Rethinking Migration Responses in a Context of Restriction and Recession: Challenges and Opportunities for Mexico and the United States

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In February 2001, President Fox of Mexico and President Bush of the United States engaged their administrations to find mutually acceptable responses to the lingering migration issue that had often placed the two countries at odds. The high-level contacts and discussions, amply interpreted as the first stages of a negotiating process, had quite ambitious objectives. Expectations of arriving at a far-reaching agreement were high until the events of September 11, 2001 brought that negotiating process to an abrupt end.

In 2004, the Bush administration opened the debate on migration reform to fix what was considered a “broken” system, while simultane-

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2. Some authors question whether the process was a negotiation. The United States ambassador to Mexico at the time argued it was “a negotiation that was not a negotiation as such.” See generally, JEFFREY DAVIDOW, THE U.S. AND MEXICO: THE BEAR AND THE PORCUPINE: TESTIMONY OF THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO MEXICO 1998-2002, Chapter 14 (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004).

3. The agenda was centered on legalizing the status of Mexicans already residing in the United States without authorization, establishing a guest worker program, enhancing border safety conditions, and on increasing the number of U.S. visas available for Mexicans. The issue of economic cooperation to accelerate the development of the main regions of origin of migrants was also part of the agenda. See, e.g., Alba, supra note 1.

ously, the building up of fences—real and virtual—along the U.S.-Mexico border continued quite vigorously. After Congressional attempts to pass a meaningful migration reform failed, the administration intensified the enforcement of immigration laws, becoming notorious for the number and the visibility of worksite raids. In late 2007, a deep economic recession settled in the United States, obliterating in practice the possibility of any meaningful resumption of the debate on comprehensive immigration reform.

President Barack Obama, who took office in January 2009, was expected to tackle immigration reform early in his tenure. But more than a year into his administration, he has not undertaken any major migration initiative. Instead, his administration has followed, although by quite different means, the inherited policies of the past administration. Thus, in a context of mounting migratory restrictions and profound economic recession, the prospects for the U.S. Congress passing any immigration reform in the near future are rather uncertain.

On Mexico’s side, the events of September 11 also derailed what was consolidating as the main Mexican response to the migration issue: to engage the United States in discussing the idea of managing the migration phenomenon “bilaterally.” The migration negotiations in early 2001 were a sort of culmination along that path when Mexico made migration issues a key component of Mexico-U.S. relations. After September 11, Mexico was left sort of “empty-handed” in terms of migration commitments by the United States. But after it was clear that a new post-September-11 international context was emerging that would adversely affect the continuity of past migration trends, the harbingers of a new set of responses began to emerge around 2005, centered on the concept of “shared responsibility.”

In December 2006, Felipe Calderón was sworn in as Mexico’s president. From the very beginning of his administration it was made clear that, in contrast to his predecessor, Calderón did not intend to prioritize the migration issue within Mexico’s complex relationship with the United States. Instead, the Calderón government has opted for a subtler, low-

6. See id.
8. See, e.g., Job One: First Things First, Mr. President-elect. Some Thoughts on What Obama’s Top Priority Should Be, WASH. POST, Nov. 9, 2008, at B2.
9. The focus on other foreign issues and the health reform can probably be held accountable for the scant activity on the migration reform front.
key approach on migration matters. It has reiterated that economic development and job creation in Mexico are key factors for breaking Mexico’s migration cycle. But the strategy for job creation has rested almost exclusively on creating favorable conditions to attract private—domestic and foreign—investment.

Notwithstanding that the economic recession has adversely affected U.S. demand for Mexican labor and caused remittances to Mexico to fall by more than fifteen percent in 2009 (compared with 2008), the administration’s positions have not changed. For the Calderón government, regaining the rule of law and fighting drug trafficking and organized crime became a priority.

The argument of this article is that Mexico, confronted with a rising restrictionist climate regarding immigration and a recession related debilitating demand for Mexican labor, needs to intensify its efforts in search of responses to deal with the migration issue responsive to the new times. To develop the argument, the article is divided into the following three sections: first, a brief review of current Mexican migration trends; second, a succinct account of “past responses” is meant to serve as a background for the challenges Mexico is now facing to develop “new responses”; third, a discussion of main opportunities and challenges to manage migration in the context of restriction and recession concludes the article.

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12. See id. At the start of the Calderon administration, The First Job Program was launched. The intent of this program was to facilitate the creation of jobs and the hiring of workers in the formal sectors. See President Felipe Calderón, Remarks at the Signing Ceremony for the First Job Program (Jan. 15, 2007) (transcript available at http://www.presidencia.gob.mx/prensa/discursos/?contenido=28619). But as of 2009, the program has not proved significant in creating additional formal employment. See, e.g., Susana Gonzalez, Fallido, el Principal Programa de Calderón Para Generar Empleos, La Jornada, Mar. 14, 2009, at 16, available at http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2009/03/14/index.php?section=economia&article=0161eco.


15. Towards the end of 2006, near the change of government, I ventured on some initial ideas in this direction. See Francisco Alba, La Reconsideración de la Política Migratoria Internacional, in México: Los Retos ante el Futuro 57-74 (2007).
I. INFLEXION OF MEXICAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

The history of Mexican migration to the United States is one of changes and continuities. But recent developments point toward a possible great discontinuity in Mexico-U.S. migration trends. Certainly, since 1942 there have been ups and downs regarding migration flows and stocks. But since the 1970s trends have steadily risen, until recently, when the flows stabilized and may have even reversed course. Those rising trends, in terms of flows and stocks, are documented first to compare them with more recent developments.

The approximate number of Mexicans settling permanently in the United States—with or without U.S. authorization—increased steadily since the 1970s; it grew from less than a quarter of a million per year in the 1980s to well above the 300,000 mark in the 1990s, and approached the half-million mark in the early 2000s (see Table 1).16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Mexican Immigrants (Average Annual Thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970-1980</td>
<td>120-155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1990</td>
<td>210-260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-2000</td>
<td>300-350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2005</td>
<td>400-500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:

Over the same years, accordingly, the size of the Mexican-born population in the U.S. quickly increased. The Mexican immigrant population nearly doubled from 2.2 million in 1980 to 4.3 million in 1990, and again almost doubled to 9.2 million in 2000. As of 2008, the Mexican immigrant population jumped to 11.4 million.17

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16. Some demographers consider the half-million figure to be too high, because it probably includes some temporary migrants, estimating as more accurate a figure in the range of 400,000 per year. See Rodolfo Corona & Rodolfo Tuirán, *Magnitud de la Emigración de Mexicanos a Estados Unidos después del Año 2000*, Papeles de Población, July–Sept. 2008, at 9, 17.

Over time, Mexican migration also changed its character. A salient change charged with quite diverse implications has to do with the fact that displacements gradually became more permanent, rather than cyclical and temporary. Moreover, over the years, the distinction between circular and permanent migration has become blurred. At the same time, the unauthorized Mexican population has also been on the increase, after a relative lull associated with the U.S. legalization programs of the late 1980s. Since the year 2000, more than half of the Mexican immigrant population resides in the United States illegally.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mexico-born Population in the U.S. (millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:

Over the years, other important changes have also taken place. The days of predominantly rural and “campesino” migrants are gone. Recent indicators suggest that the characteristics of migrants are becoming as diverse as the characteristics of the Mexican population at large, in terms of origin, educational, and occupational levels, and migration has become a nationwide phenomenon. Although, most migrants belong to the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations, there are a greater numbers of professionals and skilled Mexicans among the migrants.

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18. Numerous scholars have noted that this change could be related, among other factors, to increased U.S. border enforcement, which made it more difficult and costly (in terms of smuggler fees, etc.) for Mexicans to cross back and forth.

19. Between 1995 and 2000, only a few dozen municipalities failed to register some type of migratory activity.

20. As of 2007, there were about 552,000 Mexican immigrants with a bachelor’s degree or higher in the United States-equivalent to nearly seven percent of all Mexican professionals. See generally Elena Zúñiga & Miguel Molina, *Demographic Trends in Mexico: The Implications for Skilled Migration* 10 (2008).
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Apprehensions of Mexicans (thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009*</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:  
* Preliminary Figure.

Compared with previous, cyclical patterns, Mexican migration trends have changed significantly in the last few years, particularly since 2007. U.S. data on Mexican migration flows and Mexican population stocks, as well as Mexican data on flows, indicate that an important inflexion point is currently taking place. Arrests of Mexican immigrants in the United States declined roughly from 1 million in 2006 to a little more than half-million 2009 (see Table 3). At the same time, between 2007 and 2009, Mexican born population in the U.S. “stabilized” around the 11.5 million mark. Apparently, this stabilization is largely a result of a drop in non-authorized immigration. Recent estimates suggest that the stock of unauthorized Mexican population in the United States might not only be leveling off, but actually declining, as shown in Table 4, from a peak of roughly 7 million, in 2007 and 2008, to 6.7 million in 2009.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mexican Unauthorized Population (millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although the number migrants leaving and reentering Mexico do not indicate that there has been a “massive return” of Mexicans from abroad, fewer Mexicans have left the country since the recession began. Mexican data show that 33.5% fewer Mexicans left Mexico during the second

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21. Since the 1990s, the apprehensions figures had been in the range of 1 million to 1.7 million.
quarter of 2009 than in the same quarter of 2008 and 61.0% fewer than in the same period of 2006 (see Table 5).

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exits and Returns (of Mexicans) 2006 -2009 (2nd Quarter Annually)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolute values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The inflexion of migration trends could have far reaching implications. Remittances can be a good indicator of things to come. Remittances, like migration, increased in volume and importance in the recent past. The pace of increase was frantic: from $6.6 billion in 2000 to $25.6 billion in 2006. But remittances barely grew in 2007, they declined slightly (3.6%) in 2008, and then quite steeply in 2009—falling 15.7% to $21.2 billion (see Table 6). The consequences of this trend on the socio-economic conditions of migrant families and communities remain to be seen and explored.

Looking into the future of migration, a key issue revolves around the role and balance between economic and political forces in shaping migration flows and policy. Future flows will depend on how quickly U.S. employers resume hiring and how effective U.S. enforcement proves to be. But the uncertainty is particularly great in the present circumstances regarding future U.S. demand for immigrant labor. At the same time, the prospects of Mexico sustaining a path of high economic growth are not encouraging, while the number of working-age people in Mexico will continue to expand rapidly into the 2010s.

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22. The increase was probably due, although just in part, to more accurate accounting.
23. But because fertility rates began dropping rapidly in the 1970s, the growth in the number of working-age people thereafter will also rapidly diminish. See MEXICO: A COUNTRY STUDY 79 (Tim L. Merrill & Ramón Miró, eds. 1997), available at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/mxtoc.html.
II. CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES OF MEXICAN RESPONSES TO MIGRATION

Mexico’s responses to the migration of its citizens to the United States have merited all sorts of evaluations over the years. In order to provide some perspective to those responses, this section reviews the major ones.24

For a period of approximately twenty years, after the Bracero programs ended in 1965, a tacit understanding evolved between Mexico and the United States that was characterized by a low degree of governmental intervention. In that period, Mexico followed “a policy of not having a policy.”25 But the passage of the U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act (“IRCA”) in 1986, in an attempt to place major limits on undocumented Mexican immigration,26 pushed the Mexican government to adjust its positions and attitudes as a result of the new U.S. policy. The previous Mexican attitude of “taking some distance” from migration management, although functional, was no longer tenable. But Mexico was not prepared to actively respond to the challenges posed by that uni-

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24. This section relies mainly on Francisco Alba, Change and Continuity in Government Responses to Mexican Migration, in POPULATION, CITY AND ENVIRONMENT IN CONTEMPORARY MEXICO 259-282 (2006).


26. See Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Pub. L. 99-603, 100 Stat. 3359 (1986). U.S. policies toward irregular immigration have not necessarily been designed to exclusively influence Mexican flows, but since Mexican workers are the majority of the “undocumented,” they are the most directly affected.
lateral, restrictive action on the U.S. side to deal with a phenomenon that had long interlocked important economic industries and significant sectors of the labor markets in both countries. Nevertheless, some new responses rapidly emerged. For example, there were attempts to seek a bilateral approach to deal with migratory issues, and another response was to reinforce the policy to defend migrants’ rights.27

In the 1990s, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) marked a watershed in economic policy and foreign relations between the three countries in North America.28 But NAFTA was also regarded as a major attempt to modify Mexican migratory flows by both the United States and Mexico.29 Expecting that the free movement of goods and capital would lead to sizable investments in Mexico, it was hoped that NAFTA would lead to more jobs and higher wages in Mexico, which would reduce in turn the migratory pressures. Succinctly, migration would be replaced by trade. Additionally, from a Mexican perspective, NAFTA offered the country solid conceptual scaffolding for lending credibility to a position that it opposed the emigration of its citizens.30

Nevertheless, in the analytical framework of NAFTA, insufficient attention was paid to the issue of economic convergence among the participating countries to reduce migratory pressures within the North American region. Thus, contrary to expectations, neither the United States nor Mexico truly believed that trade liberalization would have the desired effect on migration. As a result, both resorted to their earlier positions.

The United States energetically returned to its policy of controlling the entrance of undocumented workers. The period between 1993 and 1994 saw the initial steps (with a series of Operations) of the policy known as “prevention through dissuasion,” by erecting physical barriers along the border with Mexico. In 1996, Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA)—a highly “dissuasive” law—en-

30. Francisco Alba, The Mexican economy and Mexico-U.S. migration: a macro perspective, in Mexico-U.S. Migration Management 33-59 (Agustin E. Latapi & Susan F. Martin eds., 2008) (“We want to export goods, not people” was an expression frequently used in those years).
entered into force.\textsuperscript{31}

Mexico, on its part, reinforced its actions to provide its migrants with due protection, mostly by expanding its consular protection in the United States, and by advancing or reinforcing existing bilateral liaison mechanisms along the border. Additionally, the Mexican government under former President Zedillo implemented a strategy to establish a migratory dialog with the United States, primarily designed to counter the miseries suffered by the migrants in their journey under increasingly adverse circumstances. This dialog sought to ensure for the migrants a safe departure with no discrimination and to have their rights respected once they joined the U.S. work force and society.\textsuperscript{32} The legal changes in 1996 leading to “the unrenounceability of Mexican nationality” also had the purpose of “freeing” Mexicans to become citizens of the countries where they were already residing (overwhelmingly in the United States) to enjoy a legal status that would enable them to defend their rights more effectively.\textsuperscript{33}

But the emergence of the “spirit of the NAFTA” also influenced Mexican positions—both societal and governmental—in a different direction, by providing opportunities to “rationalize” the migration phenomenon. Thus, in the year 2000, the newly elected president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, declared himself in favor of an “open border” policy between the three signatory countries of NAFTA. One of the aims behind this position was to reach an agreement that would liberalize the flow of Mexican workers, particularly towards the United States.\textsuperscript{34} In February 2001, in Guanajuato, Presidents Fox and Bush agreed to initiate a negotiating process designed to establish a new migratory relationship that would conclude with an orderly system of migratory flows between Mexico and the United States.\textsuperscript{35}

This political decision potentially filled a major gap in bilateral relations; it implied the “normalization” of one of the bonds that had profoundly linked the two countries for a long time. The search for rules to ensure an orderly and predictable management of the migratory phenomenon placed it on a par with trade, investment and financial links. The joint attempt to channel migratory flows into a legal framework was ex-


\textsuperscript{32} See Gustavo Mohar & Maria-Elena Alcaraz, U.S. Border Controls: A Mexican Perspective, in THE WALL AROUND THE WEST 139-150 (Peter Andreas & Timothy Snyder eds. 2000).


\textsuperscript{34} Fox’s government directly and openly embraced the aim of ensuring the entry of Mexicans into U.S. labor markets, also due to its interpretation that attributed Mexican emigration to the limitations and failures of previous governments.

tremely ambitious. For the first time, almost forty years after the conclusion of the Bracero programs, Mexico and the United States were prepared to seek agreements, through negotiations, on the management of the migratory phenomenon. But the events of September 11, 2001, aborted any progress that had been achieved to that point.36

Until the terrorist attacks against the United States, it could be said that past Mexican responses exhibited a mixed record; some of these responses can be (and have been) considered successful while others disappointing, but overall past Mexican responses were functional and served Mexico’s main migration interests relatively well; namely, ensuring a relatively safe departure of sizeable numbers of its workers, and avoiding the worst of the conditions regarding the smuggling and trafficking of its migrants. As for the bilateral migration contacts in progress in 2001, managing to engage the United States at the negotiation table constituted a “major triumph” for the Mexican positions.37

Post-September 11 developments could change that appreciation. National security, the anti-terrorist struggle and border control—the new U.S. priorities—pose new challenges to both countries in their search for politically acceptable solutions to manage their migration flows. Since then, Mexico finds itself at a difficult crossroads,38 confronted by a scenario where the “economic logic of market forces”—more favorable to migration in receiving countries—has been losing room to other logics, like “the cultural identity logic” or “the national security logic”—less favorable to migration.39 In this new context, U.S. domestic interests seem to be prevailing over foreign and strategic interests regarding the proximity of Mexico.

Prior to these adverse conditions that resulted rather unexpectedly, the encouraging and optimistic scenario existed between Mexico and the U.S. that, during the first months of 2001, mutually acceptable agreements to would possibly manage their migration flows. This inflexion of attitudes has made it all the more difficult for Mexico to devise new and appropriate responses to overcome the novel and serious dilemmas confronted by its migration flows.

But at the end of the Fox administration in 2005, there was an unprecedented effort to debate appropriate migration responses to the new conditions. Collectively, public officials, members of the academia and migration advocates set forth important guiding principles, recommendations, and commitments to update Mexico’s migration policy on topics

36. Arriving at any agreement was still a long way ahead. The U.S. Congress was barely involved in the various points to the agenda discussed by the executive branches.
37. An additional domestic positive implication of the negotiating process was that Mexico’s positions had to be expressed in an open, specific and precise manner. See Alba, supra note 1.
such as undocumented migration, border and regional security, human smuggling and trafficking, and international cooperation.  

A key component of the new responses was the concept of "shared responsibility," indicating Mexico's willingness to do its part regarding migration management. Among other propositions, it was suggested that Mexico should take explicit responsibility for improving economic and social opportunities in the country to retain its population, that Mexico should encourage and ease the return and reincorporation of Mexicans into their home communities, and that Mexico should also make a better use of remittances and of the enhanced relations with Mexican communities abroad to advance the development of the country, particularly of the localities of origin of the migrants. But the Calderón administration has pursued a less direct, more subtle and low-visibility orientation.

III. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Recent migration trends offer new challenges and, of course, also new opportunities for both Mexico and the United States. The challenges are not minor ones, as demonstrated by the struggles to find appropriate responses to Mexico-U.S. migration. On Mexico's side, the approaches of the "principled document" produced in 2005 and the "low-key approach" of the Calderón administration are different. This difference suggests, in my opinion, that the country has not yet found a new "consensual response" to deal with the migration issue in the post-September-11 context. On the U.S. side, it has not been possible "to fix its migration system" (to use the amply circulated and accepted expression).  


42. See id. One of the premises of the 2005 Mexico and the Migration Phenomenon document was that the United States would do its part, in accordance with the long-held Mexican view that the management of Mexican migration flows should be bilateral. As a matter of fact, the document was published in major U.S. newspapers in 2006 to influence legislative discussions on various immigration reform bills introduced in the U.S. Congress. But the move did not have the intended effect on any specific piece of immigration initiatives, and none were passed by Congress.  

43. At the same time, the Calderón government has made visible attempts to professionalize migration personnel and to modernize migration facilities to better manage transit migration.  

44. The debate on immigration reform in the United States has not reached any solution. Although, de facto, a "restrictive response" has been taking shape and hold since September 11.
The emerging era of increasing restrictions certainly creates mounting difficulties to the continuation of the "secular" Mexican immigration patterns (as we know them). These difficulties could be compounded by the adverse consequences of a deep economic recession on the demand of Mexican labor, at least in the short to medium term. Confronted with restrictive and uncertain migration scenarios, Mexico faces multiple challenges and very difficult decisions ahead.

In my view, two orientations should guide future Mexican responses to migration. One orientation should be geared to try to deactivate the migration phenomenon altogether. The other should focus on more actively supporting Mexican migrants and would-be migrants. These orientations may look contradictory, but they are not, because one viewpoint is the attitudes versus the migration phenomenon, and another the attitudes versus the migrants themselves.

Regarding attitudes versus the migration phenomenon, there should be a political decision, at the highest level, to improve domestic and economic social opportunities and working conditions to encourage people to stay in Mexico. The country also has to look at its development policies through "the migration lens" with the purpose of deactivating mass emigration. The Mexican government has to factor in "migration deactivation purposes" on its economic and social public policies. The country needs, once and for all, to accelerate its pace of economic development and reduce its regional economic and social gaps. But even if a more dynamic economic growth pattern is found, Mexico may need to seriously consider the desirability and convenience of implementing significant employment programs (of the type of "active labor or employment policies") closely tied to productive activities, like infrastructure creation.

45. I use this expression with a different meaning from the one "more generally assumed," which refers mostly to the developmental implications of remittances, and of the "circulation" of the highly skilled migrants and temporary workers. My meaning puts the emphasis on looking at the development policies with a view to "retain the population," without exclusion of the previous meaning.


47. On Mexico's economic record and migration, see Francisco Alba, The Mexican Economy and Mexico-U.S. Migration: A Macro Perspective, in Mexico-U.S. Migration Management 33-60 (Agustin Escobar & Susan Martin eds., 2008). But some developments toward international convergence are also required. Thus, if migration is not internationally acceptable, it is also essential to devise long term international (regional) economic and social policies that could deactivate migration pressures. In my view of the international convergence issue, the passage of Mexico's demographic wave through the working ages will not by itself deactivate emigration pressures.
Regarding attitudes versus the migrants, I would venture that Mexico has multiple responsibilities, some of them new, to make migration a secure, orderly, and successful process. On the one hand, every effort has to be made to support those migrants in an irregular situation in another country who want to regularize it, among other actions, by "using," and by "facilitating" migrants to use all available legal and other U.S. dispositions. On the other, there is need for a more active involvement by Mexico in the "preparation" of those wishing to emigrate, among other possible initiatives, by allowing, regulating, and supervising "manpower enterprises," which could train and help place Mexican workers abroad.

The inflexion of migration trends also offers opportunities for the United States to find political accommodation to the economic and social forces driving migration and to the geostrategic realities of vicinity. Certainly, the moment is not the most auspicious one for great bargains and ambitious visions, but given the increasingly interlocked economic, social and political environments on the two sides of the border, there should be at least some pragmatic and accommodating migration responses—be it in the form of some kind of "earned regularization," or be it under some type of temporary migration programs.

A fair amount of rethinking will be needed to address the many inconsistencies developed by the main migration responses and policies pursued by both countries (and to redress some of them). Both countries have to raise themselves to the challenge of constructively managing some unavoidable migration processes in the context of the enduring nature of the economic, social, and political forces at work, even while looking at migration through the security lens. In more than one way, the current dilemmas facing Mexico and the United States with regard to migration are the same old ones: the opening of avenues for a safe and orderly movement of Mexicans into the United States—whether temporarily or permanently—by the two countries; and the forceful and cooperative engagement of the two countries to achieve a "real convergence of opportunities" in both sides of the border in order to greatly diminish unwanted migratory pressures.

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48. This is accomplished by raising educational levels among the general population, and by training those who have foreign labor contracts.

49. There is a long-shared history of mutually beneficial U.S.-Mexico relations.

50. Arguing in favor of a thoughtful revision of some of the U.S. current policies is the realization that relying solely on tightened immigration enforcement is unlikely to change the economic and social realities that build migration pressures.