no longer intertwined with the increase in the number of refugee admissions. Together with the visa status as “visiting relatives”, it is possible to assume that the increase in the number of new entry consists of “refugee family” rather than refugees. Around this period the new entry shifts from “refugee” to “refugee family”.

Then, looking back to Castles and Miller’s model, family reunion comes as stage 3, which will occur after immigrants expect their longer stay in host society, and develop their social networks based on kinship or common area of origin and the need for mutual help in the new environment. Family reunion in Indo-Chinese community in Japan often occurs via kinship network. In fact, author found many cases in which Vietnamese or Cambodian men living in Japan find their wives from their country of

origin via “auntie” i.e. kinship network. At least, stage 2 and stage 3 of the model can be seen in resettlement process of Indo-Chinese refugees. However, as for stage 4, the number of permanent residents has also increased since 1988, 10 years later of first refugee acceptance. This means that the increase in the number of permanent resident occurred prior to family reunion. Still, we can say that Castle and Miller’s model of resettlement is applicable to illustrate the resettlement of refugees.

This paper then will focus on interpreting what stage 3 really means. According to this model, when the resettlement process proceeds, family reunion probably occurs. Family reunion often includes young adolescent as well as young wives, as “family” is normally equivalent to dependants of the refugees, i.e., his/her nuclear family. Family members, thus, are not necessarily refugee. This means that when refugee resettlement proceeds, there is a possibility that a new pattern of immigrant flow occurs. Refugee community in 30 years time, thus is not really “stable” community but “dynamic” community, in which a lot of new comers consistently flow in, and it is these new comers who bring diversity in refugee community.

As for policy maker, this is the face they will face in 30 years after first refugee is accepted. Not only the problem of generation gap between first generation and second generation, but also the problem of newcomer is consistently there in refugee community. Refugee community often faces aging population, and they are normally economically vulnerable as they have no pension, no chances of being employed, at the same time lack of nursery schools and baby sitter for newly married newcomer wives who have strong will to find employment in order to send their wages to their home. It is this diversity which policy makers have to take it into account in deciding accepting refugees.

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