
MEXICAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES AFTER NAFTA

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The United States and Mexico have been closely integrated for over a century through flows of goods, capital, and people. The scope and nature of economic integration between the two countries has been a major topic of public debate and legislative action during the last five years, with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) representing a clear acknowledgement and systematization of this relationship. The flow of people—primarily from Mexico to the United States—through temporary migration (the so-called guest-worker programs), legal migration, and illegal migration has also been a major topic of public debate in the United States. The migration portion of the debate, whether dealing with authorized or unauthorized immigration, however, has not led to any binational agreements or accords.

To increase the chances that a free trade agreement would be enacted, U.S. policymakers chose to avoid the sticky issue of illegal migration within the NAFTA context. Thus, no formal negotiations concerning migration between Mexico and the United States took place.¹ An implicit assumption of the treaty was that it would ultimately substitute flows of goods and financial resources for the movement of people.² This reasonable expectation followed a key recommendation of the U.S. government's Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development.³ The expectation of reduced migration, however, is a long-term goal and appears unrealistic within even the next decade. As large numbers of Mexicans continue to cross the border, an explicit discussion of "the problem of immigration" has again come to the forefront in the United States. This unilateral discussion is occurring within the context of a severe economic crisis in Mexico and rising anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States.

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Throughout the long history of U.S.-Mexican integration, migration has been the most consistent and is the most advanced aspect of the binational relationship. Currently, Mexico is the world's leading country of emigration, with most emigrants destined for the United States. Attention given in the United States to the migration relationship historically has waxed and waned, largely in response to general economic conditions. Low-wage workers—often Mexican immigrants—are recruited when their labor is needed but are perceived as a public burden during economic stagnations and recessions. In Mexico, decisions to migrate are based not only on perceived opportunities in the United States, but on social, economic, and political factors at home.

Illegal migration from Mexico to the United States cannot be completely controlled. The question is whether it can be reduced and maintained at a tolerable level while protecting democratic values and civil liberties. Management of the situation is very difficult, however, when many Americans perceive the migratory flow to be completely out-of-control. Absent any bilateral agreements, the Mexican government is concerned about defending the rights of its nationals who are in the United States. In contrast, the United States focuses on the "illegality" of the Mexican migrants and the reinforcement of border controls, while putting pressure on Mexico to help control illegal border crossings. Rather than continue with such an impasse and mischaracterization of the issues, it is incumbent upon both countries to develop policies to better manage the migration process.

This article identifies the primary economic factors and policy decisions that have influenced levels of immigration from Mexico to the United States over the past few years as well as the factors likely to impact future levels of immigration. It then raises policy issues for both the United States and Mexico that should be considered in discussions and negotiations surrounding the ongoing migration relationship between the two countries.

Recent Migration Flows

Currently over 1 million immigrants from countries around the world come to the United States each year. Approximately 700,000 are legal permanent residents, 100,000-150,000 are refugees, and an estimated 200,000-300,000 are undocumented. Mexico is the leading country of both legal and illegal immigration to the United States. Approximately 14 percent of all legal immigrants to the United States were from Mexico during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s; this percentage jumped to 23 during the 1980s. The best estimates indicate that approximately 200,000 Mexican immigrants (legal and undocumented) are coming to the United States annually.⁴ Approximately 9 percent of all legal immigrants and 35 to 40 percent of all unauthorized immigrants currently living in the United States are from Mexico.⁵

These statistics fail to capture the dynamic nature of the migration relationship. Many immigrants to the United States, both legal and undocumented, spend part of each year living in Mexico or return to Mexico to live

permanently after several years spent in the United States. While it is difficult to ascertain the number of illegal entrants to this country, it is even more difficult to determine how long these immigrants remain in the United States. There is no question, however, that the flow of remittances to Mexico of money earned in the United States as well as the temporary and permanent return of Mexicans who have spent some time in the United States is having a significant economic and cultural impact on many areas of Mexico.

While in the United States, Mexican immigrants tend to live in certain areas and work in certain occupations. California is the largest immigrant-receiving state; it absorbs approximately one-third of all legal immigrants and one-half of all undocumented immigrants. Among recent immigrants from Mexico, over 50 percent list California as their intended state of residence and slightly over 40 percent list their major occupation as within the category of farming, forestry, and fishing.⁶ Interviews with undocumented immigrants also show over 50 percent having California as their destination. Almost 45 percent of undocumented male immigrants worked in agriculture in the United States while almost 85 percent of women worked in domestic services.⁷ Future patterns of Mexican migration will thus have differential impacts on particular regions and particular occupations.

Mexican migration represents a critical factor in both the Mexican and U.S. economies. Approximately 10 percent of Mexico's workers depend on the U.S. labor market for most of their annual earnings.⁸ At the same time, many industries in the United States that employ unauthorized workers, particularly labor-intensive agriculture, enjoy a competitive advantage as they can pay significantly lower wages than they would have to pay domestic workers.

U.S. agriculture's desire for Mexican workers historically has been a key factor in keeping Mexican labor migration an item on the U.S. policy agenda. For years, U.S. agriculture has been able to influence the legislative outcome to ensure that Mexican workers—whether temporary workers, "green-carders," or undocumented workers—remain accessible. The debate is complicated by abuses that have occurred under some programs and the vulnerable position that accompanies unauthorized status, which opens these workers to both labor law and human rights violations in the United States while at the same time making them more attractive as employees. The availability of cheap labor in Mexico and the extent to which Mexican immigrants provide this labor to U.S. employers are as significant in the economic integration of these two countries as are measures of binational trade and investments.

To understand the issue of future migration flows from Mexico to the Unit-

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ed States, it is necessary to explore developments in three discrete arenas: patterns of internal Mexican migration, changes in the rural sector of Mexico, and changes in the rural sector of the United States.

Development of the Border Area

Internal migration in Mexico, to a large extent, has been shaped by factors emanating from the United States. Migration within Mexico, in turn, has influenced the flow of Mexicans into the United States. Mexico's northern states historically have been distinct from the rest of the country. Prior to the early nineteenth century, the Mexican border region was characterized by its geographic and political isolation from the rest of Mexico.⁹ By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Mexican economy was opened to foreigners as never before, allowing Anglo-American investors to enter into transportation, mining, ranching, and agriculture in Mexico. These U.S.-based companies hired large numbers of Mexican workers who soon began a steadily increasing migratory flow toward similar but better paying jobs across the border. As agricultural production increased dramatically in the southwest United States and California, much of the necessary labor originated in the Mexican borderlands. This bound the two sides of the border closer together and oriented the economy of northern Mexico further toward the United States rather than toward the rest of Mexico.¹⁰

Initiated as a response to war-generated labor shortages in U.S. agriculture in the 1940s, the Bracero Program helped to attract Mexican workers to the border region for the next 20 years. The Bracero Program was a bilateral labor-contract arrangement that supplied Mexican workers to U.S. agriculture. Many of these workers remained in Mexican border towns after the termination of the program in 1964. In addition to this newly displaced labor force, the U.S.-driven economic growth along Mexico's northern border attracted additional migrants from the interior areas of Mexico. By 1960, the six largest Mexican border cities had grown three to ten times their size in 1940, while medium-sized cities had doubled and tripled in size.

The significant economic disparity between rural and urban areas in Mexico helps explain the patterns of internal migration. In 1984, 80 percent of rural families were living at or below the poverty level. Nineteen percent of Mexico's total population, of which 70 percent lived in rural areas, were found to be living in conditions of extreme poverty. Total income of the rural population was 47 percent of the corresponding urban population; the standard of living was less than half of that in the cities; and the value of one hour's work in rural areas was less than half that of the national economy.¹¹

Internal migration to the northern border cities in Mexico is also part of a broader pattern of rural to urban migration that accompanies industrialization. In 1940, 20 percent of Mexico's population lived in localities with more than 15,000 inhabitants; in 1970 this percentage increased to 38 percent, and in 1990, to 57 percent.¹² Other changes in the rural sector, including the gradual *descampesinización* of the rural population (a shift away from survival based

on agriculture and toward reliance on income generated outside of the rural sector), show the declining importance of the rural sector in the Mexican economy. Mexico is still in the stage of development in which this process will continue for the foreseeable future. This will ensure continued growth along the border, as well as continued pressure for international migration because job growth seldom keeps pace with population growth during periods of industrial expansion.

Mexico's emphasis on populating and developing the border area has made it a relatively wealthy region within Mexico, despite the glaring economic disparity between the Mexican and U.S. sides of the border. The six Mexican border states are ranked among the top one-third of all Mexican states based on a national *marginación social* (quality of life) index.¹³ The relative prosperity of the region clearly "pulls" Mexican migrants to the border area.

The culture of Mexican border towns also encourages immigration to the United States. Migrants from the interior gather in these towns waiting for the opportunity to cross the border illegally, teenagers sneak across for fun, and "commuters" legally cross each day for work and shopping. These ongoing movements make the possibility of immigration to the United States part of the day-to-day reality in Mexican border communities. In a study of Mexican migrants crossing illegally into the United States, it was found that 27 percent of all migrants lived in the six border states; 17 percent were residents of Tijuana, Mexicali, Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo Laredo, and Matamoros, although the total population of these cities represents only 3.3 percent of the population of Mexico.¹⁴

Mexico's Rural Sector

Changes in Mexico's rural sector will have a critical impact on future Mexican migration to the United States. Agriculture employs approximately 26 percent of Mexico's work force, approximately three-fourths of whom are corn producers.¹⁵ Trade liberalization under both NAFTA and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, combined with Mexico's economic restructuring of its agricultural sector, is expected to lead to a steep decline in the price of corn, which for years has been supported heavily by the Mexican government. The potential of these changes to transform Mexican agriculture is enormous. Changes in trade policy have meant removal of import controls and licensing and a reduction in tariffs; changes in internal market policy have meant increased private trading and less government intervention; and changes to the Mexican Constitution have eased constraints on land tenure as a way to encourage investment in agriculture.¹⁶

To put recent changes into context, it is helpful to review the widespread trends that have been occurring in Mexico's rural areas over the last decade. During the 1980s, *descampesinización* increased, with farmworker families surviving less and less on agricultural activity and more on income from family members working outside of the rural sector. Since 1989, the Mexican government has withdrawn economic supports that had benefited large- and small-

scale producers and farmworkers in the rural areas. This has led to farm foreclosures and the greatest crisis in what had been the most prosperous agricultural regions: el Bajío, Sinaloa, Sonora, and La Laguna. Because agriculture generates many economic opportunities in cities as well, the agricultural crisis also hit farmers indirectly by reducing economic activity in nearby urban areas.¹⁷

Several models have predicted the impact that changes to Mexico's agricultural sector will have on labor displacement and international migration. Although they were developed prior to NAFTA and the current economic crisis, they are still instructive in terms of projecting future effects. One model

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estimates that changes in the Mexican economy will lead to approximately 1.4 million rural Mexicans being displaced over the next few years, with 800,000 migrating within Mexico and 600,000 immigrating to the United States.¹⁸ A similar model projects that 40 percent of those involved in Mexican corn production (700,000 workers) will be displaced and will ultimately leave the rural areas.¹⁹ Another model takes issue with the dire predictions of massive out-migration from Mexico's rural sectors, arguing that most corn growers produce primarily for household consumption rather than for the market, so they will not be directly affected by a fall in the price of corn.²⁰

The role that labor-intensive fruit and vegetable production in Mexico will play over the next decade is critical to understanding Mexican migration patterns to the United States. Currently, fruits and vegetables account for approximately one-half of all Mexican agricultural products entering the U.S. market.²¹ Many assume that, based on the lower costs of labor in Mexico, that country will have a clear advantage

in the production of such labor-intensive commodities. A widespread shift of fruit and vegetable production from the United States to Mexico is not feasible, however, because of the high cost of other agricultural inputs in Mexico; the lower level of Mexican worker productivity; problems with water availability, soil quality, and transportation infrastructure in Mexico; and the complementary seasons of crops grown in both Mexico and the United States. Nevertheless, we can expect that there will continue to be a gradual increase in the production of labor-intensive fruits and vegetables in Mexico. It is unlikely, however, that employment from this growth will be able to absorb the number of farmers that will abandon small-scale agricultural production in Mexico's rural areas. Employment on large fruit and vegetable operations is also likely to increase migration to the United States because such employ-

ment is highly seasonal and wages and earnings are low, necessitating a longer work cycle. In fact, a study of Mixtec farmworkers in California and Oregon found that two-thirds of these workers had been employed in Baja California vegetable production prior to seeking agricultural work in the United States.²²

The current economic crisis in Mexico means that job growth—projected to occur as a result of economic reforms and liberalization in Mexico—is essentially frozen. The continued growth of labor-intensive fruit and vegetable production, as is the case with many other industries, depends to a large extent on attracting foreign investment as well as on a return of Mexican flight capital. While the dramatic devaluation of the peso makes Mexican products attractive in the short run, the instability caused by spiraling inflation and an economic recession will inhibit widespread investment and job growth for at least the near future.

The United States' Rural Sector

Labor-intensive fruit and vegetable production in the United States has long been dependent on an immigrant labor force.²³ More than any other industry, and more than at any other time this century, U.S. agriculture depends on foreign-born workers to meet its highly seasonal labor demand. Whether by need or design, the result has been the development of a binational labor force composed of an increasing proportion of unauthorized workers. According to the National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS), 60 percent of all farmworkers and 88 percent of all first year farmworkers are foreign-born, with a vast majority coming from Mexico.²⁴

The production of fruits and vegetables in the United States has been growing over the past 20 years as a result of an increase in consumption and exports as well as a surplus of inexpensive labor, exacerbated by the continued influx of unauthorized workers. There is very little to indicate that this situation is likely to change. The increased demand for seasonal agricultural labor has been met largely through the employment of farm labor contractors who generally hire recent immigrants. Nearly one-half of workers employed by farm labor contractors lack work authorization, compared to 23 percent of workers hired directly by growers.²⁵

Farm labor contractors are important players for understanding the migration process, as the growth in farm labor contracting facilitates the continued influx of immigrants.²⁶ Contractors serve as recruiters in Mexico, in rural areas of the United States, and in U.S. cities. They allow new immigrants, particularly single men, to establish job contacts and move quickly into employment in the United States. Farm labor contractors also serve as culture brokers, providing new immigrants (for a fee) with housing, transportation, and access to other services necessary for their survival.

The primary mechanism, however, that continues to support ongoing migration from Mexico is the development of well-established social networks composed of previous immigrants to the United States. One study found, "The

primary means by which agricultural employers recruit farmworkers and by which workers seek employment are networks based on personal, family, neighborhood, and village contacts."²⁷ Once in the United States, kin and friends aid new migrants by providing information about the job market and the area; sharing lodging, food, and transportation; and serving as an ongoing source of social relationships and support.

The well-established recruitment structures of labor contractors and family networks have not only eased entry into the United States, but also allowed for the diffusion of Mexican immigrant workers throughout the country. While Mexican immigrants tend to gravitate to particular states and occupations, no longer are they confined to these specific areas. Many Mexican-born agricultural workers now work on the East Coast and some former migrant farmworkers have settled permanently into nonagricultural occupations such as seafood and poultry processing.²⁸

In short, seeking employment in the United States will continue to serve as an attractive option for Mexican citizens, for several reasons. The social process of migration is well entrenched and the network of Mexican immigrants has spread throughout the United States. The wage differential between wages in Mexico and wages in the United States is approximately 8:1. Today more sectors of the U.S. labor market are turning to immigrant labor and paying workers lower wages than they would have to pay domestic workers, often in violation of labor standards. The U.S. labor-intensive agriculture sector, which traditionally hires Mexican workers and continues to be the largest employer of immigrant labor, is expanding and its demand for labor is increasing.

Future Migration

Illegal migration from Mexico to the United States is likely to increase substantially during the next decade and beyond. Critical pressures on the Mexican side include:

- The process of economic development leads to the movement of people from the countryside into the cities, yet cities seldom have enough jobs to support this influx.²⁹ This is particularly the case in Mexico under present economic circumstances. One solution is international migration.
- For years, Mexico has provided government support to rural areas through systems of land tenure, price supports for producers, and reduced prices of agricultural products for consumers. Mexico is withdrawing this system of support, which will lead to the displacement of small- and mid-scale farmers, farmworkers, and members of their families from the rural areas.
- Mexico has entered into a trade agreement with the United States, a country that can produce corn in huge quantities and at relatively low prices. This will further undercut corn prices in Mexico, a major source of income for the rural areas. As a result, more workers are likely to be displaced.
- Since December of 1994, Mexico has been reeling from an economic crisis.

The peso was devalued by 50 percent, inflation and unemployment soared, wages stagnated, credit was paralyzed, and agricultural prices hit rock bottom. Despite economic recovery programs in Mexico, political and economic instability will increase pressures to emigrate.

- Technological improvements in Mexican industries will decrease the number of new jobs created. Jobs that are created in labor-intensive agriculture will be seasonal and on a complementary cycle with such jobs in the United States.
- Sixty percent of Mexico's population is under age 25. This compares to 35 percent for the United States. As these youth enter the labor force, Mexico will continue to produce a substantial labor surplus for the foreseeable future.
- Decades of immigration from Mexico have led to a culture that accepts migration north as a plausible and acceptable response to economic hardships. One result is that many villages in traditional sending areas in Mexico are highly dependent on remittances for their economic survival.³⁰

In the United States, policymakers and voters are clearly expressing a desire to limit legal immigration and eliminate illegal immigration. The Clinton administration and Congress are working on proposals to achieve these ends. However, attempts to control immigration often have perverse effects. For example, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which aimed to reduce illegal immigration, actually worked to encourage this flow.³¹ Likewise, current proposals to reduce legal immigration may, in fact, serve to increase illegal immigration. For example, if efforts to limit the categories of individuals who would qualify for legal immigration through a family unification policy are successful, such unification would likely continue to occur even if it were outside the legal context. So, while legal immigration is clearly "controllable," the United States has made little progress toward developing policies and practices that would reduce—much less control—illegal immigration. Various other factors point to increasingly high levels of illegal immigration to the United States from Mexico:

- Labor-intensive agriculture continues to expand and an increasing number of U.S. industries are utilizing a system of labor contracting and employing immigrant workers in order to keep wages low. Fraudulent documents are easy to obtain and, even without them, unauthorized workers who come to the United States are able to find employment.
- Employers in immigrant-dominated industries tend to hire labor contractors, both to facilitate recruiting and to avoid liability for immigration and/or labor law violations. These contractors are a main source of employment for unauthorized workers. As competition increases among contractors, the profit margin diminishes, which in turn fosters the additional hiring of easily exploited unauthorized workers.
- Migrant networks are already firmly in place throughout the United States; they ease the transition and reduce the costs for new migrants from Mexico.

- Many Mexican agricultural workers who are now legal U.S. residents reside for some part of the year in Mexico. Their cyclical pattern of migration has increased the contacts of these young men in Mexican villages and has made it easier and cheaper for their friends and relatives to cross the border with them.
- On the whole, the United States has been unsuccessful at preventing illegal border crossings and at deterring potential immigrants from attempting to cross.
- The enforcement of employer sanctions continues to be a low priority within the budget of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, resulting in few workplace inspections and even fewer punitive actions against employers who hire unauthorized workers.

As a result of these factors, Mexican immigration is likely to continue at extremely high levels well into the next century. An important, if unfortunate, factor that may discourage Mexican migration to the United States is the increasingly strong anti-immigrant sentiment that is sweeping the country. Despite the continuing lure of jobs in the United States, if immigrants fear that they will be faced with hostility and even violence, as occurred recently in California and in parts of Europe, they will likely endure more severe economic hardships in their home country before making the decision to migrate.

Policy Considerations

From the U.S. perspective, migration policy issues primarily focus on the need to discourage the entrance and employment of unauthorized immigrants. From the Mexican perspective, the primary issues revolve around the nature of Mexico's economic development and the role that the United States should play in such development. Various mechanisms and structures for binational cooperation were developed during the NAFTA negotiations. These bodies must recognize that the movement of people is a primary factor in the economic integration of the two countries and anticipate the impact that policy decisions will have on cross-border migration. This recognition should lead to the development of similar binational mechanisms to deal with the ongoing issues of migration that accompany increased economic integration. Four areas of important policy considerations are border controls, workplace controls, guest-worker programs, and Mexican economic development.

I. Border Controls

The United States has been adopting an increasingly "get tough" approach at the border. This includes an increase in manpower and equipment to patrol the border as well as specific initiatives in areas that historically have had very high numbers of illegal border crossings. This approach affects political perceptions more than long-term deterrence. The physical and economic costs

to Mexicans who want to cross the border, with a few tragic exceptions, are still very low. Several issues should be addressed before the United States simply continues to pour resources into border control as a response to the problem:

- While forcing people to obey the law, a basic respect for human rights must be maintained. A militarization of the border is likely to lead to abuses that are counter to democratic principles, increase political turmoil in Mexico, and cause serious problems in the international arena. The current atmosphere seems to encourage abuses, as evidenced by a recent incident of police brutality in Riverside, California, where police from the sheriff's department were captured on film beating two Mexicans they believed were smuggling aliens into the United States.
- During times of fiscal constraints, does it make sense to further criminalize illegal entry into the United States? Resources and funds must be available for the prisons and the legal costs that this would entail. Should such expenses be a priority?
- Is it a wise use of funds to capture and deport unauthorized immigrants by escorting them to the other side of the border? The majority simply wait briefly and then reattempt illegal entry. While it would be more expensive to return individuals to their homes in the interior, it would drastically increase the costs of illegal migration to the United States and could have a substantially stronger deterrent effect.

While border control is in some sense a U.S. problem, it appears to be an issue that should be addressed by increased binational discussion and cooperation. Mexico also loses from continued high levels of emigration, both in terms of its standing in the international arena as well as through the loss of significant numbers of its healthiest and most motivated workers. The Bi-National Commission currently meets to discuss border issues; however, U.S. policymakers frequently ignore the role that Mexico should play at various levels of deliberation.

II. Workplace Controls

In 1986, the United States acted to make it illegal to employ unauthorized workers. Employer sanctions, however, have clearly been ineffective at eliminating the magnet of available jobs and thus reducing illegal immigration. Both inadequate enforcement³² and the availability of fraudulent documents account for this. In many industries that rely on immigrant workers, employer penalties for violating labor laws are seen as simply a cost of doing business. Even if enforcement of employer sanctions were strengthened, the verification process invites confusion, discrimination, and fraud. Currently steps are being taken to minimize the range of documentation that can be used to establish work authorization, to pilot various programs for effective verification of documents, and to increase resources for enforcement. The major issue that arises in strengthening employer sanctions through increased en-

forcement and simplified verification is to protect the civil liberties and rights to privacy of legally authorized workers while building an easily accessible, computerized database that is useful to employers.

This approach to eliminating the employment of unauthorized workers overlooks the fact that the use of unauthorized workers remains cost-effective for employers. Not only are these workers paid lower wages, but their unauthorized status makes them more docile, malleable, and less likely to press for their workplace rights.

There is no question that immigration is a labor issue and is tied to the overall economy. Not only can the employment of unauthorized workers exclude domestic workers from particular labor markets, but the prevalence of unauthorized workers increases the supply of available workers to the point that it depresses wages and working conditions. There is also a significantly higher incidence of labor law violations in immigrant-dominated labor markets. The "attractiveness" of unauthorized workers could be reduced significantly by coordinating enforcement and information-sharing among labor and immigration agencies and significantly increasing penalties in cases where there are violations of both immigration and labor law.

III. Guest-Worker Programs

During the debate preceding IRCA, the agricultural industry attempted to gain special treatment by admitting to employing a largely illegal work force. Their attempts led to a special legalization program for agriculture that provided legal status to almost 1 million Mexicans and continues to have a powerful impact on levels of legal immigration (through family unification) and naturalization. Less than a decade later, the agricultural industry is again admitting to reliance on an illegal work force and asking for a specific program to ensure that this work force will not disappear in the event that employer sanctions are effectively enforced. This program would take the form of a nonimmigrant or guest-worker program, much like the Bracero Program of 30 years ago. Again, the goal would be to turn unauthorized workers into legal ones, although these workers would return to their country of origin as soon as their labor was no longer needed in the United States.

Our past experience with the Bracero Program raises the following issues:

- Guest-worker programs lay the groundwork for patterns of illegal immigration that begin during and continue well after termination of the program. While this could be minimized by allowing only workers from well-established sending areas in Mexico to qualify for the program, this approach may affect internal migration flows more than international ones.
- Guest workers depress the wages and working conditions in the occupations into which they are introduced. This would continue to discourage domestic workers from seeking employment in agriculture as well as to discourage this industry from ever moving beyond provision of substandard wages and working conditions.

- If such a program were developed for agriculture, why should it not be available to other immigrant-dominated industries?

If the United States does move toward establishing a new nonimmigrant program, it is imperative that Mexico—as the likely sending country—be involved in planning the manner in which such a program would be structured and implemented.

IV. Development in Mexico

The nature of economic development in Mexico will strongly influence flows of migration. Increased employment opportunities throughout the country and support of small- and mid-scale businesses must be priorities in order to reduce the movement of workers into the United States. Currently, Mexico's industrial structure includes high technology enclaves surrounded by the use of relatively primitive technology. There needs to be a massive incorporation of new technologies into small- and medium-size industries.³³

Targeted development and investment could be achieved through tax incentives that would encourage economic growth in the interior of the country, particularly in central and southern Mexico. The rural areas where most job displacement is expected to occur also require special consideration. With the withdrawal of direct government support to agriculture, Mexico will need to reconstruct supportive institutions for marketing, credit, and technical assistance. Labor-intensive fruit and vegetable production can absorb some of these displaced rural workers. Policies designed to enable small- and mid-scale producers to enter this market should be developed and supported by both governments. Mexico will also need to develop its public infrastructure, which is stretched beyond its capacity, to support economic growth and internal migration.

One alternative to this development scheme is an expansion or elaboration of the Maquiladora Program, which Mexico has used to aid development by enticing foreign firms to locate assembly plants in Mexico. These plants use imported components and raw materials but rely on Mexican labor to produce goods for export. Because this strategy primarily uses cheap labor to attract foreign business, there is a danger that the pressure to keep wages low will institutionalize this form of economic dependency. Another drawback is that this strategy tends to foster enclaves rather than promote links to local economic ventures. Mexico has already adopted some aspects of the Maquiladora Program, rather than modernizing its technology and production.³⁴ Even prior to NAFTA, Mexico already began turning its economy into one giant *maquiladora*, as evidenced by an increasing reliance on imports, displacement by foreign firms and industrial conglomerates, a decline in small- and mid-scale manufacturing enterprises, and an ever-widening gap between the rich and poor. Policies that promote using Mexican inputs—other than labor—in the production process are critical for developing a healthy economy that would reduce the economic incentives for migration.

Conclusion

The nature and history of the long-standing relationship between Mexico and the United States have shaped the policy issues that currently confront these two countries. The essence of the relationship remains the importation by the United States of low-wage/low-skill labor from Mexico—whether through trade or migration.

As the world moves toward global economic integration, developed countries must lose some industries and occupations that depend on low-wage workers to less-developed countries, or they must import immigrant workers as a way to keep wages in these industries and occupations low. This is a process that has been occurring for at least the last 100 years. One approach would be to reduce migration significantly and simply allow absolutely free trade to determine what is produced where. The United States is understandably leery of removing all supports (including unauthorized workers) from industries and sectors that would not be internationally competitive. In developing policies to shape their economic integration, the United States and Mexico have begun to search for the proper balance between free trade and protectionism. Further discussion and negotiations need to be held regarding the implications of this balance for both countries.

To date, the economic integration of the United States and Mexico has been asymmetrical, with Mexico exporting cheap labor and receiving industrial products and financial resources. In many respects, NAFTA symbolized the goal of Mexico to shift from a development strategy based on import-substitution industrialization with a protected domestic market to one based on liberalized trade and investment and an expanded role for the private market. Few question the validity of this strategy or the notion that economic prosperity in Mexico will ultimately reduce illegal migration to the United States. Policies developed in both the United States and Mexico should anticipate the dislocation of people that this process will entail and the manner in which this will impact the continuing integration of the United States and Mexico.

The movement of people has proven to be much more difficult to legislate and control than has been the movement of goods and services between the United States and Mexico. Because immigration has such an immediate and visible impact, politics has frequently inhibited the development of rational policies. Recognition that immigration is a binational issue and thus calls for binational negotiation and cooperation is a necessary step in raising the debate to a higher level.

Notes

1. This excludes the temporary entry of business persons and professionals.
2. Researchers also accepted this premise, although they disagreed on the length of time it would take to reach this goal. Realistic estimates ranged from five to 20 years.
3. For more information, see Report of the Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development, *Unauthorized Migration: An Economic Development Response* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991).

4. Jorge Bustamante, "Undocumented Migration from Mexico to the United States: Preliminary Findings of the Zapata Canyon Project," in *Undocumented Migration to the United States: IRCA and the Experience of the 1980s*, ed. Frank D. Bean, Barry Edmonston, and Jeffrey Passel (Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 1990); and Robert Warren, "Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States by Country of Origin and State of Residence, October 1992" (Washington, DC: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1994).
5. Michael Fix and Jeffrey S. Passel, *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 1994); and Jeffrey S. Passel, "Illegal Immigration: How Big a Problem" (Paper presented at U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Conference on "Latin American Migration: The Foreign Policy Dimension," Washington, DC, March 17, 1995).
6. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbooks of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1993; 1994).
7. Rodolfo Corona Vázquez, "Cambios en la Migración de Indocumentados de México a Estados Unidos en los Últimos Años," in *The Mexican Labor Migration to the United States of America: A Bilateral Perspective from Mexico* (Mexico: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1994).
8. Philip Martin and J. Edward Taylor, "The Mexican Crisis and Mexico-U.S. Migration," unpublished manuscript, 1995. (From Philip Martin, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of California, Davis, CA.)
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12. Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO), "Programa Nacional de Población 1989-1994" (Mexico, D.F.: Diario Oficial de la Federación, 1991); and CONAPO, "National Report to the International Conference on Population and Development" (Mexico, D.F.: 1994).
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26. David Griffith and Ed Kissam, *Working Poor* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995).
27. Griffith and Kissam, 245. Also see Monica L. Heppel, Joanne Spano, and Luis R. Torres, "The 1992 Apple Harvest in West Virginia" (Washington, DC: Inter-American Institute on Migration and Labor, 1993).
28. Monica L. Heppel and Sandra Amendola, *Immigration Reform and Perishable Crop Agriculture: Compliance or Circumvention?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992); David Griffith, *Jones's Minimal* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993); David Griffith, Monica L. Heppel and Luis R. Torres, "Labor Certification and Employment Practices in Selected Low-Wage/Low-Skill Occupations: An Analysis from Worker and Employer Perspectives" (Washington, DC: Inter-American Institute on Migration and Labor, 1994).
29. As a result of industrialization, between 1980 and 1990 Mexico's urban population grew by 2.7 percent, while the rural population grew by .3 percent, despite the fact that the birth rate was higher in the rural areas. See Téllez Kuenzler.
30. Robert C. Smith identifies the importance of a "remittance economy," which dominates the economies of certain villages in central Mexico. In one such village, Smith found that over 50 percent of the households received more than 90 percent of their income from jobs in the United States. Robert C. Smith, "Los Ausentos Siempre Presentes: The Imaging, Making and Politics of a Transnational Committee between Tievani Puebla, Mexico and New York City" (Columbia University, Ph.D. dissertation, 1995).
31. CAW, 1992.
32. There are approximately 320 INS agents responsible for enforcing employer sanctions. In contrast, there are approximately 5,000 INS agents responsible for border enforcement.
33. Edur Velasco Arregui, "Industrial Restructuring in Mexico During the 1980s," in *The Political Economy of North American Free Trade*, ed. Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell Cameron (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).
34. Kathryn Kopinak, "The Maquiladorization of the Mexican Economy," in *The Political Economy of North American Free Trade*, ed. Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell Cameron (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

