Crisis, NAFTA and International Migration:

From massive migration to growing returns

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Summary

The severe peso devaluation crisis of 1982 and the economic and social repercussions that followed the adoption of a neoliberal economic model in Mexico, brought devastating consequences to the country that were aggravated by the signing into law of NAFTA, in January 1994, which disrupted thousands of supply chains in the country and brought the farming sector –which was oriented to the domestic market– to the breaking point. On top of this, emigration to the United States exploded, in relation to the crisis and with consequences originating in the middle of the 1980s, intensifying in the 1990s, and reaching their peak in 2007. Serving as an enormous "escape valve" for those affected by the new economic model and NAFTA, migration was seen as a buffer for the consequences of neoliberalism. But the U.S. economic crisis from 2007 to 2013 put an end to that outlet with its repercussions in unemployment and a greater militarization along the border, leading to massive deportations. In this period, forced and voluntary returns of Mexican migrants occurred without any support program for the economic reintegrations of migrants and their families, which in tandem with the (un)employment scenario, represents one of

the greatest short- and long-term national challenges.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1980s, shortly after the economic crisis and the 1982 devaluation, Mexican authorities decided –unilaterally– to liberalize the economy, opening it up to foreign capital and the flows of financial investment. The government set aside development strategies and social protection policies, and concentrated its efforts on macroeconomic stabilization. Commercial and financial liberalization were accompanied by policies of privatization, decentralization and deregulation, which led to a large displacement of workers from their previously formal and secure jobs in large businesses and the government, to less-structured and unprotected labor markets characterized by conditions of unsteady work (Meza González Liliana 2006: 175).

The development strategy leading up to the 1980s was based on the substitution of consumer product imports and the import of capital and intermediate goods. In the period following the Second World War, the Mexican economy needed significant cash flows to purchase imports. This money mainly came from agricultural exports, since Mexican perishable products at that time were in great demand in the U.S. marketplace. Farm workers who did not produce for foreign markets were protected by guaranteed prices, since the agriculture sector was kept sheltered.

In the urban areas, the government's industrialization efforts, combined with a political system characterized as having a corporate structure, also protected low-skilled workers from the risks inherent in the markets, such that migration to the United States was not considered by many as an option. Between 1940 and 1960 the economy grew by record rates, thanks to the efforts of industrialization and accumulation, promoted by a highly interventionist government. In 1965 the Mexican and U.S. governments agreed to allow for the creation of *maquiladoras* on Mexican soil, and the Mexican economy began to produce for the international market in a framework disconnected from the rest of the national economy, in which its main attraction was cheap manual labor (Meza González Liliana 2006: 176).

Liliana Meza shows how the import substitution economic model became increasingly incapable of promoting growth and began to show signs of weakening when the international economy experienced a slowdown in the 1970s and the prices of Mexican export products fell to unprecedented lows. In 1976, Mexico experienced the first of a series of economic crises characterized by devaluations, capital flight, low growth levels, inflation, growing unemployment and high social costs.

At the end of the 1970s, state authorities debated the need for a new economic model, and agreed that government intervention had been the source of negative externalities and market failures that could only be remedied by a freer market. However, the decision to open the Mexican economy was proposed by the authorities when new sources of oil were discovered and when the petroleum prices were reaching record heights. At the end of the 1970s, when the Mexican government had accumulated an enormous external debt –in foreign currency– it argued that oil revenues would be sufficient to offset it. Then, when the national economy suffered another crisis in 1982, combined with the ever-present, huge external debt and the fall in petroleum earnings, it provoked a sharp drop in worker salaries and in the quality of life of the majority of the population.

Between 1981 and 1988, the Mexican economy grew at an average rate of only

1.8% and suffered a 5.3% drop in 1983. Inflation reach its highest level in 1987, when it grew by more than 150%. All of this severely affected working conditions of the average Mexican worker, not only because of the decrease in real incomes and the number of formal jobs, but also because jobs became ever-more undependable, in the sense that they were created by small businesses with short lives. In 1985, Mexico joined the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT, precursor to the current World Trade Organization). In 1986, yet another crisis struck the Mexican economy when international interest rates jumped and the price of oil fell again. In 1987, the stabilization process dealt another blow to workers, as suppresed real incomes were used as an anchor against inflation.

Between 1989 and 1994, under the Salinas government, the economy grew by relatively high rates and new social programs were implemented (National Solidarity Program) with the objective of protecting the most poor. In 1992, Mexico joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with high hopes for the future; however, a series of economic and political events led to a new economic crisis and capital flight in 1994, with negative repercussions for incomes and quality-of-life of the population. In the same year, the full force of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect, intending to reduce barriers to trade between Mexico, the United States and Canada, but above all, in the case of Mexico, to ensure that the economic reforms of the Salinas regime would live on beyond that administration (Meza González Liliana 2006: 117).

The decade of the 1980s was crucial for Mexico in many respects, not only for the change of economic model, but also for the radical process of redefining the city-countryside relationship that arose not so much from a rural crisis as an urban one (Arias, Patricia: 1992). Throughout this period, a series of processes and transformations in the migratory patterns occurred that marked the beginning of a new phase, completely different from those that had gone before (Durand, Jorge: 1994). For Jorge Durand (1996), three factors directly influenced the emergence of this new stage: the economic crisis that began in 1982, the amnesty law for undocumented workers (IRCA) that was proclaimed in 1986, and the confluence of elements that have traditionally influenced migratory currents: demographic, social, cultural and political issues.

The consequences of this are drastic, with a overall increase in the volume of migratory flow but also with regard to its composition. The traditional migratory pattern based on a quintet of characteristics –masculinity, rurality, temporality, regionality and illegality– has completely changed. The exclusively male composition has been pushed aside due to a notable growth in female migration, tied to processes of family reunification, by its own dynamic of incorporation into a bi-national labor market and by an increase in the demand for female workers in the United States. Furthermore, the almost exclusively rural composition of migrants has been augmented by a significant addition of urban-origin migrants and even those from metropolitan areas. Also, the pattern of seasonal migration, the "round-trip," has been transformed by the penetration of the migrant workforce into the industrial and service sectors that require a permanent workforce, unlike seasonal agriculture work. Migratory periods tend to be longer, and for that reason, permanent residency is more likely.

With respect to the illegality of Mexican migrants resident in the United States, this characteristic was modified with the regularization of 2.3-million undocumented migrants in 1996 under the IRCA, who from that point onward were free to enter and leave the country. It was in this context that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada was enacted, in which the governments of Mexico and the United States –through a process of repeated negotiations– handled the matter of reducing migratory flows as a core issue for its completion. In fact, Salinas de Gortari, in November 1993, during the final stage of negotiations and faced with the task of securing the signature of President-elect Clinton, started a campaign in support of the deal with the argument that the only way to avoid an invasion of millions of Mexicans to the United States was through the signing of the Agreement.

Arguing against the deal, Durand (1996) thought that any reduction in the flow of migrants should address at least two fundamental problems: employment and income. On employment, the Mexican picture is complicated. New jobs created under NAFTA would need to overcome the existing deficit of 477,705 unemployed, incorporate 1,109,000 underemployed and take into account the new entries into the workforce that each year brought 1-million more people into the labor market (James B. Pick and Edgar Buttler: 1994). In reality, however, the problem is seen in its full dimensions when one considers that in Mexico the entire *maquiladora* industry of the northern border area, after 50 years of promotion and development, has generated only 429,725 jobs (Ibid). Given that the majority of the *maquiladora* workforce is female, higher rates of male migration into the region of rapid demographic growth is an aggravating factor.

Similarly, for Durand, the salary differential between the two countries must be resolved, to eliminate it as an incentive for migration. That gap is similarly enormous: The annual per capita income difference between the two nations is 1:10, and if Mexico sees a 3% increase in incomes while the United States raises incomes by 1%, it will take 116 years to arrive at equal levels. But these two factors are, in fact, only two aspects of a complex puzzle, in which other issues must be taken into account – such as domestic policies.

NAFTA and international migration

For Francisco Alba (2008), the principal argument wielded in defense of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was the search for a better use of productive resources. This optimization would be achieved through the relocation of activities in the partner nations; however, the 'political' approval, above all in the United States, was solidified in the supposed trade liberalization that would have significant collateral implications in the reduction of Mexican emigration to the North. Over the course of the discussions and debates surrounding NAFTA, the Salinas and Bush (Senior) governments believed that trade liberalization, through the stimulation of investment, the creation of jobs and growing incomes in Mexico, would lead to an economic union between both countries, and would bring about an end to the Mexican migrant flow to the United States.

The signing into law of NAFTA and the new economic crisis of 1994-1995 deepened the Mexican economic crisis and increased poverty among small-scale farmers, with no solution in sight in that sector nor in other economic sectors affected by the recession and growing financial instability. In the face of this situation, a new kind of political economy for agriculture was needed, that –not forgetting the need to improve efficiency and competitiveness– took into account the specificities of the farming economy, the strategic role it played in the economy, and in the social and political stabilization of the country (García Rodolfo, 2000: p.75). During the 1988-1994 period, NAFTA was presented as the lever for the modernization of the country and the countryside, anticipating an avalanche of capital and technology that never arrived. On the contrary, it resulted in an almost total opening of Mexico to North American agricultural exports, deepening the national agricultural crisis in the 1990s, with a growing social and regional polarization in the country, made even worse with the 1994-1995 new economic crisis.

Halfway through the 1990s, Sherman Robinson and Mary Burfisher (1995) theorized that the manner in which the Mexican economy came out of its crisis, a soft or hard “landing”, would determine the positive or negative repercussions for agriculture and migration. On top of the growing interdependence with the United States, Mexico would have to pursue structural changes to modify its agricultural policies, and the United States, for its part, would need to achieve a growth in exports for a rapid recovery and a reduction in the migratory flow. At the end of the previous year, it became evident how the new national economic crisis and devaluation not only did not lead to an increase in the sector's exports, but rather to their reduction, deepening the negative impact on its performance.

Hubert Cartton de Gramont (1996), for his part, noted how the government's commitment to policies within a more liberal and deregulationist economic model, had consolidated the polarization of rural Mexico, in which only 15% of producers were capable of producing for export and could compete in the current economic environment; 35% had productive potential that depended on the support of suitable government programs, while 50% of producers had no productive capacity and who, under the new economic model, would have to abandon the sector, since no emergent economic sector existed into which they could be absorbed.

For each of these groups, the Mexican government created specific policies, since producers “with productive capacity” (15%) were seen as being able to compete equally within the conditions of the open market. For producers with “productive potential” (35%), programs to improve their productivity were planned to raise efficiency (which were not implemented since they did not contribute to macroeconomic stability). For the remaining farm producers (50%), poor and marginalized, the idea of raising their production was abandoned, instead offering them poverty management programs. In reality, for this wide swath of the population, it was hoped that in the future the policy of economic adjustment would lead to the creation of more jobs in the farm sector and in the cities.

In the debate around the role of NAFTA as an instrument that brings new energy to the countryside and all economic sectors in the country, the work of Alain de Janvry and Elizabeth Sadoulet (1997) is interesting. They note that, given the short time that the Agreement had been in force, the asymmetries between the countries and the macroeconomic impacts of the 1995 crisis, among other matters, led to small producers having difficulties in switching over to more marketable crops; they also determined that while NAFTA offered limited opportunities for the poor in Mexico and for the structural problems that they face, it turns out that it created a transitory poverty in the countryside, a result of structural change, which in the medium term would disappear, while structural poverty (the vast majority of peasants) will remain for the long term; and lastly, the authors identified the necessity of broader programs and social reforms, funded by the incomes of improved trade and direct foreign investment.

The evaluation mentioned previously, carried out by researchers from The University of California, Berkeley, refuted the illusion that NAFTA could serve as an alternative to the modernization of all economic and social sectors in the country. What should occur is a earnest review of sectoral policies, their successes, limitations and the needs of the country.

Assuming that the deep economic and social crisis that the Mexican countryside experienced was overcome in the 1970s, there is no doubt that with the new neoliberal economic model, implemented as of December 1982, the rural crisis was accentuated and within the framework of this model, no way out could be seen. From this perspective it is very important to recall the assessment of Blanca Rubio (2001), when she pointed out that, at the beginning of the 21st Century, the essential feature of the new model consisted of a kind of "exclusive control" over the exploited classes, which leads to an enormous social marginalization, as well as an unprecedented concentration of capital in the hands of a few. Exclusive control is the form through which capital appropriates wealth: it is at the heart of neoliberal capitalism, its engine and simultaneously the origin of its contradictions.

At the start of NAFTA deliberations, one of the most controversial topics was that of its possible impacts on migration, as much in public opinion as in the realm of government or academia. Here, in accordance with conventional economic theory, it held that the reduction and elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade would allow for the use and allocation of productive uses with greater overall efficiency. In an open and larger market, such as would supposedly exist under NAFTA, additional benefits would accrue from the exploitation of economies of scale. Within this framework, it was hoped that Mexico would achieve more efficient and full use of labor inputs. It was also hoped that a reduction would be achieved in the salary and income gaps between the signatory countries. In fact, the majority of the econometric projections on the effects of NAFTA estimated that the benefits of the agreement would be greater for Mexico than for the other two countries (Alba, Francisco, 1993). In broad terms, it was argued that the potential for economic growth and job creation would be greater within an open economy, oriented toward exports, than a closed economy.

Within the econometric models used to measure the possible effects of NAFTA on migration, of note is the model of computable general equilibrium, created by Santiago

Levy and Sweeden Van Wijnbergen, which offers a detailed explanation of the agricultural sectors and of migration from the countryside to the cities. Specifically, it models the policies of agricultural support, including the protection of the corn sector and food subsidies for the urban poor population. It includes migration from rural to urban zones and migration is adjusted to maintain a differential between real incomes, explained exogenously, between rural and urban households.

Accordingly, various scenarios are explored: those in which the corn sector is liberalized to allow free trade, and various compensatory policies are simulated, designed to attenuate their effect on the poor. In this analysis, the liberalization of the corn sector produces a significant degree of migration from the countryside to the cities: between 650-thousand to 700-thousand workers. Rural employment is estimated at 6-million, of which 29% (1.7-million) are situated in the corn sector. Without compensation, the authors conclude that the distributive effects of trade liberalization are regressive, but that it is possible to design viable compensation packages that even out in great measure the income losses of the poor. Based on a number of simulated scenarios, they argue that specifically-designed and targeted programs can be created with which substantial gains in efficiency can be gained through trade liberalization and which mitigate the regressive distributive impact of the elimination of the protections given to the lowest-income corn producers (Levy, Santiago and Van Vijnbergen Sweeden, 1991: 134).

In a dynamic version of the model described above, the authors explored different paths of transition toward free trade, through a period of adjustment lasting nine years. They explored the effect of introducing trade liberalization and changes in domestic policies both immediate and gradual, analyzing the effects that the speed of reform has on migration. They concluded that if liberalization is applied in a sudden act, the benefits in the first year will be elevated, but migration would also rise by some 700-thousand migrants from the rural sector – in only one year. In all the liberalization options, migration drawn from the countryside to the cities over a nine-year period would reach 1.9-million workers. However, a panorama of gradual liberalization would allow for a regular distribution of migration over time, with annual rates approximating 200-thousand migrants. In a scenario without liberalization, the models creates an accumulated migrant body of 1.2-million workers from the rural sector. Their model includes implicit demographic tendencies, identifying how Mexico might confront significant structural changes in its labor markets with or without trade liberalization (Ibid, 135).

Sherman Robinson, et al. (1991), studies some of the same themes related to the labor market, but in the context of a Mexico-United States bi-national model. They made use of a similar subdivision of agricultural sectors, separating corn, fruit, vegetables and other planned harvests (important in order to tie in with U.S. agricultural policies). They employed the same kind of function for migration as Levy and Van Vijnbergen, but established differences in the workforce by category of qualifications and added migration to the United States. Their results are in line with the previous study. They deduced that complete trade liberalization increases bilateral trade and drives efficiency gains for both countries. In a scenario of total liberalization more than 800-thousand workers abandoned the rural sector and more than 600-thousand migrants went to the United States. The majority of these were destined for the urban labor market, for example, to Los Angeles, and not to agriculture. Robinson and his colleagues also explored various scenarios of partial liberalization, searching for a package of policies that offered a direction for the transition to free trade with fewer social ill effects. They concluded by noting that it is feasible to create these kinds of packages of transition policies.

Sherman Robinson and his colleagues estimated the quantity of growth that Mexico would require to absorb the workforce that abandons agriculture, without increasing emigration to the United States. For example, an increase of 25% in the share of capital added to Mexico relevant to the United States, according to his calculations, would eliminate the increase of migration to the neighboring country arising from total liberalization. This differential in growth coincides with the experiences of other semi-industrialized countries, which have successfully adopted development strategies that are open to the international economy. The results of Robinson, Levy and his colleagues show that Mexico would require a long transition period and that it should lend resources to agriculture during that transition. A too-quick introduction of free trade in agriculture may not be desirable for either of the two countries, if social and economic costs are viewed as more important than higher migration rates with trade growth (Ibid. 136).

Accepting the argument that economic growth reduces migratory pressures, however, is not the equivalent of declaring the relationship between these matters linear nor immediate, nor that any sort of growth produces similar results, according to Francisco Alba (1993). Past economic activity, the fruit of a closed economic strategy and sheltered from foreign competition, did not produce the kind of results that were expected under NAFTA. From 1940 through 1981, the country crew rapidly and developed at an acceptable rate. Nonetheless, the migratory phenomenon grew and became part of the economy and society of Mexico and its relationships abroad. Based on this context, Alba wonders: Why should one suppose that in the future things will be different from the past? Beyond associating job creation and rising incomes with the reduction of migratory pressure, this question does not explicitly enter into the various debates around NAFTA and migration in the years before and after it came into force.

If migration to the United States is the result of labor market conditions in Mexico in terms of job creation and salary levels, as well as the economic disparity that exists between Mexico and the neighboring country, the task placed before NAFTA was enormous, according to Francisco Alba in 1993. On one hand, the labor market conditions constituted a heavy burden, and on the other, the amount of time predicted for the reduction of disparities is too long. The recovery of economic growth in recent years, the product of a restructuring that in part derives from conditions under NAFTA, in general has not reverted to the conditions of the Mexican labor market in terms of jobs and salaries that had existed in earlier periods when migration to the United States was unfolding. From this perspective, he saays, economic revitalization has a considerable distance to go before reaching earlier employment and salary levels.

However, Francisco Alba (1993: 746) notes that the knowledge of migratory systems has revealed that the economic factors of employment, salary and income are merely one part of the set of factors which feed international migratory currents. In this chorus of forces, three different groups can be distinguished, although they are interrelated. One refers to economic factors, including trade relations and economic integration. Another covers the various social factors that tie the migrant to their family, friends, home community and their destination. The third is composed of political factors, among which are included the migratory policies of nation-states. Drawing on these elements, in 1993 Alba offered various possible scenarios regarding the future impacts of NAFTA and migration:

- Taking advantage of the temporary worker programs H2A and H2B, underutilized at the beginning of the 1990s, with 5-thousand workers in 1991 for the former and

2-thousand for the latter.

- Given stronger regional ties, arrangements for the management of the migratory phenomenon can be considered.
- Extend liberalization to include the movement of persons with NAFTA, taking advantage of the existing category of qualified workers.
- Creation of specific funding for regional development in Mexico as a more appropriate strategy for the prevention of massive migration, as seen in Europe.

Fifteen years later, Francisco Alba (2008), shows the failure of the optimism held by the governments of Mexico and the United States regarding the possibility of NAFTA leading to an economic convergence of the two countries, a structural transformation in the Mexican economy and the reduction of migration to the U.S. The evolution of production per capita in the two countries does not show NAFTA having generated any tendency toward convergence of the two countries. In 1993, in terms of U.S. dollars, the production per capita in Mexico equalled only 14.3% that of the United States. In 2006, this has dropped to 13%. In terms of purchasing power parity, in 1993 Mexican production per capita was 28% of U.S. production, and in 2005 it had dropped to 25.8%. For Alba, the reason for this behavior is found in the low growth of the Mexican economy compared with its partners from 1982 to 2006, when a number of studies had expected the opposite. If economic convergence was the objective, the Mexican economy should have grown at a faster rate. The Mexican economy in fact grew from 1993 to 2000 by 1.8%; from 2000 to 2006 by 1.0%; and average growth from 1982 to 2006 was only 0.9%.

During the 1990s, the U.S. economy went through one of its longest cycles of economy growth, while Mexico experience a wide-ranging restructuring and a deep crisis halfway through the decade. In reality, the developments of 1994 and 1995 –political assassinations, zapatista uprising and peso devaluation– and their consequences were a burden for the subsequent changes in the Mexican economy's macroeconomic aggregates. The Gross Domestic Produce of Mexico, in nominal terms, fell 6.2% in 1995. However, for many analysts the existence of NAFTA allowed for a quick recovery from this recession.

Although NAFTA's implementation favors the growth of international trade between both countries, the supposition that it would bring about a reduction in migration has not occurred. Permanent migration continues to rise and the geographic origin of migrants has broadened far beyond the traditional areas, with migrant flows increasingly coming from new parts of the country. Fifteen years after the implementation of NAF~TA, Francisco Alba (2008: 84) concluded that the agreement appears to have had no significant effect on economic convergence between the two countries, nor in reducing the flow of Mexicans to the United States, although it must be recognized that these two objectives were going to be difficult to achieve in any case. As to the former, Alba believes this is tied to the very low economic growth rate, as well as the lack of a sustained structural transformation and of fiscal and other policies to strengthen economic activity. With respect to the second objective, it was never going to be easy to transform such an established migratory system as exists between Mexico and the United States.

In 1996-1997, *The Mexico-United States Bi-national Migration Study* was carried out (Corono Rodolfo 2007: 102) in which, among other matters, the migratory flows to the United States were quantified. The Mexican population that emigrated to the neighboring country in the 1960s did so at a rate, on average, of 28-thousand per year; this crew to 137-thousand in the 1970s; to 235-thousand in the 1980s and 300-thousand between 1990 and 1996. It is estimated that 7.2-millon Mexicans were permanently living in the U.S. in 1996, of which 2.4-million were undocumented. It is also estimated that 600-million temporary migrants move annually between these two countries.

For their part, Agustín Escobar and E. Janseen (2006: 274) showed how in 1997, *The Mexico-United States Bi-national Migration Study* foresaw migratory pressure in Mexico dropping in the following fifteen years (1996-2010) thanks to the combination of two phenomenon: decreasing fertility rates, whose effects are beginning to be felt in growth of the working-age population, and the stabilization and growing number of formal jobs, the fruit of national economic policies and –to a certain point– NAFTA. These phenomena are closing the gap between offer and demand of labor, which in turn will decrease migratory pressure. In other words, say these authors, two aspects of development (control of demographic growth and job creation) will come together to reduce migration.

As Escobar and Janseen (2006) note, assuming that growth in employment must translate into lower migration in a relatively short time period, the reasons why this did not happen in 1995-2000 could be that the demand for workers in the United States was strong at the end of the 1990s; the flexibility of work in the United States created greater demand for "flexible" workers (the epitome of which are foreign workers); the fact that during the years following the 1982 Mexican crisis, the creation of migratory social networks were able to facilitate migration by providing better labor market information regarding that country; and the settlement patterns of irregular migration of family and friends.

For Escobar and Janseen (2006), the tendencies observed during the 1996-2002 period reinforce some points of view already outlined in the literature on the topic and point to other emerging tendencies. In the first place, the United States border control has been unable to reduce undocumented Mexican immigration. In the second place, the creation of jobs in the country of origin appears to play a less relevant role –at least in the short term–

than the demand in the country of destination. It may not be possible to generalize, but int he case of two very integrated and unequal neighboring economies, this could play a determining role, above and beyond whatever other factors and policies. In third place, the removal of general subsidies and guaranteed prices for agriculture in favor of a focus on the free market were hardly addressed by focused compensation programs (Crédito a la Palabra, Procampo, Progresa), which did not support population permanence or which could spark a serious crisis among small and medium producers, which in and of itself could have direct repercussions on migration (those affected, migrate) or indirect (due to deteriorating local markets). If this is correct, a more definitive resoult of these reforms in terms of a reorganization of Mexican agriculture could change the tendency, but not in the short term. In 2002, for example, there are already indications that the social programs that provided financial transfers to poor households represented a larger income for them than remittances, due to reorganization and greater efficiency in the implementation of those programs.

For José Luis Calva (2012), the hypothesis that NAFTA would bring with it the creation of sufficient well-paid jobs to the Mexican population, keeping them in the country and thus remediating migration to the United States has not been proven. According to data from the Pew Hispanic Center Project from 2008, the population of Mexican-origin residents in the United States and who emigrated during the 1981-1993 period grew to 3,137,000 persons, or 241-thousand emigrants per year; from 1994 to the first quarter of 2008, another 6,051,000 people born in Mexico were added to the resident population in the United States, that is, 403,400 per year. For its part, the Bank of Mexico reports that remittances sent to our country by Mexican workers resident abroad went from $5,078,000,000 USD in 1993, the year before NAFTA came into effect, to

$25,138,000,000 USD in 2008.

The principal cause of growing Mexican migration abroad lies in the insufficient growth of Mexico's Gross Domestic Product. In order to create sufficient employment for new job seekers, the Mexican economy must grow at a rate of 6% annual or higher. This relationship, accepted by experts, is based on empirical data showing the job-seeking population as growing at 4% annually - drawn from the demographic growth rates seen during the 1970s and 1980s, and added to this is the growing participation of women in the labor market, such that a 4% annual economic growth rate is only sufficient to absorb the new entries into the labor force if worker productivity does not rise. With a 2% annual increase in productivity, an economic growth rate of 6$ would be necessary to give jobs to new job seekers. However, during the period of NAFTA's operation (1994-2010), Mexico's GDP barely grew at an average annual rate of 2.4%. As a result, more than nine-million Mexicans emigrated aboard during this period (Calva, 2012: 259).

Furthermore, notes José Luis Calva (2012), the jobs created during the NAFTA period not only are insufficient to contain Mexican migration to the United States, but the few jobs that were created in Mexico were far from being “well-paid jobs”. On the contrary, they turned out to be less well-paid than before NAFTA: in the period 1994-2010, the minimum wage in Mexico lost 33% of its purchasing power; salaried workers in the federal branch lost 32.6% of their purchasing power; real incomes in the manufacturing industry dropped by 16.4% and real incomes in the construction industry fell by 28.6% in their purchasing power. Given the disappointing debt added to the Mexican economy during the 1994-2010 period, it is clear that NAFTA has not brokered development in Mexico and that it is the underdeveloped country of North America.

Mexico-United States Migration in the 21st Century: Trends and Challenges

At the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st Century, with the growth in international migration from Mexico to the United States, growth also came in the number of studies and publications on the latest trends in this phenomenon, the impacts and various proposals for public policy. Notable among them is the inter-institutional, bi-national and multidisciplinary research carried out by researchers at Georgetown University, Davis University, El Colegio de México, the Universidad Iberoamericana, the Instituto Tecnológico Autonomo de México and CIESAS Occidente, whose results were published in 2007 (Escobar Agustín and Susan Martin), in which the following findings were presented.

Migration must be understood within the context of the great trends of economic integration made possible with the implementation of NAFTA. The authors recognize that after ten years of the Agreement's existence, Mexican exports have grown, but the anticipated economic and social convergence has not come about and migration grew to historic levels. Mexico-United States migration is driven by economic conditions. Since there is a diversity of factors that influence the migratory process, in essence it is the large difference in income and job opportunities that arises from an asymmetrical integration between both countries which explains the dimensions and impacts of this flow. Mexicans go to the United States in search of jobs that could improve their well-being in Mexico, or offer a better future for them and their families in that country.

Although for the short- and long-term the expectation is that emigration will increase, it is possible and viable to reduce the flow if the two governments cooperate and take practical and effective measures. In the long term, only the development of Mexico could reduce those flows. In this country there are already demographic changes occurring that will contribute to a reduction in migratory pressure. However, the risk exists that this flow will continue for the long term if current institutions don't change and continue in their inability to comprehend and properly manage migration. Bi-national cooperation is key for an improved management of migration between Mexico and the United States. The authors suggest that joint responsibility in the management of migratory flows between the two countries via new options for legal, orderly and safe migration. Cooperation is needed in the management of the problematic border area and in the promotion of economic development strategies in migrant zones of origin in Mexico. A recognition of shared responsibility should lead to a practical and efficient partnership.

With regard to the top trends in international migration between these two countries, recall that migratory flows grew in the second half of the decade of the 1990s and fell in 2001-2003, in close relation to the employment dynamic within the United States. Mexicans constitute the largest group of migrants, both legal and undocumented, in the United States. In 2004, there were approximately 11.2-million Mexicans in the United States. The authors estimate that of this total, 5.3-million have a legal residency status and the other 5.9-million are undocumented. This percentage has remained relatively constant since the last decade.

Mexicans are constantly spreading into new parts of the United States, but there are growing concentrations in certain metropolitan areas. California is losing its place as a top destination, while Texas and Illinois maintain their attraction, and several new destinations in the South and North of the United States are springing up. However, the increase in their dispersion takes place within the context of a rapid growth in the total flow, which means that the number of Mexicans in California has not decreased. The majority of all Mexicans that live in the United States are concentrated in a few metropolitan areas. 1.5-million Mexicans lived in Los Angeles in 2000, and there were significant populations in the traditional zones of Chicago and Houston. Half of all Mexicans resident in that country are located in 12 consolidated metropolitan areas.

After a period of restructuring in the 1980s, the regional origins of Mexican migration have varied little, but the contributions of some states to the international flows have changed considerably. It is significant that between 1987 and 2002, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí doubled their migratory flows while the numbers from Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas declined. Flows grew in Puebla, Veracruz and Oaxaca, but dropped in Guerrero. Finally, added to the flows were migrants from Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo. In the center of the country, the numbers from Hidalgo grew considerably. The authors of this bi-national study raise the possibility that some states are reaching their maximum migration levels (the “crest” of the migratory “wave”) due to economic and demographic changes. Its economic performance, however, is likely to remain unchanged, according to the authors.

There has been a reduction in the circulating population over the past twenty years. This is explained, among other factors, by the regularization of 2.3-million undocumented migrants in 2007 under the IRCA, the recurring economic crises in Mexico of 1976, 1982 and 1994, and the growing militarization of the northern frontier that increased the costs and the risks of irregular migration. All of this has led to a transition toward a new migratory pattern: definitive and with the entire family. There is a growing feminization of the Mexican resident population in the United States. Women represent nearly 50% of all Mexicans who live in the United States. This percentage is practically unchanged between the 1990 and 2000 censuses. This, however, is the restul of specific migration patterns by gender. Women tend to be less mobile, younger and with stronger social and familial ties.

Mexican migrants are slightly more educated than the average Mexican population. The greatest proportional loss occurs among Mexicans with the highest educational levels. For the authors, education affects men and women in different ways. Among women, education increases the propensity to emigrate, while this is not a significant factor among men. However, the loss for Mexico of those who have a higher educational level is very serious. 19% of Mexican male youths with a Master's degree and 29% of all women, are in the United States. At the Doctoral level, the figures grow to 32% and 39%, respectively. Other recent studies show that migrants are healthier, more likely to take risks, younger and in general are more capable of dealing with new situations. Immigrants have a positive impact on the United States economy, but they have a negative impact on other low-paid workers.

Regarding the factors that influence Mexico-United States migration, consider the following: A growth is forecast for the low-qualification jobs typically filled by Mexican migrants. The new strategy for border control has not reduced the migratory flow. The huge delays and large queues for family reunification contribute to unauthorized migration. Although in the short term the demand for workers is the most important factor weighing on migration, in the long term the solution to the migration issue depends on the economic and demographic conditions in Mexico. The Mexico-United States migratory system does not only depend on the demand for labor in this country, but in a fundamental way on Mexico's economy and society. Among other factors that could influence the future migratory dynamic, they consider significant the continuing drop in fertility rates.

In general, the rates of economic participation have stabilized, and Mexican youth are delaying their entry into the workforce, which reduces pressure on that market. The growth of the working-age population is positive, but is declining. The growth in formal work has resumed, despite being below the levels achieved in the 1990s. Salary levels in the rural and urban sector have risen slightly in the last five years, with rural poverty dropping between 2000 and 2004. Predictions point to a reduction in Mexico's migratory pressures over the long term, between 2020 and 2030. The authors of this study believe that this period will come about due to the positive effects of the reduction of fertility and the positive economic impacts of NAFTA leading to growing job creation.

The North American Economic Crisis and the Fall of International Migration and of Remittances

As discussed earlier, since the 1980s and in proportion to the depth of the economic crises in Mexico, emigration to the United States grew constantly until 2006. That constant growth in emigration is explained essentially by the recurring economic crisis in Mexico and a long period of economic growth for its neighbor to the north, which over four decades functioned as an “escape valve” for the structural problems of employment, income and well-being of Mexicans (García, Rodolfo, 2009: 309).

Thus, we see that for every year of the six-year term of the government of Vicente Fox (2000-2006), 575-thousand Mexicans, more than 3-million in total, emigrated. This produced, among other effects, the depopulations of hundreds of communities across at least 600 municipalities in the country with the greatest history of migration, those which have registered negative rates of demographic growth. Likewise, in this period the number of women who left the country to seek the American dream grew, reaching 45% of the total (Balboa, Juan, 2007).

The growing trend toward emigrating to the United States continued during the first year of the government of Felipe Calderón, which according to data from the National Population Council for 2007, estimates that 679,611 Mexicans settled in the United States (Reforma, 24 September 2008). These trends are backed up by the World Bank (Milenio, 24 enero 2008), which reported that in the last two years some 644,361 Mexicans had left the country on average every year. Thus, Mexico has ousted 10% of its population.

However, in the summer of 2011, various publications that cover international migration issues between Mexico and the United States, discovered an historic break with the migratory trends among both countries: a substantial reduction in migration, unprecedented in the last forty years. According to data from the Pew Hispanic Center, less than 100-thousand undocumented migrants traveled to the United States in 2010, far fewer than their 525-thousand countrymen who crossed into the United States each year between 2000 and 2004, with the undocumented population in the United States stagnant at 11.2-million people. This figure assumes a drop of one-million migrants in relation to 2007, when total undocumented immigration reached its ceiling of 12-million migrants. The impact of the United States' economic crisis and stricter border control are considered as the principal causes of the decrease. As a result, the undocumented population now sits at triple the number from 1990, and within this, those of Mexican origin continue to be the largest sub-group, with 6.5-million undocumented migrants.

This new trend spurred a debate known as “migration zero”. What is relevant here is the enormous fragility of Mexico, which has been gravely affected by the economic crisis of its northern neighbor, calling into question three decades of structural reforms that have not been able to eradicate the causes of migration nor the enormous dependency upon the United States' economic cycle. Therefore, that country no longer functions as an “escape valve" for Mexico and this prompts the need for a reorientation of the economic model of the country toward employment, income and the well-being of its population (García, Rodolfo, 2012).

Francisco Alba (2008) sees the future trends of those factors which sustain Mexico-United States migratory patterns as pointing to a continuity of the powerful migratory pressures in the medium- and long-term. In the case of the United States, the majority of observers agree that the structural demand for migrant workers will continue into the immediate future. Consequently, if the weakness and stagnation of economic growth in Mexico persists, and no solution to overcome is limited capacity to absorb the labor force due to its high degree of integration with the U.S. economy, then strong migratory pressures will continue. It is estimated that even a moderate economic growth rate of 5% annual in Mexico will not suffice to curtail the number of emigrants in these first decades of the 21st Century (Tuirán et al., 2000). Thinking of the immediate future, the persistence of deep asymmetries between the two countries will continue to influence migration within the framework of a growing integration and interdependence of Mexico and the United States.

Thus, for Alba (2000), given the situation outlined above and from the point of view of development, Mexico has much more to do and must adopt explicit policies to "absorb" its workers and citizens, and cast aside a deeply ingrained migratory mentality. In general, the development experience of Mexico in the 20th Century showed that all of the different periods and pathways to development have been accompanied by relatively massive migratory flows. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative changes are required in the political economy of Mexico to accelerate the pace of growth and close regional and social gaps. It is imperative to raise the quality of life of the population and improve employment opportunities within Mexico, and not only in the poorest parts of the country.

Still, the United States has an important role to play in the development of Mexico. The two governments have to agree on a conceptualization of the "Partners in Prosperity" (ASPAN) initiative. Both parties must remember the fact, implicitly incorporated into the economic vision of NAFTA and in the *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America*, that only development will discourage migration. Only within a framework of broad-based regional development will the massive migrant flows of Mexicans to the United States be reduced. If the North American region can follow an effective path toward a shared prosperity, the possibilities increase that agreements on the orderly movement of workers can be reached.

Conclusions

If the belief that development is the long-term solution to reduce massive migration from Mexico to the United States, then the implicit, original argument of NAFTA returns to its central role, albeit in a modified way: that trade and economic liberalization should be supported by active policies designed to achieve economic convergence. From a perspective of an integral vision for development, a strategy that is oriented toward achieving shared prosperity and economic convergence should incorporate changes in Mexico in the spheres of education, infrastructure, social investment and the reduction of poverty, among others.

Three decades after the implementation of the neoliberal model in Mexico and after twenty years of NAFTA, the promises of economic development, social development and the reduction of international migration have not been fulfilled. On the eve of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexico's ambassador t the United States, Eduardo Medina Mora, expected that our country, together with Washington and Ottawa, would seek to put forward a new “strategic vision” of this instrument for trade during the meeting of leaders next February. For his part, the President of the Business Coordinating Council, Gerardo Gutiérrez Candiani, said that at the present juncture it would be opportune to reformulate and relaunch NAFTA, which “has entered a phase of relative stagnation” (La Jornada, 2014).

The insistence of authorities and of private business of the need to reformulate NAFTA requires one to remember the unequal and contrary to the interests of the nation nature that this agreement had from its very origins, which at the time offered a mirage for our country's future progress. On the contrary, two decades later, this tripartite trade agreement has had grave consequences in Mexico's leading sectors, has caused profound damage in various branches of the national economy –such as agriculture and industry– and has weakened the internal market, a result of the unequal terms upon which it was written, the submission of our country to a deeply inequitable integrationist process, as well as by the erratic application of this instrument by the government in Washington, which has continued to provide subsidies to the agricultural sector and tolerated, even encouraged, unfaithful trade practices.

In macroeconomic terms, the figures are conclusive, where at the time of signing NAFTA, Mexico's external trade balance registered a surplus of more than $500-million USD; a balance that at the end of the first quarter, 2013, was in deficit to the tune of $2-billion USD. In these twenty years, grain and oil imports went from 8.8-million tonnes in 1993 to 29.2-million in 2012; destroyed a significant part of the productive infrastructure; multiplied farm unemployment and exacerbated the abandonment of the countryside by more than 10-million people with no realistic opportunity to find formal employment in the urban economy. In social terms, the promise that NAFTA would bring Mexico up to first world income levels has been revealed as a lie, corroborated by data recently published by a World Bank report, according to which the proportion of Mexicans in poverty as a portion of the total population is now at its highest point in two decades: 52 of every 100 persons (Duch, 31 December 2013).

In circumstances like the present, and taking into account the correlation of political power and ideology of the group in power, it is likely that the announced “relaunching” of NAFTA, in the event that it succeeds, will lead to the reinforcement of the vices and potential harmful effects of this instrument. It can be expected, for example, that our country's energy sector will be opened up under the Agreement, made possible by recently approved and announced constitutional reforms.

Nonetheless, it is pertinent and necessary to insist that overcoming the country's social and economic struggles will require that this government pursue a deep reformulation of his instrument (NAFTA), that it correct the enormous structural deficits found within it: Mexico's economic dependence on its neighboring country; the abandonment of the countryside, with the corresponding sustained losses of food sovereignty: the destruction of community social fabric and the painful emigration from agriculture; the dismantling of national industry, accompanied by unjustifiable labor conflicts; and the cheapening of the national labor force to the benefit of transnational capital.

Given that it is expected that on some far away horizon social and migratory relations between both countries as structural elements of a complex bilateral relationship will continue to exist, the explicit objective of any bilateral (regional) initiative should consist of a reduction in the economic and income disparities of North America. This is a significant challenge, but by adopting a long-term vision, the two governments will be equipped in the coming years to manage a difficult relationship that is clearly affected by intense migratory pressures.

With the widespread repercussions of the United States economic crisis on the fall of international migration from Mexico, on the growing deportations that during President Obama's first term reached more than 1.5-million deportees –350-thousand annually, on average, from 2005-2013 according to the Center of Migratory Studies, National Migration Institute (2013, Mexican repatriation incidents), and the constant return of Mexican migrants to their home country –estimated at 400-thousand migrants by the same Center, it is important to design and implement new policies of international migration and development that work to restrict the structural causes of that migration and not passively depend on the economic cycle of the neighboring country's economy.

From the perspective noted above, it is important to heed the observations of Rodolfo Corona (2007), in that it is necessary to accept that, regardless of the existence of a permanent demand for jobs in the United States, the principal cause of the international migration of Mexicans is poverty, the lack of jobs and the low standard of living that our country's population faces. That is, the phenomenon of Mexicans migrating to our northern neighbor is a national problem. Therefore, the continuous search for agreements with the United States and countries of the South must continue, and actions must be taken domestically. Within the nation's borders, it is essential to lend special attention, with sufficient resources and in a coordinated manner among the various government bodies, to the northern and southern border areas where different migrant topologies converge and where other conditions exist that lead to violence and insecurity.

For Corona (2007), it is also important to pursue the well-being of migrants and their families, in which any action that is taken must seek to strictly observe their human rights. It is also necessary to address the complete migrant body, but taking into account the particularities of each migratory modality; that is, both international and internal migrants, and include both Mexicans and whichever other nationality, particularly Central Americans and U.S. nationals of Mexican origin. This progressive attitude of bi-national collaboration in the management of Mexico-United States migration began to take shape early in 2001, under Presidents Fox and Bush, when both governments recognized the need to create a legal process, safe and orderly, to handle migratory flows. To that end, Mexico and the United States agreed to hold tentative conversations to reach an agreement in principle for shared responsibility, which implied making compromises and mutual obligations.

The agenda agreed to by both countries was made up of the following five points, referred to by Jorge Castañeda as "the whole enchilada":

1. Regularization of the migratory status of approximately 3.5-million undocumented Mexicans that presently live in the United States
2. Establish a temporary worker program that allows authorized access to labor markets in specific regions and sectors by the Mexican labor force.
3. Broadening of the available visas for Mexicans with the aim of coinciding with the actual migratory reality between the two countries.
4. Strengthening border security through coordinated actions between Mexico and the United States, with special emphasis on efforts aimed at preventing the deaths of migrants along the common border and to combat human trafficking.
5. Initiate regional development programs in the areas of high intensity migration in

Mexico, coordinating those efforts with the support of a temporary worker program between both countries.

The result of which will never be known, due to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which lead to the discussions being deferred and later definitively cancelled. The attacks changed the United States government's priorities and in so doing, not only discarded the hopes of achieving a migratory agreement, but practically erased the topic from the bi-national talks agenda and placed national security at the core of their concerns. This preoccupation increased U.S. uneasiness around undocumented immigration and made efforts to stop the flow of migrants even more visible (Tuirán and Ávila, 2010).

Due to the lack of advance in the shared responsibility between the Mexican and United States governments to manage migratory flows following the events of 2001, Agustín Escobar and Susan Martin (2007) offered the following proposals for bi-national cooperation and new public policies:

1. Institutionalize international cooperation. Revitalize and strengthen the migratory dialogue, making possible the discovery of mutually beneficial solutions for the migratory challenge.
2. Open new legal paths to migration. Programs focused on temporary workers are needed to manage the migratory flows over the short and medium term that are outlined in specific social programs.
3. Application of the law. Cooperate in border monitoring to reduce undocumented migration.
4. Increase cooperation among border crossing officials.

5. Effective regulation of emigration requires the effective application of the law on job-seeking sites.
6. Promote development strategies that address migration, taking advantage of remittances, new labor capabilities, savings and other resources of / for migrants and returnees.
7. Strengthen bi-national programs in health and education.

Fom the point of view of 87 non-governmental organizations that make up the Colectivo PND-Migración and that make up the social organizations that work with migrants in their communities of origin, in transit and at their destination; as well as academic, religious groups and migrant organizations themselves, there is an agreement that the following causes of the migratory phenomenon persist:

1. The economic and social fragility of the communities of origin, resulting from a predatory economic model that destroys economic and social foundations of stability, community life and the environment.
2. Discrimination and exclusion of various sectors of society toward migrants and their defenders and their human rights.
3. Growing violence toward migrants and their families as much by state security officials as by criminal organizations that have found in them a new sector in which to employ violence to recruit and extract money via diverse mechanisms.

In the context of a discussion on the *National Development Plan - Mexico - 2013-2018 (PND)* over the months of March, April and May 2013, the collective presented its

Migration and Development Transnational Strategic Agenda with the following key objectives:

1. Articulate an integral and multidimensional vision of the relationship between migration, development and human security with the measures that integrate migration in a way that cuts across the PND guidelines;
2. Explicitly incorporate the migration phenomenon, the link between migration and development, and the functions and obligations of the federal government to guarantee rights in a national system of accountability, supported by management indicators, wide and exhaustive access to information on migratory data, efficient control mechanism and clear sanctions;
3. Creation of an inter-institutional coordination body across the three levels of government on migratory matters, in which citizens, civil society organizations and academics participate;
4. Creation of a national strategy for the protection, promotion and full realization of the rights of migrants and their families. The strategy should include actions for sensitizing authorities across the three levels of government regarding their obligations in relation to the rights of migrants; and establish appropriate coordination measures. Conditions for accessing justice should be broadened, explicitly taking into account the right to identity, health and education, and establish actions to combat impunity and cultivate a culture of respect for the rights of migrants.
5. Explicit consideration of migration in sustainable development programs with a foundation in the concept of well-being, which ties strategies to combat poverty

with the principles of inclusion and equality, and which are oriented to the fulfillment of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights;

6. Increase the representation and representativity of communities of migrants in the mechanisms of management and coordination of integral migratory policy.

This Transnational Agenda, including objectives, challenges and instruments, was presented to President Peña Nieta and the Treasury Secretary at a public event at the Foreign Affairs Department on March 11, 2013, meriting only a 500-word section in the *National Development Plan 2013-2018*. Regardless, the effort by civil society to establish new public policies relating to migration and development was not sterile; it had already generated at least three important outcomes: a broad alliance of networks of transnational social organizations, a shared Transnational Agenda with a strategic vision for Development, Migration and Human Rights and a process of learning, collaboration and transnational support among the social organizations, migrant communities, religious organizations, academics and others.

Still, even with the efforts of the Colectivo PND-Migración, thirty years of PRI and PAN failures in terms of economic independence, employment, well-being, democracy and human security show that Mexico has become one enormous factory of 53-million poor and the hell of structural and emerging violence that is ripping apart our country socially and institutionally. With the privatization of the energy sector, Mexico will lose 36% of its fiscal income, provided by oil exploitation, and has not shown how it can compensate for this loss now that it has authorized the entry of huge corporations to appropriate the oil, its profits and spin-offs; it has not shown how this privatization will revitalize state finances, nor how it will benefit sectoral and regional development in the country. All of these years of the neoliberal nightmare, of the abdication by the State of its obligations to promote economic and social development and state sovereignty, of delivering the country's natural resources and patrimony to the national oligarchy and foreign interests, show that inequality, poverty, marginalization, violence will grow, and the destruction of the nation as an independent country.

This dark future that has been created in the interest of the great empire and its corporations will be a hybrid between Puerto Rico, Iraq and Afghanistan, with the current U.S. Ambassador being an expert in managing these kinds of nations. Enormous energy reserves placed at the service of the Empire and its national partners, the widening reproduction of the factory of the poor and of programs to administer poverty, the permanent militarization of the country with a policy of imperial security continuing to be applied by the 17 U.S. security agencies that have operated in Mexico under Plan Mérida, all of this describes the future of Mexico until the day comes when popular mobilization and the peaceful citizen's revolution returns the country to its independent path (García, 2013).

Three decades of the long PRI-PAN night refute the lie of Peña Nieto that with greater privatization in energy, natural resources and the delivery of the country into the hands of the national and foreign oligarchy will rescue us from backwardness, economic dependence, inequality and the poverty of half of the national population.

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