

A bilateral perspective on Mexico-U.S. migration

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Editors

A BILATERAL PERSPECTIVE ON Mexico-U.S. MIGRATION

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SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION: THE NEED TO RE-CONCEPTUALIZE U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS FROM A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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The massacre of 72 migrants in Tamaulipas, Mexico, during August 2010 and the continuous reports of migrant kidnappings, fraud, injuries, and abuse are some of many expressions of the current humanitarian crisis along the Mexico-United States border. All over the world, contemporary international migration appears as an unwanted by-product of globalization that is frequently *securitized* along with other phenomena such as terrorist threats and other transnational crimes that have dominated the international agenda.

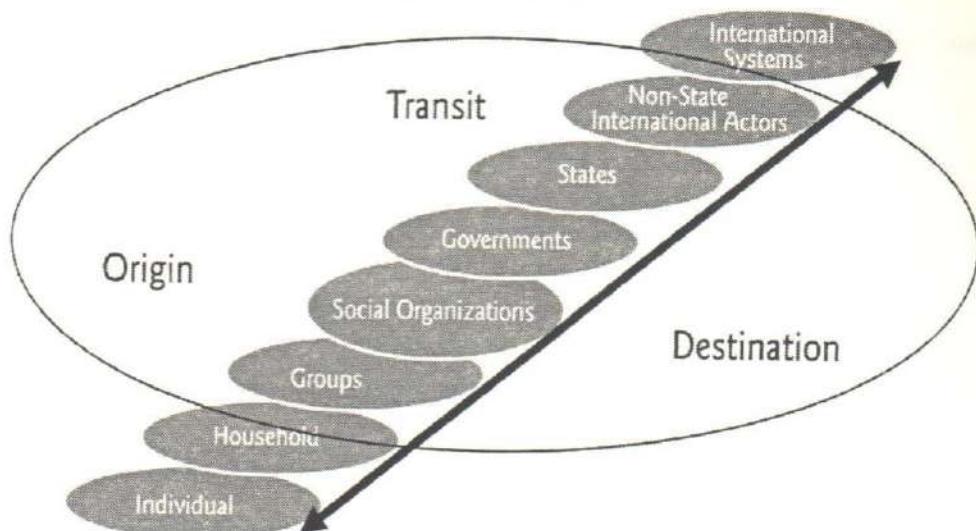
In the last three decades there has been an exponential increase in human mobility across national borders because the labor requirements of the world economy cannot be separated from other factors such as the means of production and capital, the circulation and security of which are stimulated and protected by international agreements. Globalization carries a dramatic increase in international migration. The United Nations (2002) reports that more than 213 million people live in a different country from the one in which they were born, 113 million more than three decades ago. Of all international migrants, only 16 million are refugees and asylum seekers whose *security* is at risk. The remaining migrants, 197.6 million people (92.4%), left their countries for "other" reasons, especially employment and family reunification. All over the world, migrant workers annually send more than 300 billion dollars in remittances to their communities of origin and families (United Nations, 2010; World Bank, 2010).

For countries of origin, especially those the UN labels "less" or "least developed," international migration is not only an escape valve but also one of the main sources of foreign currency and a good substitute for development policies that were formerly the State's responsibility.

For host countries, on the other hand, these migrants, especially those considered to be "undocumented," represent an irregular population whose presence contradicts the functionality of their own liberal economic systems. Migration imposes a depreciation of low-qualified jobs and exacerbates the labor and social benefits crisis within the post-industrial model. For transit countries, these migrations import risks, and those who traverse the borders are often criminalized and met by repressive responses.

Security and International Migration:
The Need to Re-conceptualize U.S.-Mexico Relations from a Regional Perspective

Figure 7: Origin, Transit, and Destination as Geographical Spaces that Need to be Considered in Migration Policy Research



Source: Self constructed diagram

The Mexican case is illustrative because it shows the contradictions between the Human Development Index and real human security, or rather insecurity, as experienced by those Mexicans who decide to migrate. Mexico is securitizing undocumented immigration from Central America in return for a commitment to action by the United States. However, within the Mexican territory, the decrease in efforts to curb factors that cause migration, including economic, financial, environmental, social, cultural, physical, judicial, technological, functional, and informational security, is eminent. These foundations are the basis of the new conception of Human Security. The lack of progress in these areas condemns Mexico and other countries from which migration originates to continue compromising their own development in favor of labor exportation and remittances.

Notes

¹ *Pochos* is the name given to a Mexican-American or Mexican that lives in the United States who adopts the American way of life and doesn't speak proper Spanish. Because of this, Mexicans don't see *pochos* as true Mexicans.

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