



ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND MIGRATION POLICIES: THE CHALLENGES FOR MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES

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INTRODUCTION

The bilateral relation between Mexico and the United States underwent a major change with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994.¹ Economic liberalization of the Mexican economy since the 1980s had already led to a significant integration of the countries' markets, but signing NAFTA meant that the governments were willing to establish a formal and extensive commercial and financial cooperation agreement. In the past, the asymmetry of economic and political power between both countries had determined the fact that the U.S. could achieve its goals in every area without assuming the costs of establishing formal compromises with Mexico. In turn, Mexico didn't have enough bargaining power to influence U.S. policies according to its own interests. Nevertheless, in the case of NAFTA both countries agreed that the best way to protect their interests in light of changes and new trends in the international environment was through economic cooperation.

Even though the asymmetry of power persists –given that Mexican economic dependence on the U.S. is greater than the U.S.'s dependence on Mexico's market–, the cooperation that began in commerce and finance has influenced major changes in the way in which both countries perceive each other, and the domestic and foreign policies they implement. Many analysts agree that NAFTA is not only a commercial agreement; its implications are far-reaching and its consequences affect political, social, and cultural aspects in both countries (Alba, 1998; Massey et al., 2002). As the process of economic cooperation has developed in the past eight years, the boundaries for policy coordination have been extended to other areas, which in some cases include historically controversial issues such as the management of legal and illegal labor migration from Mexico to the U.S.

In this essay I will analyze the extent to which bilateral cooperation has influenced migration policies in both countries. My argument is that the asymmetry of power between Mexico and the U.S., and the lack of domestic consensus regarding migration issues are the limits to formal cooperation in this area. Even so, I believe that current changes in the bilateral relation, especially since NAFTA, can lead to a new and better management of the situation in the future. Each of the three sections of this paper will develop these ideas. First, I will analyze the reasons why NAFTA did not include common migration policies and how the governments dealt with economic integration in relation to this issue. Due to the fact that migration flows between the countries have direct economic causes and consequences, they are a relevant factor to achieve the goals delineated by NAFTA and to foster further integration. The reasons why a shared migration policy was not included in the agreement point towards certain factors that have historically hindered the possibilities for bilateral management of this phenomenon. In order to explore these factors, in the second section I will explain the domestic circumstances that determined Mexico's and the U.S.'s positions towards migration throughout the 20th century. The third section will focus on the

¹ In this analysis I will focus only on Mexico and U.S. relations, therefore, Canada, the third party to NAFTA, will not be mentioned.

changes NAFTA has wrought in the management and discussion of this issue, including an analysis of the current situation following the 09.11.01 attacks. In my closing remarks I will delineate what I consider the current challenges for the management of migration in the short and longer terms.

My perspective is based on the assumption that the current flows of Mexican migration to the U.S. involve economic, political, and social factors inherent to both countries. One must take into account the existence of all these variables in order to broadly understand the circumstances that *push* and *pull* migration and the ways in which they are dealt with in each country. In the past, one of the greatest limits for the management of migration has been the lack of shared objective information. This has led to the creation of myths that portray migrants as threats to receiving countries, of groundless ideas about their economic effects, and of inadequate policies detached from the reality of the situation (Cornelius, 2000). The negative consequences that these tendencies have for both countries can no longer be ignored. My intention is to enlighten the discussion with an objective, extensive analysis of each country's history and policies, in an attempt to meet the challenges that I believe are implied in the integration process between Mexico and the U.S. since NAFTA.

I. NAFTA AND MIGRATION

During the NAFTA negotiations, begun in 1991, Presidents George Bush (1988-1992) and Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) agreed to restrict the discussions to commercial and financial matters. Both believed that the political costs of including migration in the agenda would be too great and could be an insurmountable obstacle for the conclusion of NAFTA. Both agreed that the problems that caused and arose from Mexican worker's migration to the U.S. could be solved indirectly by NAFTA. Economic development through the liberalization and integration of markets would eliminate the pressures for out-migration in Mexico. Stimulated by capital investment flows, economic growth in Mexico would provide more jobs and better salaries, thereby eliminating the incentives for emigration.

This solution was based on a limited analysis of the migration dynamic and the various aspects that need to be taken into account in order to produce a real solution. It implied that migration was only a result of Mexican economic problems and eliminated the issue of the permanent demand for low-wage labor from employers in the U.S. Without recognizing this explicitly, both governments' strategies ensured that undocumented migration flows would continue as in the past. There would be no explicit policy for managing and controlling the hiring of Mexicans in the U.S., which implied that the workers would still come to the U.S. in a vulnerable position, subject to abuses, and lacking work benefits or protection. Even so, by accepting this situation the Mexican government could still secure the flow of remittances and preserve an alternative to unemployment. For the U.S., securing migrants' labor without any formal contracts or agreements was an inexpensive solution to its lack of labor force (specially for low-paying jobs). Although labor unions were aggravated by the workers' presence their pressures were not enough to counterbalance undocumented workers employers' support to the government's policies.

Such was the reality of migration flows, known by both governments, but in their discourse it was disguised according to political and economic interests that were at play during the NAFTA negotiations. On the Mexican side, Salinas followed the tactics that his predecessors had used to avoid diplomatic tension with the U.S. and domestic criticism when dealing with the migration issue. Since the 1970's, the Mexican government had resorted to the rhetorical discourse that "Mexico wanted to export goods, not people". On the one hand, this guaranteed U.S. economic and political support for the maintenance of the Mexican government's policies. On the other hand, it shadowed discussions about Mexico's lack of explicit and successful migration policies, and its failed attempts to protect its population abroad. The U.S. also appealed to this strategy for negotiating "goods instead of people". This discourse would prevent opposition from traditional anti-immigrant groups in the U.S. and even from employers who saw a formal migration agreement as a risk to their access to low-wage workers and the possibilities of avoiding government controls and sanctions for hiring undocumented migrants.

Even though the effects that NAFTA has had on the Mexican economy cannot be evaluated thoroughly in every area, due in part to the fact that it has only been in force for nine years, and that data is not yet available, it is obvious that the "solution" proposed for migration is far from being achieved. Not only have the economic asymmetries between both countries persisted,

but also great problems have arisen as the competition in some sectors surpasses their capacity for adjustment. This is especially the case of the agricultural sector, where most but not all migrants' communities of origin are located.² Any comprehensive migration policy has to include a program for investment and development in Mexican rural areas and sending communities as NAFTA negotiators suggested, but even this measure is not sufficient. An adequate solution has to go beyond the traditional economic explanations of the phenomenon (i.e. wage differentials, cost-benefit rationales, market failures, etc.); it must take into account all the characteristics of these flows and explore the reasons for their historical changes (Massey et.al., 2002).

Mexican migrants: who and why?

Recent data and studies from Mexico and the U.S. show that the characteristics of Mexican migratory flows have changed in the past few decades due to demographic, political, economic, and social circumstances.³ A migrant worker population once composed mainly of middle-age men from rural areas now includes more females and children, younger males, and urban populations with higher education levels. The migrants' behavior has shifted into longer periods of stay in the U.S., which means that the circularity and temporality of the flows has decreased. The number of undocumented workers has increased, inducing more migrant smugglers ("*coyotes*" or "*polleros*") who charge higher fees, more document falsification, abuses, violation of human rights, and an alarming number of deaths at the border. The Mexican-American community is now the largest ethnic minority in the U.S. amounting to approximately 22 million (14 million are American citizens of Mexican origin, between 8 and 8.5 million are legal migrants, and 3 or 4 million reside illegally in the U.S.).⁴

In their most recent publication, Massey, Malone and Durand document the fact that "immigration may begin for a variety of reasons, but the forces that initiate international movement are quite different from those that perpetuate it" (Massey et.al., 2002: 18). Some examples of the perpetuating forces in the case of Mexican migration to the U.S. include the existence of family and employer networks that facilitate the arrival of new immigrants, the dependency of remittances in Mexico (which currently amount to USD \$10 billion per year), and growing social and economic ties between the countries. Both Mexico and the U.S. have favored the existence of this flow, which has become a structural factor for their economies. Migration policies (or lack there of) have influenced the ways in which the phenomenon has developed, and the costs and benefits implied.

2. MEXICO AND U.S. MIGRATION POLICIES IN THE 20TH CENTURY: ASYMMETRY OF POWER AND DOMESTIC FACTORS

Throughout the history of U.S.-Mexico bilateral relations, the U.S. has generally formulated and implemented unilateral migration policies to which Mexico has almost always reacted passively. With the exception of the Bracero Program (1942-1964)⁵, formal and explicit cooperation with the Mexican government has rarely been considered a convenient option. The U.S. has been able to obtain low wage labor, recruiting and disposing of it according to economic circumstances, without assuming the political costs of an agreement. According to the theories of international relations this is a typical case of asymmetric interdependence (or asymmetric cooperation) in which the weaker party, in this case Mexico, usually cannot protect its interests or exercise pres-

² When NAFTA's deadlines for the complete liberalization of agriculture arrive, the Mexican government's ability to deal with the competition in this sector will be tested; not with a very positive outcome, it seems. This could increase the pressures for out-migration and create economic and political instability in Mexico, which would considerably affect both countries and revive domestic debates and criticisms over NAFTA.

³ Examples of these data can be found in the U.S.Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov>), Migration Information Source (<http://www.migrationinformation.org>), CONAPO (The National Population Council, <http://www.conapo.gob.mx>), INEGI (The National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics, <http://www.inegi.gob.mx>).

⁴ Sources: U.S.Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov>), CONAPO (<http://www.conapo.gob.mx>).

⁵ Through this program, Mexico and the U.S. managed the hiring of Mexican workers ("braceros") to work in the U.S. agricultural sector due to the labor shortages during the Second World War. The program was ratified yearly by both governments until 1964, when the U.S. decided to cancel it.

sure against the more powerful country (Krasner, 1990, Keohane, 1990). Even though this asymmetry is a structural condition in the bilateral relation, Mexico's and the U.S.'s migration policies cannot be reduced to this explanation. The analysis of the historical, domestic roots of their positions provides the framework both for explaining the changes in the recent years, and for understanding the current challenges for further cooperation.

When tracing the origins of Mexican migration flows to the U.S. it is clear that geographic, economic, and demographic variables play a key role. Sharing an approximately 2,000 mile border, including territory which belonged to Mexico until 1848, it was natural for Mexicans to move across the border. The Mexican economic and political instability and the poor conditions in rural states during the Porfiriato and the 1910 Revolution pushed many *campesinos* (peasants) to seek alternatives such as migration. The fact that the U.S. lacked sufficient labor to consolidate its territory and to develop the Southwestern economy increased the incentives for Mexicans to emigrate in search of a job in a society receptive to them (Corwin, 1978). The majority of the workers provided their labor for agriculture, but as they gained experience, and as the U.S. economy developed, their mobility and social networks gave them access to other sectors (currently including industry, construction, domestic work, and services).

Even though the U.S. implemented restrictive migration laws to other countries (mainly Asian), Mexico was an exception to the rule. Employers' demand for immigrant labor was constant, and it grew during the First and Second World Wars due to an increase in production and to the fear of labor shortages. Mexican labor was easy to attract and dispatch; it was cheap and the migrants were hard working. Nevertheless, the demand for labor surpassed emergency situations, becoming an essential and structural factor for economic growth in the Southwest. American workers, when available, were unwilling to occupy these harsh low-paying jobs, whereas Mexican laborers were always accessible, regardless of the salary, type of work or living conditions.

Although nativist and anti-immigrant groups were exercising pressures for the government to exclude "potentially dangerous" peoples since the beginning of the 19th century, Mexican migrants were not their target until the 1920's. The laws that had resulted from these pressures limited migration flows from Asia and Europe, which in turn led to a growth of Mexican migration, especially after the First World War. From then on, when economic or political crises occurred, public opinion began to notice the presence of the growing Mexican population, whom they blamed for salary depression, failures in labor union organizing, high welfare costs, and unemployment. The government responded to these pressures through policies such as deportation and repatriation (i.e. 1921, 1929, 1954), restrictive immigration laws and quotas (i.e. 1965, 1986, 1996), and border control reinforcement (i.e. 1994, 1996, 2001). Mexican migrants became the "scapegoats" for economic and political problems in the U.S.. By implementing visible policies to control a flow that had been managed through negligence in the past, U.S. governments gained legitimacy and distracted public opinion from deeper political or economic problems (Bustamante, 1983, Andreas, 2000).

Regardless of these measures, migration flows did not subside, rather, legal and controlled flows were replaced by illegal ones (Massey et al., 2002). As Peter Andreas demonstrates, U.S. policies were more a symbol of political control than a real policy that recognized the structural demand for labor (Andreas, 2000). Even so, they were successful because pressures from employers and public opinion were reduced. Employers could obtain even cheaper and more docile labor by taking advantage of the vulnerability of undocumented migrants and the absence of governmental sanctions or controls. Labor unions and public opinion were satisfied because the government appeared to control the territory and to protect its population's interests and values. This "protection" meant increasing the number of fences and border patrols and the number of apprehensions and deportations by the INS, which amplified the risks and dangers of border crossings through areas that were unseen by the public. By maintaining the "back door" open for illegal migration, the U.S. satisfied its economic and political needs.

Even though the negative effects and unintended consequences of these policies (for both countries) were thoroughly examined and documented since they first began, the U.S. government maintained and even incremented border controls and restrictive policies: a tendency which persists to date. The myths disseminated by the media and political leaders about the growth of the Mexican-American community and the insecurity and fear related to illegal crossings resulted in a vicious cycle of pressures for more immigration control. This explains President William Clinton's (1992-2000) "dissuasive" migration policy, consisting of a series of border reinforcement opera-

tions and restrictive laws that increased the costs of border crossing and reduced social benefits for migrants.⁶ The costs of these policies were assumed by the migrants and the Mexican government because they resulted in more abuse and violence against the migrants, which increased domestic pressure against Mexican authorities who were evidently unable (or perhaps unwilling) to control the situation. Meanwhile, the U.S. government's legitimacy and dominance were consolidated because it was able to "control" a problem portrayed as a threat to the population.

Even though the Mexican government was aware of the problems and costs that a continuing and growing migration to the U.S. signified, and the potential domestic criticism and instability that could arise due to the long absence of an explicit migration policy and alternative development programs for rural areas and migrant-sending communities, its actions were weak. When compared with the U.S.'s policies, the Mexican government's response to these pressures exemplifies the asymmetric capacities of the countries for dealing with the costs of migration, and also their particular historical, political and cultural developments.

Since the 1940's, the Mexican government had considered migration a "safety valve" for economic and political problems until the conditions for equal income distribution and social justice promised by the Revolution could be developed. Even though economic growth was sustained until the late 1960's, the benefits of the "*milagro mexicano*" (Mexican economic miracle) did not reach the rural population that the revolutionary government had based its claims and legitimacy upon. Under these circumstances, migration turned out to be more than a temporary solution and became, instead, a permanent strategy for reducing political pressures from the citizenry. Moreover, it was a major factor for economic development because it secured the flow of foreign currency through remittances.

Even though during and after the Bracero Program, Mexicans faced abuses and serious risks in the U.S., the Mexican government's efforts to protect them were limited. Part of those limitations resulted from its vulnerability in negotiating with the U.S. Nonetheless, it is also true that Mexico preferred to guarantee the permanence of these flows and avoid tensions with the U.S. that could lead to massive repatriations or policies that impeded out-migration. Even so, this does not justify nor explain the fact that Mexican governments failed to introduce sustainable programs for development in rural areas or domestic institutions to protect migrants' rights.⁷ Although Mexico was losing an important part of its labor force, which implied social and economic changes in rural communities and created a greater dependency on remittances, policies directed to manage these circumstances were not sufficient. By 1974, after many failed attempts to negotiate another bilateral migrant labor program with the U.S., Mexico had decided to take a "non-policy" approach towards migration (Garcia y Griego, 1988). This meant that the issue was kept low-key on the foreign policy and domestic agendas in order to maintain a convenient *status quo* for the government, regardless of its costs for the population.

After the demise of the import substitution economic model in the late 1970's leading to the debt crisis of 1982 and pushing more Mexicans to seek job opportunities in the U.S., the domestic solutions that had been promised for migration were evidently unsuccessful. Even so, the permanence of the nationalistic, revolutionary rhetoric was still used to legitimize government

⁶ The passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) authorized the funds for different operations for border control and reduced Social Security, educational, and public assistance benefits to legal and illegal aliens, as well as restrictions for sponsoring legal migrant's family immigration. This law was accompanied by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, which set further limits for legal and illegal immigrant's access to federal, state and local public benefits. The first Operation for Border Control was "Blockade" --later named "Hold the Line"-- in the El Paso, Texas-Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua crossing (September, 1993) --extended in January, 1997 into New Mexico--. Then came "Gatekeeper" in the San Diego, California-Tijuana, Baja California Norte area (October, 1994) --it expanded in October, 1996 to cover 66 miles--. Operation "Safeguard" was implemented in Nogales, Arizona-Nogales, Sonora (1995) --in 1999 it expanded to Douglas and Naco--. The last one, "Río Grande" covered the southeast Texas area (August, 1997). All these operations included setting up steel fences, floodlights, watch towers, video cameras, high-power infrared vision scopes, and an increase in border patrol agents (see Andreas, 2000; Cornelius, 2001).

⁷ Projects such as the establishment of *maquiladoras* (bonded assembly plants) in the border since 1965 proved unsuccessful in reducing migration to the U.S.

programs, which tacitly assumed migration as a “necessary evil” to guarantee economic and political stability. In the government’s discourse, independence from the U.S. and defense of national sovereignty were greatly emphasized. Paradoxically, at the same time Mexico began a process of economic liberalization in the 1980’s relying on the U.S.’s support and guidance. These changes were the antecedents of the process that led to NAFTA. Throughout this process the nationalist discourse began to change in order to justify economic integration with the U.S., but it still limited the government’s domestic and international actions in areas such as migration or energy (Mabire, 1994). Migration issues remained at the periphery, while the negative costs and consequences of the policies implemented kept accumulating silently at the core of the Mexican system.

The domestic conditions and circumstances generally described here reveal the political connotations that the migration issue entails and the fact that they are deeply embedded in both governments’ responses. In the U.S., the influence of pressure groups such as employers or labor unions, and the existence of nativist or anti-immigrant reactions to economic or political crises are major explanatory factors for migration policy outcomes. Mexico’s limitations for pressuring changes in the status quo are its vulnerability in any negotiation of a migration agreement with the U.S., and its interest in maintaining good relations and economic cooperation. Furthermore, the need for maintaining this “safety valve” open and avoid domestic pressures also determined its passivity when dealing with migration. The asymmetry of power was the context in which these policies were framed and developed.

NAFTA reflected both governments’ domestic and international restrictions for achieving a common definition and a shared policy for migration. Even so, the agreement entailed intrinsic changes in the bilateral relationship, which meant confronting the challenges posed by migration in new ways. The extent to which these changes can lead to formal bilateral cooperation will now be examined.

3. AFTER NAFTA... WHAT HAS CHANGED, WHAT CAN CHANGE?

As Francisco Alba explains, the sole initiative that led to NAFTA has affected the ways in which migration issues are dealt with (Alba, 1993). In a favorable atmosphere for cooperation and dialogue, information exchange between governments, academic institutions, and bilateral commissions has been extended, including new actors such as NGO’s and businesses. Initiatives such as the Border Liaison Mechanisms, cooperation between local and state governments in regional affairs, shared training programs for border patrols, and common plans for border safety are examples of the extension of cooperation to areas not included in NAFTA.

After NAFTA, both countries’ perceptions of each other have changed. Throughout the NAFTA negotiations Mexico designed new lobbying strategies that helped build new relations and networks in the U.S. through Congress, political parties, media, labor unions, and other pressure groups. Mexico also realized the influence of Latino politicians and leaders, and the electoral significance of the Mexican-American community, both in the U.S. and in Mexico.⁸ The importance and influence of the Latino population for the U.S. has been made evident in the past few years due to the fact that it is now the largest ethnic minority (13% of the population). At governmental and societal levels, there is growing interest in creating closer links with Latinos and integrating them into their programs, communities, or associations.

⁸ The importance of the Mexican-American community was made evident since the 1970’s, but government interest in strengthening the ties with this population was not emphasized until the beginning of the 1990’s. Through programs such as the Program for Mexican Communities in the Exterior (PCME), the Programa Paisano and the creation of the Beta Groups, the Mexican government made greater efforts to organize the Mexican community, protect migrant’s rights and exercise better control of border crossings. The number of consular representations and their functions also increased (currently there are more than 45 Mexican diplomatic representations in the U.S.). One of the greatest changes in the government’s position towards its population in the U.S. was demonstrated when political pressures against migrants were manifested through legal initiatives such as Proposition 187 in California, in 1994. The Mexican government responded with the passing of a Constitutional reform permitting dual nationality (this does not include dual citizenship, which means that Mexicans who have a different country of residence cannot vote in Mexican elections). This reform allowed Mexican citizens in the U.S. to use their vote to exercise their rights and protect their interests, and to have a greater impact as an electorate.

The relevance of the Mexican-American community and the migrant population was made evident in 2001 during the various meetings between Presidents Vicente Fox (2000-2006) and George W. Bush (2000-2004), and their commitment to a comprehensive negotiation of migration issues. Both countries had decided to negotiate Mexico's proposal for a comprehensive migration agreement that included regularization of undocumented migrants currently in the United States, increasing the number of permanent visas granted each year to Mexicans, establishing a guest worker program, creating new border safety strategies, and promoting Mexico's economic development, especially in those regions from which most migrants originate (Leiken, 2001).

The Mexican economic stability after President Ernesto Zedillo's government (1994-2000) and the democratic transition that led to the election of President Fox, gave the new government a possibility to abandon the remains of the passive nationalist discourse and change it into a new activism in which the enhancement of NAFTA and relations with the U.S. were a major factor. The achievement of a migration agreement was to be a fundamental aspect of this new foreign policy and "special relationship" between the U.S. and Mexico. The Bush administration seemed to follow this line, interested in gaining legitimacy through success in a foreign policy issue and through assurance of the Latino vote.⁹

After the 09.11.01 attacks, the U.S. government's priorities changed and the possibilities for an agreement were reduced, at least in the short term. Nevertheless, the salience of the issue and its inclusion in the bilateral agenda could no longer be ignored. This is shown by the discussion of migration issues in further meetings between the Presidents and other political actors, as well as current cooperation in the area of border safety, migrant identification cards (*matrículas consulares*), and facilitation of remittance flows. Despite the stalling of the negotiations for the agreement proposed in 2001, the necessity of a bilateral management of migration has become a reality. The possibility of such development depends on both countries' willfulness and capacity to solve pressing domestic issues and take a further step towards deeper integration. This doesn't necessarily mean including a free labor market agreement in NAFTA, but rather achieving a shared management of a common situation.

Today's challenges

Currently, awareness of the causes and consequences of migration has grown in Mexico and the U.S., transcending the national boundaries. The negative consequences of the absence of a shared definition and implementation of migration policy can no longer be avoided. One major reason is the magnitude of the population involved, the human costs, and the human rights violations it has meant. The other reason is that the integration of the economies and the increase in flows of goods, as well as transnational communications between institutions, businesses, societies, and governments, carries with it flows of people. In order for these flows to occur in a secure, controlled, and optimal manner, and for the achievement of the goals set by NAFTA, both governments must agree and negotiate the terms in which they will meet the challenges.

One of the most important changes has to occur in the information transmitted by both governments to their citizenry. The need for demystified, objective portrayals of the situation is a condition for people's involvement in and acceptance of the realities of migration. Through this, it will be possible to solve issues related to migrant labor hiring, human rights violations, border controls, and migrant assimilation in better, manageable terms. For the U.S., this would require recognition of the demand aspect of the problem and the need to raise visa quotas and create adequate temporary worker programs. This would also imply a new strategy to reduce the negative consequences of border enforcement exemplified by the more than 2,355 deaths at the border

⁹ Many editorials and newspaper articles published in the U.S. interpreted Bush's interest in Latino issues as a strategy to gain important votes for the Republican party by detaching it from its traditional anti-immigrant stance (i.e. Robert Leiken, "Border Colleagues: On Migration, Bush and Fox Belong on the Same Side", (*The Washington Post*, September 2, 2001). Before the 09/11 attacks a migration agreement was seen as a possibility for Bush to obtain an easy political victory that could enhance his debated legitimacy after the 2000 elections and the weak political support to his party. An analysis of these issues was discussed by various scholars at the conference "The Political Role of Mexican Americans and the 2001 and 2002 Elections" (The New School, International Center for Migration, Ethnicity and Citizenship (ICMEC), New York, December 6, 2002).

since the 1993 reinforcement operations began,¹⁰ the increase in smugglers, corruption and violence at the border, and the continuing presence of undocumented workers. If the U.S. shifted its current policies pressures would surely arise from employers, anti-immigrant groups and public opinion influenced by political discourse and media in exaggerating the costs of migration. Even so, political will from the Executive level and the President's lobbying within Congress, has proved to be able to reduce these pressures in the past.¹¹

In order to create the conditions for such a development, Mexico still has to show its capacity for managing and controlling its migrant population in the Northern and Southern borders, and to continue developing an institutional framework in this specific area. For Mexico, a formal migration agreement would imply accepting the reality of its ties to the U.S., the benefits that further cooperation would bring, and the obstacles of maintaining the nationalist discourse in this regard. Nevertheless, President Fox and his Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda (2000-2002) took major steps in this direction by making a very explicit and radical change in foreign policy objectives and discourse.¹² For the Mexican government it is also important to show the Mexican population living abroad their interest and the priority they give to issues related to them, for their political and economic influence in both countries continues to grow. The creation of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME) in April 2003 was a major development in this area.

As much as the solution for migration portrayed in the NAFTA negotiations is insufficient in the short term, to think that the bilateral agreement proposed in 2001 will be the ultimate solution would also be unrealistic. Regardless of the losses or achievements in the foreign policy arena, Mexico must meet its domestic challenges to reduce the costs produced by past policies and prepare the conditions for reaching an agreement with the U.S. according to its interests. If the Mexican government places all its efforts on negotiations with the U.S., it runs the risk of blaming the failure of its strategy on the fact that the U.S. is unwilling to negotiate. This will mean delaying comprehensive solutions for even longer.

Domestically, Mexico still requires an explicit and clear definition of effective strategies to enforce border security in its Northern and Southern frontiers, reform institutions dealing with migration, and develop and create alternatives for development in sending communities. Actions such as these can enhance its bargaining position in the event of bilateral negotiations, and will also lead the way to broader solutions to the problem. Internationally, the government must continue fostering its relations with groups in the U.S. and its lobbying at all levels. The information and resources available since NAFTA have been an important instrument for developing successful strategies for dealing with the U.S. government and other influential actors. In the future, as Minister Castañeda recognized, the timing of Mexico's strategies will be a determinant factor in their success (Castañeda, 2001).

It is undeniable that the U.S. can continue to rely on its power and capacity to control the costs of policy outcomes and to gain legitimacy through restrictive policies, unless the costs of doing so appear too high. This will depend on the pressure stemming from domestic groups that favor a migration agreement against employer lobbies who want to keep labor costs low through hiring illegal immigrants. It will also depend on the ability of the Mexican government to appeal to pro-immigrant groups in the U.S. and to gain others' support by emphasizing the fact that the U.S. also needs Mexico to achieve its goals in NAFTA and to benefit from the economic growth that the access to Mexican guarantees.

The fact that migration is a permanent, structural factor of Mexican-U.S. relations due to the characteristics of both countries, is no longer in question. As is the case with NAFTA, there will always be winners and losers in both countries as a result of migration (Rico, 1992). The question now is: do governments still have the power and capacity to control who the winners and

¹⁰ See Wayne Cornelius, "Las lecciones equivocadas", *Reforma*, June 6, 2003.

¹¹ Todd Eisenstadt (2000) shows how it was possible to obtain the necessary consensus for the passage of NAFTA despite opposition from various groups and a divided Congress. In order to achieve this, Clinton promised allocation of resources and other benefits to congressmen who supported the initiative. The President's political will was also key in 1995 when Clinton decided to grant a loan to help solve Mexico's financial crisis despite congressional opposition.

¹² Although there are still political sensitivities in Mexico that can limit the effectiveness of a strategy based on a closer relation to the U.S., this is related more to certain political, economic and commercial matters than to migration issues.

losers are through unilateral policies? Can bilateral management of U.S.-Mexican migration reduce the negative costs and reap the benefits for both countries? As NAFTA and regional integration continue to develop, the Mexican and U.S. governments and societies will have to confront these domestic and bilateral challenges and decide where the boundaries for cooperation will lie.

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