

Crossing the U.S.-Mexico Border: Push and Pull Factors for Migration

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Each year, thousands of undocumented (or “illegal”) migrants from Mexico and Central America attempt to cross the U.S. border. These migrants face a variety of challenges on their journey, ranging from harsh desert conditions and corrupt smugglers to government border guards and fences. Many of these migrants choose to leave their homes because of “push” factors such as economic hardship, and they are drawn to the United States because of “pull” factors such as job opportunities. However, this controversial issue includes human rights factors at home, in transit, and within the U.S. More discussion of the human rights implications of undocumented immigration is sorely needed.

This research paper explores the factors that “push” Central Americans and Mexicans out of their homes, as well as the “pull” factors that bring them to the United States. By approaching these factors from a human rights perspective, this paper highlights the challenges faced by these migrants and their connections to human security issues such as trafficking and drug violence. This topic is significant because “illegal” immigration across the U.S.-Mexico border has been happening for years, and it represents a charged political issue within American politics. Despite the passage of strict immigration laws and even the construction of a border fence, immigrants continue to come – often at great personal expense and risk. Discussion of the push and pull factors leading to immigration may not only help us understand this issue at a deeper level, but also uncover the human rights vulnerabilities at

its core. This understanding is vital for policy-makers hoping to protect international human rights in the face of large-scale immigration.

In order to discuss the push and pull factors inherent to migration, this paper will proceed as follows: First, a brief history of this issue will provide background information for understanding migration, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Bracero program. Second, push and pull factors related to drug violence will be outlined using a human rights perspective. Third, economic push and pull factors will be addressed. Fourth, the problem of ineffective (and sometimes corrupt) governments will tie to push and pull factors. Lastly, recommendations for solving these problems will be considered.

Background of the Issue

Migration to the United States

The background of migration includes a variety of factors, including both economic and political. Migration happens all around the world at any given time. According to the United States Department of State (n.d.): “Since time immemorial, people have left their countries in search of a better life for themselves and their families.” People leave their home countries for many reasons and are in search of many things. There are more than 190 million migrants in the world today, constituting approximately three percent of the world’s population (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Migration is significant to the United States because it is a country founded by immigrants. There were about 37.5 million foreign-born persons living in the U.S. in 2006. During the time period 2000-2005, 3.7 million immigrants chose to become citizens of the United States (U.S. Department of State, n.d.).

Among the myriad of circumstances, which cause someone to immigrate to another country, chief among them are economics, social pressure, politics and the environment. For instance, economic migrants may move to find work or to follow a particular career path. Social migration involves people

moving in order to obtain a better quality of life within a country better suited to their personal beliefs and social values. Another reason for undocumented people to migrate is the environmental causes of migration, which tends to occur because of natural disasters such as flooding or earthquakes (BBC News, n.d.). Political migration has to do with moving to escape political oppression or war that is tormenting citizens within their home countries. A prime example of this would be people who have moved out of their country of origin due to political fears. These people choose to flee their home country, seeking asylum, because their political, social or religious views subject them to persecution or threaten their lives. One example of this is the Jewish Diaspora resulting from mass migration during and after World War II.

Both the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees freedom of movement as a fundamental human right. Article 13 of the UDHR states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state” (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Article 12 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states, “Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own” (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1966). There is an obvious tension between what the UDHR and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states and what countries actually do in regards to permitting entrance to their country. Each country has their own sovereignty and power to determine who enters their country, as well as determination of who may become a citizen. This is why there is a great tension between international documents and what can/will happen; the international system is grounded on the concept of state sovereignty, but international human rights standards put obligations on states that transcend domestic decisions. For instance, international law guarantees the right to seek asylum – and countries must consider asylum requests for those who cross international borders (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951)

For the case studies considered in this paper, the history of migration between the United States and Mexico is a long and varied one. During the time before the United States had defined its borders, there was a natural migration of people from Mexico to the lands that are now claimed by the United States. History also shows that the United States annexed many territories from Mexico. These territories were located in present-day Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona. People in these territories were Mexican citizens, and then suddenly they found themselves in a new country after the Mexican-American War. In the treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo, the Mexican government relinquished to the United States Upper California and New Mexico. This was known as the Mexican Cession and included present-day Arizona and New Mexico and parts of Utah, Nevada, and Colorado (Gray, n.d). In that same treaty, Mexico also gave up claims to Texas and recognized the Rio Grande as the southern boundary of the United States. The United States paid Mexico \$15 million in compensation, and the treaty included a provision for the protection of property and civil rights of the Mexican citizens that were living within the new boundaries of the United States (Gray, n.d).

Later, the Bracero Program was the first program established by the United States government to encourage immigration into the U.S. This program allowed employers to temporarily employ workers from Mexico, who would occupy various jobs such as agricultural labor. The need for this program arose because much of the American labor force was busy with World War II and could not undertake work in the fields. There were more than four million Mexican farm workers who came to the United States to work on farms during this time. These workers were drawn to the U.S. because they had suffered since the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and they needed jobs that Mexico could not provide for them. In World War II, when the United States government needed the labor of the citizens of Mexico, both sides had equal benefits in allowing Mexican laborers to come work the fields (Marentes & Marentes, 1999). The money that Mexican citizens could make in the U.S. allowed the *braceros* ("laborers") to send money

back to their families to cover the costs of their needs. This in turn helped to spike the economy in both countries, which was mutually beneficial (Zatz, 1993).

The Bracero program fits within a larger context in which the United States provided temporary work visas to foreign laborers. Around 200,000 Mexicans were admitted between 1910 and 1920 as economic refugees as a result of the Mexican Revolution (Whitaker, 2009). With the start of World War II in 1942 and the development of the United States economy in 1964, about five million Mexicans were again hired as short-term laborers to work in agricultural sectors under the Bracero program. As Mexican citizens flooded into the United States legally, there were also an equal number of citizens that had to enter by other means. Whitaker (2009) writes that, during the 1990s and early 2000's, about 80-85 percent of the half million Mexicans entering into the United States each year were undocumented. From the early years of the Bracero Program, the United States government did not take substantial steps to stop the undocumented migration to and from the United States. According to Whitaker (2009), there is an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States today, despite how difficult it is to cross the border.

Ease of trade and growing economic opportunities are another reason for migration to the United States. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect after being signed by the governments of Mexico, Canada, and the United States. The purpose of the agreement was to make things easier for everybody with trading and selling within the North American countries. NAFTA entered into force on January 1, 1994 to create the world's largest free trade area. It now links 450 million people, producing \$17 trillion worth of goods and services (Office of the United States Trade Representative, n.d.). Critics argue that NAFTA has a hidden agenda of exporting cheap labor from poor countries to rich ones. According to Raúl Delgado Wise, director of development studies at the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas and president of the International Migration and Development Network, "NAFTA...had an underlying objective to export cheap labor to the United States. This export

of labor has been a crucial aspect of economic restructuring in the United States since the implementation of the agreement” (Graybeal, 2011, p. 5). Some contend that migration from Mexico is positive and creates a high rate of growth, helping the United States to grow into a great country. Indeed, many people who helped the United States grow were Latin Americans, with a majority of them being Mexicans – yet despite these contributions, many of these immigrants receive 30 percent or less compared to nationals doing the same jobs (Graybeal, 2011).

The Immigration Debate

Immigration has become a hot button issue in recent years within the United States. Debated by a host of pundits, politicians and theorists, everyone seems to come up with different evidence to support their arguments. The people who are staunchly against undocumented immigration argue that immigrants are a stress on the economy of the United States. On the other side of the debate, there is the argument that undocumented immigration bolsters the economy and strengthens the country. Some people state that undocumented workers hold jobs in the United States that would otherwise not be held by American citizens, for instance. Many people believe that the government needs to refine their immigration laws-to attract more skilled immigrants, yet it’s hard to gain forward movement in the current political climate. This constant arguing has blocked the development of immigration reforms (Lee, 2013).

Part of the problem stems from fears over what happened in 1986, when President Ronald Reagan approved an act that relaxed immigration rules for those who could prove they were in the United States since January 1, 1982. It is important to note that migrants had to prove knowledge of U.S. history and English language skills to gain citizenship, as well as have a clean criminal record. However, today many people argue that the passage of a similar law today would reward law-breakers who entered the United States illegally. That would create an enticement for additional immigrants to

attempt to enter into the United States without legal status or documentation (National Public Radio, 2010). Interestingly, a long-running survey of migrants from Mexico “found that the work, not the potential to gain legal status, was the main cause of increased border crossing in the 1990s and 2000’s” (Cave, 2013). Critics argue that as many as 11 million undocumented migrants are living in the United States without investing in the country; these migrants are charged with being unproductive, vulnerable to abuse and in need of social services, and disrupting an already incomprehensive immigration policy.

One proposed “solution” to this issue is building a fence to protect national security around the southern border between Mexico and the United States. Critics argue that the best way to limit the number of undocumented workers in the United States is to build a fence to make the country’s security stronger. The plan, already in progress, is to build a longer fence across the border and fortify it with more agents (Whitaker, 2009). This fence comes out of the United States citizen’s tax dollars and it costs a lot; a 2009 analysis from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the cost of pedestrian fencing ranged between \$400,000 and \$15 million per mile with an average of \$3.9 million a mile (Sais, 2013). This fencing is something that is being used to keep undocumented immigrants from crossing from Mexico into the United States. Yet since the United States government has erected this fencing in an effort to forestall illegal immigration, it has become apparent that this has not stopped undocumented border crossing; people continue to find ways around the border fence and into the United States.

Supporters of expanded immigration argue that the need for strict controls, including the fence, is unwarranted. They contend that there are many benefits for the country in supporting immigration and these benefits should be explored. Bandow (2013) writes that immigration benefits the United States; for instance, the economic advantages are significant and many immigrants are natural entrepreneurs who establish companies and create jobs. In a recent *Forbes* article, Bandow (2013) contends that many immigrants are highly trained and experienced; it’s therefore a shame that the

United States government has to sometimes turn away such skilled workers because of the current immigration system is not functioning properly. Even in cases of unskilled labor, there are plenty of undesirable yet necessary jobs that many Americans are unwilling to do. Many U.S. businesses benefit from migrant labor that help with farming, for instance, and factory work. Other benefits from wider immigration include cultural diversity, which allows people from various cultures to meet and educate each other (Bandow, 2013).

As Americans continue to debate whether immigration is good for their country, migrants from Mexico and Central America continue to undertake great risks in order to cross the border illegally. The risk is high for people who attempt to enter into the United States without documentation. Entering into the United States is not easy; around 370- 800 migrants die every year in the U.S. while attempting to cross the border illegally. The U.S. government reports the number of deaths as being 300-400 annually. Estimates of the death toll range from 3,861 to 5,607 in the last fifteen years (Jimenez, 2009). The majority of these deaths are the result of dehydration, hypothermia in the desert during the night, or drowning in the Rio Grande canals (Peña, 2012).

There are many different ways to cross illegally into the United States, often including the help of paid smugglers, but these stories often end tragically. Migrants have crossed the border by hiding in the false back of a truck, for instance, or by crawling through tunnels dug under the border fencing. The government often focuses on increasing security and installing preventative counter-measures for reducing traffic across the border illegally. Fortunately for the immigrants, the border fence does not cover the complete border between Mexico and the United States. In the year 2005, there was a sweltering summer, resulting in many deaths as immigrants attempted long voyages in order to gain entrance into the U.S. The majority of migrant deaths have occurred in Arizona, where the landscape is vast and mountainous; the Arizona desert spans over 2000 miles and temperatures reach as high as 120 degrees Fahrenheit during the hottest months (Whitaker, 2009).

Push and Pull Factors

Push and pull factors are the motives for people to choose to migrate to and from a country. The push factors are the things that push the individual away from their home country. According to Andrew Schlewitz (n.d.), some push factors for people to move from their homes in Mexico include lack of economic opportunity, globalization of the Western image, proximity, and political and public violence. A pull factor is some aspect of the place where an individual wants to go that makes it better than where the individual came from. Schlewitz (n.d.) lists possible pull factors for people choosing to leave Mexico, including: U.S. economic development, social networks and chain migration, educational opportunities, U.S. volunteer immigration policy, and U.S. refugee policy. Although all of these factors are important, this paper will focus on push and pull factors specifically centered on human rights issues. In this section, we'll explore push and pull factors related to drug violence, economics, and issues of ineffective (and sometimes corrupt) governments.

Drug violence

The War on Drugs in Mexico that began in December 2006 has been a long and violent conflict. While the government has been fighting drug trafficking and violence, the drug traffickers have also been fighting among different drug cartels for control over territory. According to Human Rights Watch, nearly 35,000 people were killed between the years 2006 to 2012 (Human Rights Watch, 2011). In Mexico, the drug cartels take in between \$19 and \$29 billion USD annually from U.S. drug sales. The cartels are reluctant to give up their positions due to the vast wealth and power the crime garners them. Mexico provides 90 percent of the cocaine that has entered into the U.S. In some states within Mexico, the citizens lead a difficult and fearful existence thanks to the influence the cartels yield over their daily lives. In the year 2006, a drug cartel in Michoacán called "La Familia Michoacán" was reported to have

hurled five decapitated heads of rival gang members onto the dance floor at a local establishment. In a recent news report, a woman talked about having to move to the United States from Michoacán because two hooded men entered her home and killed her father and her 14-year-old brother (Associated Press, 2013).¹

The Mexican cartels commit a large amount of human rights violations that can range anywhere from kidnapping to human trafficking. Most cartels in Mexico will extort local businesses and bolster their finances through kidnapping and asking for a ransom. The threat of being kidnapped is a constant concern for citizens of Mexico and neighboring countries plagued with drug violence. Generally, those involved in drug trafficking are also tied into human trafficking, smuggling, and prostitution rings. These are very serious human rights problems (BBC News, 2014). Children and teens are often brought into this way of life in order to earn money and support their families, continuing the cycle of violence for future generations. These problems seep into the United States, as well; drug violence in Mexico impacts lives on both sides of the border. According to school officials in the town of Fort Hancock, Texas, many students in their district are suffering the traumatic after-effects of bearing witness to gang violence. According to Vicente Burciaga, who lives in Juarez near the U.S.-Mexico border: "It's very hard over there" referring to the impacts of gang and drug violence on everyday people. In the town of El Paso, the police estimate that at least 30,000 Mexicans have moved across the border in the past two years because of the violence in Juarez and the river towns near the borders (McKinley, 2010).

While violence happening at these high rates, it is only natural that the number of people seeking refuge and asylum in the United States continues to grow. These asylum-seekers range from police officers and journalists to government officials and everyday people who were threatened by

¹ I am able to relate to this experience to a degree because of a crime that occurred while I was studying abroad in Guadalajara, Mexico. The authorities found a van outside of the city with decapitated bodies inside, victims of drug violence. This was a very frightening experience that made me want to return to the United States (see: Shoichet, 2013).

gangs. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Unfortunately, these rights do not come easy for everyone. Asylum seekers are placed into detention centers and held there for the duration of their asylum proceedings while awaiting a decision. While the asylum process is a contentious battle for some, even those who attain it may find it a shallow victory. Not only must they start life over in a new country, but they also fear for the well being of those they left behind. (Associated Press, 2013). In Mexico, people find themselves caught in the middle of violence between the criminals, armed forces, and police; this has led to a mass exodus of 230,000 people leaving the border region between 2007 and 2010 and some 20,000 dwellings abandoned. While most of these people had never thought of leaving their homes before, they now have no other choice. Crossing the border seems not to be a strategic decision, but rather a practical one based on geographical proximity (Calderón, 2014).

Although many migrants seek safety from drug violence in the United States, spillover violence threatens human security in border towns and its scope is not completely understood by government agencies. It is important to note that law enforcement agencies do not have the ability to effectively track spillover crime that is related to drugs. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) do not have a common definition for identifying these types of crimes. Thus information over spillover crime cannot be gathered, nor can people retrieve the information easily to analyze it. Frequently, government agencies have a difficult time tracking this information because victims of drug crimes will not report problems because they fear incrimination or retribution (Potter, 2013). While government definitions may be lacking, however, there is no shortage of nightly media coverage concerning drug-related violence. News articles report witnesses describing gang members as being “belligerent, they carry weapons” (NBC News, 2012). Other quotes include: “It’s a nightly problem with them being on the property. They’ve already tried to break in”; “It’s upsetting and there’s a lot of

them. It hasn't decreased; there's a lot of traffic" (NBC News, 2012). These quotes from people who live near the border towns illustrate how people's rights are being disregarded during this drug war.

The drug war violence in Mexico continues to grow, spreading to an ever-larger geographical region. While some may argue that the violence that has spilled over from Mexico to the United States has been restricted to the drug traffickers and the fight between different gangs, in truth this is increasingly hurting innocent people. President Barack Obama's administration has committed to spending an additional \$700 million to help Mexico fight the cartels and to double the amount of agents that are working the border, all with the hope of making the border area safer for civilians (O'Neil, 2009). The full impacts of this spending, however, is yet to be determined.

Economic factors

Economic factors are another reason for migration, and there are many different ideas to explain why Mexico and Central America face current economic troubles. Some stress the interrelatedness of global economies and growing reliance on international trade and finance. With the recent U.S. banking crisis, for example, came a domino effect of economic problems. Earlier, from the mid-1990's to the early 2000's, large global financial consortia made strong inroads in Latin America. In Mexico, international or foreign banks controlled 80 percent of the banking systems. This foreign control of local banks is one reason why economic foundations in countries such as Mexico are so weak (Vidal et al., 2011). Yet others contend that the financial field in Latin American is expanding every day; the Mexican financial system today enjoys a resiliency that was obtained through previous economic ups and downs. In the 1970s and '80s, the Mexican economy went from "boom to bust" and then enjoyed a large increase due to creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Businesspeople such as Bancrea CEO Adrian Lozano say that the Mexican economy is boosted by the government and

opposition parties pushing through major reforms, surges of new consumers, and demands for staples such as food and petroleum (Vidal et al., 2011).

From a human rights perspective, economic rights play vital importance for the well being of individual people and the respect for human dignity. Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment” (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). All people should have the right to have reasonable work and be able to work and earn a living wage, which includes the ability to provide necessities for one’s family. In some countries, there are not many opportunities for people to enjoy economic rights, however. In parts of Mexico and Central America, these rights are being violated by high unemployment rates and government corruption that allows poverty to continue. While some CEOs may report economic growth, the reality is that many regular people do not enjoy the benefits of this development.

NAFTA and government corruption are frequently cited as obstacles to economic rights and causes for migration. For instance, NAFTA favors U.S. farmers and creates challenges for Mexican ones. NAFTA has crippled Mexican farming prospects by opening competition with the heavily subsidized U.S. farm industry (Sergie, 2014). Since there is a lot of poverty in countries such as Mexico, it is often hard for people to obtain the skills they need to open new markets – including farmers, who are sometimes pushed out of agricultural work due to economic constraints. Government corruption also contributes to inflation and widespread poverty in the face of a devalued Mexican peso. A variety of historical events contribute to this issue, including a series of unfortunate events that led Mexico to lose its prosperity. In 1982, the price of oil fell and took the Mexican peso with it. The Mexican government inflated their money in response to the crisis, eventually helped when the U.S. government, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank stepped in to provide billions of dollars in

bailout money. As a result, the Mexican government became indebted to these governments and organizations (Gomberg-Meñoz, 2009).

Economic difficulties are a significant cause for any person to want to travel to another country to improve their life. In Mexico, there is not a surplus of sufficient jobs where someone can make a livable wage. This is a huge push factor for people from Central America and Mexico to leave their home countries and attempt to find greater opportunities in the United States. They know that, in the United States, the jobs pay a lot better than at home. Mexican labor statistics show that 2012 compensation costs in manufacturing was \$6.36 USD, and \$4.45 USD in hourly direct pay overall. The unemployment rate in 2012 was 5.1 percent of the civilian labor force. (Both men and women are close in unemployment rates; men at 5.0 and women at 5.1 percent.) The outlier rests with young people; unemployment for workers under the age of 25 was 9.9 percent of civilian labor force. This information shows that the general hourly rate of pay is very low in Mexico, and that young people struggle to find work (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Unskilled and minimum-wage jobs in the United States offer the potential to earn wages that are often unavailable in home countries.

There are a number of jobs that immigrants from Mexico and Central America occupy in the United States, and many are dangerous. Men frequently work in construction, extraction, transportation, and various service industries, while women often work in service occupations and manufacturing, installation, and repair jobs (Terrazas, 2010). Immigrants are often forced into jobs that are not healthy and are dangerous. A study using 2003-2005 data from the American Community Survey of the Bureau of Labor indicates that immigrants were more likely to work in riskier jobs than U.S. born workers. This was partly explained by factors such as low English skills, education levels, and undocumented work statuses. Such migrants typically do not work in white-collar jobs; rather, they are in dangerous jobs such as meatpacking and poultry processing. In these kinds of factories, workers experience cuts, carpal tunnel syndrome, skin disease, amputations, and even death. The danger is

equal or worse for the immigrants who work in the agriculture sector, where they are subjected to numerous abuses (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009).

In addition to the risks faced by migrants, U.S. companies also face challenges in the face of undocumented migration. For instance, companies are legally required to check documentation status. If a company does not complete or does not correct an I-9 form on behalf of each employee within the first three days of employment, the company could face penalties of \$110 to \$1,100 dollars for each violation. A company that signs an I-9 form containing false statements may be charged with perjury. A company that knowingly uses undocumented workers can be fined as much as \$10,000 and employers may face jail time up to six months (Ohio State Bar Association, n.d.).

Remittance is one way that undocumented immigrants help their families back home. In the 2008 documentary *The Other Side of Immigration*, interviews with 700 Mexicans highlighted the lived experiences of economic immigrants living in the U.S. (IMDb, n.d.). These migrants sent remittances home to their families, where loved ones depended on the economic help to purchase necessities. There are other estimates of how many remittances are transferred across the lands of the United States into Mexico and Latin America. According to the Pew Hispanic center, \$14.2 billion USD in remittances are sent to families in Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras. Almost all of the remittances flow to these countries from the United States, and it is estimated that \$21 billion to \$25 billion in remittances will be received in Mexico between 2020 and 2030 (Suro et al., n.d.).

Many undocumented migrants are drawn to American cities where existing migrant communities have already been established, meaning that they have support networks of people who understand their language, culture, and situations. When the undocumented immigrants come to the United States, they usually have little to no money; they go to places where they have relatives or community to help them get on their feet. In some cases, these communities also help new families survive in a foreign country. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, nearly half of

undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are parents of children who are underage. About 77 percent of these children are American citizens, born on U.S. soil. Sometimes there are undocumented immigrants who live with their relatives, who are American citizens. These support systems are essential for migrants who are trying to work hard and make a better life for themselves and their families (Hills & Hayes, 2013).

Ineffective governments and corruption

Although it's likely that every government has some form of corruption, we see massive problems with corruption within the Mexican government. The drug traffickers have become the law of the land in many Mexican cities, mainly because they have the ability to corrupt and threaten the public officials. The people distrust the police because they might work for the cartels. This fear is also within the security forces at municipal, state, and federal levels. It is incredibly difficult to overcome the violence and corruption that is destroying Mexico, but it does appear that the government is trying to fight the different cartels, including the powerful Tijuana cartel. Human security will be threatened within Mexico if these drug traffickers go unchecked; the government has to root out corruption in order to be effective and legitimate. For instance, the President of Mexico created an elite police force to take the place of the corrupt police, yet a group of elite officers had connections to criminals serving time for kidnapping and murder. For many high-ranking officials, working with the cartels is the only way to keep their families safe from violence. Obviously, there needs to be significant change in order for Mexico's government to function properly (Freeman, 2006).

Economic growth in Mexico is disrupted by the government corruption. Take the case of remittances, which are sent back from the United States to support migrant workers' families. The government counts remittances as economic growth, and there are reasons to believe that many remittances do not always reach families, as they should. While situations vary, it is believed that some

remittances are stolen or greatly reduced by corrupt officials and organized crime. The government should be assisting people because there is no guarantee that everyone will get the amount of support that he or she needs. When the government does not fulfill the basic needs of the citizens, the citizens take it upon themselves to try to find a way to survive – for instance, by crossing into the United States (Tyburski, 2012).

Despite widespread corruption, the government of Mexico does allow for human rights monitoring in the country – although many reports outline inefficiencies in the government itself. The National Commission on Human Rights, for instance, recently reported that approximately 700 people had been displaced in Tlacotepec because of communal conflicts and violence. There are also instances of displacement caused by major development projects in which the residents of the community were not informed properly of what was going to happen. These displaced people have immediate human rights problems, which include the need for a place to live, a place to work, and other social services. These problems are caused by the inefficiency of the government of Mexico. People who find themselves in these situations do not know if they should make new homes for themselves elsewhere or wait so that they can return home. With this uncertainty in the governmental system, it makes their choices much more difficult (Batista, 2014).

The U.S. government is not particularly confident in the Mexican government, and as a result has implemented a variety of programs and actions. This is particularly important because of the high numbers of migrants crossing the border each day, as well as the high numbers of American tourists visiting Mexico. (The U.S. State Department warns travelers about high rates of violence, including vulnerabilities to armed robbery and car thefts.) As a result, the United States tries to assist Mexico with security matters (U.S. State Department, n.d.a, n.d.b). In addition, the United States has enacted volunteer immigration policies related to family reunification, asylum seeking, and citizenship by birth. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, every year people come to the United States

seeking asylum because they have suffered persecution or have fear of being persecuted. The people have been persecuted for their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, and political opinion (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, n.d). The Dream Act is a provisional, conditional path to citizenship that will give the 65,000 young immigrants who graduate from American high schools every year permission to live in the United States. The six-year conditional path to citizenship, which would require completion of a college degree or two years of military service, is still making its way through U.S. Congress and has been the source of much controversy (Dream Act Portal, n.d.).

Recommendations

Looking forward, it is important to deal with the three major problems examined in this paper: drug violence, economic problems, and government corruption and inefficiency. As long as there are huge disparities in Mexico and Central America, people will continue to be forced out of their home countries to seek out a better life in the United States. First, drug violence must be addressed. The Drug Policy Alliance, for instance, recommends that some now-illegal drugs are legalized in the United States. Since the United States is the largest importer of drugs that are made in Mexico and Central America, the U.S. government could try to lower illegal drug consumption. Legalized marijuana would allow people to sell the drug legally, thereby taking away business from violent cartels. The Drug Policy Alliance argues that drug use is inevitable and that is why legalization is the best option (Drug Policy Alliance, n.d.). Mexico must also take down its drug cartels in order to protect security and the economy. Partnerships between Mexican and American agencies and security forces can combat narcotics trafficking rings, which in turn will help fight corruption in government and boost the overall economy.

Second, there needs to be an increase in jobs in Mexico and Central America. These countries could look to the United States as a role model and try to strengthen jobs sectors. The governments could try to make new public sector jobs, including hiring public servants, and give tax benefits for businesses to stimulate the private sector. This will provide the ability to hire more people and create more buying power. With the ability to make money working legal jobs, many people would no longer turn to working for drug cartels to support themselves and their families. Furthermore, the United States government should consider changing its funding allocations; rather than spend money and resources to deport thousands of migrants back to their home countries, these funds could be reallocated to NGOs working to better local communities. For instance, fund education programs and health initiatives to improve life at home. In the United States, employers who employ undocumented migrants should be more heavily discouraged; these jobs encourage undocumented migration and often include harmful, dangerous working conditions that American citizens would not undertake.

In closing, I have written about the push and pull factors for migration from Mexico and Central America to the United States, including the severe human rights implications of this migration. I've outlined how I would like to solve the human rights problems, ranging from drug trafficking and poverty to the dangerous voyage to America. I hope this paper helps educate people on the human rights issues inherent to immigration debates.

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