Immigration Issues & Conflicts Faced by Latin America

(A Perspective on Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico & Argentina, Venezuela and Ecuador)

By Dr Kemal YILDIRIM

Abstract

Immigration issues in conflict will be studied in this article with the framework of a comparative approach such as concentrating by irregular migration routes through these Latin countries with Current Emigration Trends on Economic and social costs.

Keywords: Immigration, Latin, Argentina, Colombia, Argentina, El Salvador

Introduction

I have reviewed seven countries in this article such as Colombia Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico and Argentina, Venezuela and Ecuador in terms of emigration prospects with emigration flows as well as the Refugee and Asylum Policy issues with Ongoing Concerns.

However, this article indicates that migration processes alone cannot be solved on its own but it remains to be a regional conflict by itself and it is necessary to take some measures to slow down immigration increase in these countries. To me OAS (Organization of American states) needs to implement new policies to develop status of new incoming immigrants. Perhaps The NGO's need more power to play role for shaping immigration issues.

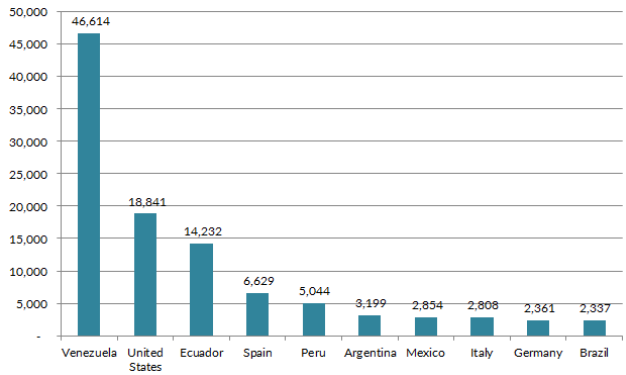
Colombia

Immigration to Colombia seems to remain limited following its independence in 1819. Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, occasional migrant flows arrived from some of the Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and European Union like Germany, Italy, Spain, France, and Japan, but Colombia did not experience the same large-scale immigration seen elsewhere in Latin America.
Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian immigrants first arrived in Colombia in the 1880s. An estimated 5,000 to 10,000 Middle Easterners settled between 1890 and 1930, making them the second-largest immigrant group. These communities transformed commerce and trade in Colombia and had significant political involvement in the first half of the 20th century. Although the flow of Arab-Christian immigrants decreased in the late 1900s, a large number of descendant communities remain active.

European immigration to Colombia increased between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries. Two waves of Jewish immigrants settled in Colombia between 1830 and 1938, contributing significantly to regional financial sectors through trade and business. Germans arrived in the mid-1800s, and by the early 1900s were leading revitalization of the coffee, tobacco, and banking industries. After World War II, many European technicians and agricultural experts migrated to Colombia. Other immigrant communities that developed successful enterprises were the Spanish, French, Italians, and Americans, who settled in the capital of Bogotá for the most part, and the Japanese who settled in the Cauca Valley region.

Regional and hemispheric migration flows have prevailed in Colombia since the 1960s. Venezuela, the United States, and Ecuador have been the leading countries of origin for immigrants in recent years (see Figure 1). According to the United Nations, more than 133,000 immigrants lived in Colombia in 2015, representing 0.2 percent of the population of 47 million. A substantial number are returning migrants holding dual citizenship.

Figure 1. Top ten origin countries for the immigrant population in Colombia 2015



Highly Concentrated Emigration Flows

Large-scale emigration from Colombia began in the mid-20th century, owing to lack of jobs and economic opportunities and the armed conflict.

Venezuela, the United States, and Ecuador were the leading countries of destination for migrants in the late 1960s and early 1970s. An estimated 557,000 Colombians migrated to Venezuela, the United States, Ecuador, Panama, Canada, Peru, Chile, and Bolivia between 1963 and 1973, according to the Administrative Department of National Statistics of Colombia (DANE). In the late 1990s, as the armed conflict progressed, Spain and other European countries also became popular destinations for Colombians. Approximately 80 percent of Colombian emigrants in 2012 lived in the United States, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Spain. More recently, immigration restrictions and changing socioeconomic conditions have encouraged Colombians to move to other South American countries such as Chile, which experienced a 47 percent increase in Colombian immigrants between 2010 and 2015.

Emigration to Venezuela and Ecuador

A boom in oil production and economic growth drew many Colombians to Venezuela and Ecuador in the 1970s and 1980s. Amid the armed conflict, an estimated 1 million Colombians migrated to Venezuela during the last four decades, making them the largest immigrant group there. Many have returned to Colombia since the start of Venezuela's economic and humanitarian crisis in 2015. In Ecuador, nearly 90,000 Colombians accounted for half the total immigrant population and 98 percent of refugees in 2011. As more Colombians return and Venezuelans flee poor conditions at home, traditional migration dynamics in the region are shifting.

Internal Displacement and Colombian Refugees

Meanwhile, far more Colombians are displaced by violence within their own country than live abroad. There are 7.3 million registered IDPs in Colombia, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). At least half of those displaced, primarily from rural areas, have fled to slums of the 27 largest cities. An estimated 340,000 Colombians live as refugees abroad, primarily in Venezuela, Ecuador, the United States, Canada, Panama, and Costa Rica. While many refugees and IDPs are formally registered with UNHCR, a large number of Colombians living abroad remain unregistered and as a result are unable to access basic services in their host countries.

As Colombia continues to emerge from civil war, a number of migration-related issues have emerged to test the country's newfound migration management capacity.

By taking control of vast portions of territory over the course of the war, rebel groups forced millions to flee their homes. Fighting between rebel groups, paramilitary organizations, and Colombian armed forces caused an uptick in displacement over the last two decades. As the FARC now abandons its long-occupied territories, remaining rebel groups have stepped into the vacuum, resulting in further displacement and violence in areas where state presence is almost nonexistent. In the first three months of 2017, more than 3,500 people were displaced along the Pacific coast as paramilitary groups such as the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia continue fighting for control of territories where Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples live.

Efforts to protect the millions of IDPs have led to the creation of mechanisms to support humanitarian response, reparation, and integration. Several programs and laws, shaped in cooperation with international organizations, have been adopted to provide sustainable solutions:

Law 387 of 1997: Recognized the existence of internal displacement and sought to adopt measures to prevent forced displacement, including attention, protection, and socioeconomic stabilization of displaced peoples.

In 2011, the Law of Victims and Restitution of Land for the first time incorporated a judicial mechanism for the restitution of land seized from or abandoned by victims of the conflict. Since then, it has provided financial assistance, reparation, and a pathway to land restitution for victims. By 2015, the government had restored land to 4,127 families, of a total 81,050 requests. Many land restitution processes must await better conditions.

In 2012, UNHCR and the UN Development Program launched the Transitional Solutions Initiative, a joint program intended to restore communities and facilitate humanitarian assistance for IDPs.

Government-provided emergency assistance is available for IDPs in urban centers, for a three-month period. Many IDPs are not aware of their

rights, and as a result, do not register for assistance. This has led to the establishment of informal settlements which sometimes become hotspots for drug trafficking and extortion. Despite precarious conditions in urban settings, most IDPs in cities expect to establish permanent residence there and are reluctant to return or relocate to rural areas.

While the flow of refugees to neighboring countries has decreased in recent years, the need for protection remains high. Continued violence in some parts of Colombia makes voluntary repatriation unpopular for most refugees.

Figure 2 Irregular Migration Routes through Colombia

Source: Map created by Valentina Carvajal using route information from Jacqueline Charles, "New Migration: Haitians Carve a Dangerous 7,000 Mile Path to the U.S.", *Miami Herald*, September 24, 2016, ; and Karl Vick, "The Long Way to America," *TIME*, October 12, 2016, Colombia is also a source of illegal immigration. Major migrant smuggling networks are responsible for facilitating the transit of Colombians with counterfeit visas to North America and Europe. Unauthorized Colombians are also found in large numbers in South America, including Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile, and Peru, with a growing number heading to Chile in particular. Human trafficking is also an issue of significant concern for Colombian authorities. Although Colombia is predominantly a country of origin for human trafficking, it is also one of transit and destination for traffickers and victims. Sexual exploitation and forced labor account for the majority of victims sent to the Caribbean, the United States, Europe, Asia, and elsewhere in South America.

Guatemala

Guatemala in a regional context also includes its borders with El Salvador and Honduras in the subregion of Central America's Northern Triangle. Guatemala is a country of transit for other Central American migrants; it is also a country of destination for some workers from neighboring countries, just as those countries are for some Guatemalan workers. The treatment of those other Central Americans, including deportees from Guatemala, has become a major focus of debate in Guatemala.

Guatemalan migration from the civil war and post-war periods has profoundly transformed many communities within Guatemala, and the country as a whole, but it is still too early to assess whether these changes have in any way advanced human development in Guatemala. Among the broad issues for a longer-range assessment are questions such as: Can human development needs be met in Guatemala, so that migration becomes voluntary rather than necessary? And what are the human consequences for individual Guatemalans and their communities of the migration processes that are almost certain to continue?

El Salvador

The number of Salvadorans residing in the country totals about 6.2 million. But it is estimated that anywhere from 817,000 to 2.7 million Salvadorans, or another 13 to 40 percent, live outside the country. While Salvadorans can be found in almost any part of the world, an overwhelming majority migrate to the United States (see Table 2). According to U.S. census data, they are predominantly of working age and a high percentage are women. In fact, analysis published in the UNDP report shows that Salvadoran women dominated migration flows to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

With the outbreak of civil war in the 1980s, not only did migration increase significantly, but men started to migrate in far greater numbers than women. Despite the onset of peace in 1992,

migration to the United States has continued. Evidence from recent field work in 18 municipalities of El Salvador indicates that, after the earthquakes of 2001, young people from the countryside have been migrating to the United States at a faster rate than ever before.

Estimates of Number of Salvadoran Migrants and Their Characteristics, 2000

Estimated number of Salvadorans in the Americas	817,000 to 2,680,000
% in the United States	90%
% in Canada	6%
% in Mexico and rest of Central America	3%
As a percentage of Salvadorans in El Salvador	13 to 40%
Characteristics	
% in U.S. that are age 44 and younger	80%
% in U.S. that are women	48%

Source: U.S. Census, Salvadoran Foreign Affairs Ministry, Salvadoran Ministry of the Interior

At the same time, deportations of Salvadorans have risen from a total of 4,216 in 1999 to 36,689 in 2004, as documented by the Salvadoran Ministry of the Interior. From 1999 through 2001, the majority of these deportations came from the United States, but, as of 2002, the vast majority of deportees are returned from Guatemala and, even more importantly, Mexico.

Within El Salvador, major concern has arisen concerning the criminal activities of deportees, especially their affiliation with youth gangs Drug offenses, armed robbery, drunk driving, and domestic violence are also some of the other crimes deportees have committed. The growing debate around deportees and crime requires a deeper understanding of transnational relationships and migration. In some cases, deportees with serious criminal offenses may be more a product of U.S. society than El Salvador's, but this is clearly one public policy challenge that transcends borders.

Economic Costs

The financial costs of migration vary from migrant to migrant, depending on their socioeconomic status in El Salvador. "Middle-class" migrants are more likely to obtain a tourist visa and travel north on an airline ticket, either returning home before their visa expires or overstaying their visa and becoming undocumented.

The poorest migrants tend to pay the most, often embarking without proper documentation and few monetary resources in a journey that involves hitching a ride on a moving freight train or enduring rape and many other forms of violent crime in Mexico. Others are guided northward and into the United States by a network of coyotes that charge anywhere from $6,000 to $8,000 for their services.

In order to come up with the funds, Salvadorans have proven to be extremely resourceful. Family and friends in the United States often help out, or livestock is sold and land titles mortgaged to cover this "investment."

Others resort to local microlending programs to finance migration, causing some of these programs to reevaluate loan amounts and criteria for lending. And while personal loans to pay the coyote are not part of the mission of these initiatives, which are designed to support small entrepreneurs, they have saved some families from foreclosure on their land or exorbitant interest rates coyotes charge.

Social Costs

Although much academic research has focused on transnationalism (the phenomenon of being part of two societies at the same time), families living in different territories and realities easily incur social costs that are not always discussed. Spouses live apart for extended periods of time; children and young people grow up in the care of extended family; and the elderly lose their network of family support.

One of the most striking changes in Salvadoran family life has been the shift from male to female-

headed households. Nationwide, data from the EHPM shows that households headed by women have risen from 26 percent in 1992 to 32 percent in 2004.

The impact this has on a community can best be seen by comparing two municipalities. According to data from the EHPM from 2004, Concepción de Oriente, in the far eastern part of El Salvador, is the municipality with the highest rate of households receiving remittances (63 percent); Santa Catarina Masahuat, in Sonsonate department in the western part of the country, is the least impacted by international migration with less than one percent of households receiving remittances.

But the differences do not stop there (see Table 3). The poverty rate in Concepción de Oriente is almost half that of Santa Catarina Masahuat.

Even more striking are the demographic changes to these two communities. In Concepción de Oriente, for every 100 women there are only 76 men; the gap widens for those ages 15 to 24, to just 66 men for every 100 women. The masculinity index in Santa Catarina Masahuat is essentially one to one. Concepción de Oriente also has larger portions of younger and older people compared with Santa Catarina Masahuat, and almost three times the percentage of households headed by women.

Essentially, the migration of young men from Concepción de Oriente to the United States has meant that their families back home live in better homes and have more income. But it is altering the social and demographic composition of the community.

Argentina

For most of its history, Argentina has been characterized as a country of immigration. Yet global forces, combined with a recent history of economic, political, and social instability, have slowly transformed Argentina into a country of immigration, emigration, and transit.

Whereas millions of Europeans — predominantly from Spain and Italy — made their way to Buenos Aires and beyond at the turn of the 20th century, many of them and their descendants have returned to Europe or gone elsewhere. Since the 1990s, dismal employment prospects coupled with strong foreign-labor demand and, at times, favorable visa policies in countries including the United States, Spain, Italy, and Israel have given rise to a new wave of emigration.

Most recently, Argentina's economic collapse in 2001-2002 saw significant emigration flows of Argentine nationals and immigrants alike. In the past five years, an estimated 300,000 people (many of European descent) have left.

Despite these outflows, however, Argentina's strong demand for predominantly unskilled, low-wage labor ensures its role as a regional immigration hub, consistently attracting new economic migrants from its neighbors in the southern cone of Latin America.

Furthermore, while many foreign workers in Argentina have short-term migration prospects (anticipating another move either home or abroad), others are permanent, as demonstrated by increasing permanent immigration rates in recent years.

Recent Migration History

After gaining its independence from Spain in the early 19th century, Argentina adopted an open immigration policy and encouraged immigrants to embrace the country as their own. For a short period at the end of the 1880s, the government went so far as to subsidize immigrant boat passages. It is estimated that the country received over seven million immigrants, predominantly from Spain and Italy, between 1870 and 1930.

Argentina proved attractive to many foreigners confronted with harsh economic conditions in Europe; they were drawn by the appeal of the New World and an under populated country rich in natural resources and employment prospects ranging from agriculture to factory work.

However, about half of these immigrants returned home in the decades that followed. Although return migration existed in all countries, a 50 percent rate of return was notably high. Slow industrial development in Argentina and a "return mentality" on the part of Europeans saving to buy land and reunite with their families in the home country pervaded.

European migration to Argentina began declining in the 1930s during the global economic

depression, bouncing back slightly before again decreasing in the 1950s as the economic and political situation in Europe improved after World War II.

Net migration rates in Argentina remained comparatively strong until the 1980s, however, through increased flows from neighboring countries with less robust economies such as Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Chile (see Table 1), whose natives sought employment and higher wages. Due to intense urbanization from rural-urban internal migration flows, many of these southern cone migrants filled the rural labor demand in Argentina.

Table 1. Immigration Flows to Argentina from Select Latin American Countries, 1960 to 1989

Period of Entry	Bolivia	Chile	Paraguay	Uruguay
1960-1969	21,888	25,057	50,355	9,226
1970-1979	22,736	63,559	51,039	48,172
1980-1989	38,854	54,120	37,918	42,655

Source: **Demographic Bulletin: International Migration in Latin America. United Nations: Santiago, Chile. January 2000.**

Argentina's immigration policies gradually became more restrictive beginning in the 1930s, and gained force in the 1950s due to unstable economic conditions and a series of military dictatorships. These stifling economic and political conditions gave rise to Argentina's first significant emigration outflow of native-born citizens, especially of the highly-skilled, in the late 1960s and 1970s.

An estimated 185,000 Argentines emigrated between 1960 and 1970, and the number climbed to an estimated 200,000 in the decade that followed. Primary destinations of the highly skilled included the United States and Spain, although other Western European countries and Mexico and Venezuela were also destinations.

The low point for net migration coincided with the most recent military dictatorship (1976-1983), during which it is estimated over 300,000 people — predominantly intellectuals, students, and minorities — "disappeared." Although some emigrants returned after the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1983, many Argentines remained abroad and were, for the most part, integrated in their host societies.

Current Emigration Trends

While regional immigration flows to Argentina continued in the 1980s and 1990s, economic opportunities abroad and a lack of opportunity at home caused many Latin Americans to migrate. Growing Argentine emigration rates, particularly of the young and highly skilled, closely follow the larger Latin American trend of those seeking more stable economies and social conditions in Western industrialized nations. An estimated 1.05 million Argentines were living abroad as of March 2005 — double the number from 1985.

The United States is one country that has experienced an increase in Argentine immigration flows over the last decade (see Table 2), with over 60 percent living in just three states: California, Florida, and New York. The majority of permanent immigrants enter under family reunification provisions, whereas most temporary immigrants (not shown in Table 2) enter the United States as specialty workers (H-1B visa), exchange visitors (J-1 visa), and intracompany transferees (L-1 visa).

Table 2. Inflow of Argentine Permanent Immigrants to the United States, 1994 to 2004

Year	Inflow
1994	2,318
1995	1,762
1996	2,456
1997	1,964
1998	1,511
1999	1,393
2000	2,331
2001	3,328
2002	3,685
2003	3,157
2004	4,805

Note: Data exclude temporary visitors and workers, refugees, and asylees. *Source*: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2004, Table 3

A strong foreign labor demand and favorable citizenship policies in Spain and Italy — applicable to Argentines who can prove Spanish or Italian ancestry — help explain why these countries also receive a large proportion of Argentine immigrants and Latin American immigrants in general. Argentina's relatively unstable economy and the European Union (EU) policy granting citizens free movement within EU territory have further promoted this trend.

In 2004, 157,323 native-born Argentines were living in Spain, up from 64,020 in 1999. In Italy, the stock of Argentine citizens nearly doubled in the period 1999-2003, from 5,725 to 11,266.

Canada has also seen a marked increase in Argentine immigration: up from 455 permanent residents in 2000 to 1,783 in 2003. More significantly perhaps, Argentina has risen in the ranks of top Latin American source countries to Canada — from 13th to 5th in that same time period.

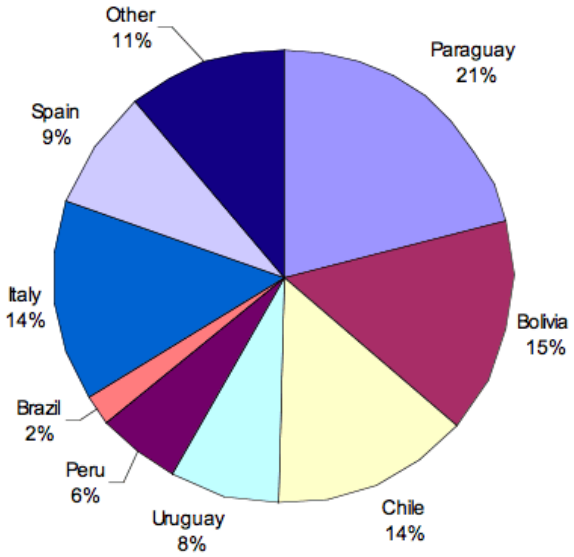
Remittances to Latin America make up nearly one-third of the world's total share. Although remittance flows to Argentina are not among the region's largest, their significance continues to grow.

According to the National Migration Directorate, remittances to Argentina reached $724 million in 2004, triple the 2001 figure. Some of this growth is attributable to improved calculation methods, but remittances to Argentina — as in the rest of the region — have increased remarkably. Remittances are used for a combination of basic needs, debt repayment, and investment purposes, although their primary uses in Argentina have not been thoroughly studied

Immigrant Populations and Settlement Patterns

To date, over 65 percent of the country's foreign-born population of 1,531,940 comprises immigrants from neighboring countries (see Figure 1), and only 4.2 percent of the population is foreign born compared with its peak of 30 percent in 1914. Nevertheless, Argentina's net migration rate remains positive at 0.4/1,000 population in 2005, and the country is host to over half of South America's migrant population.

Top eight source Countries in Argentina as a percentage of the total Foreign born population 2001



The country's urban immigrant unemployment rate was relatively low at 11.7 percent in 2003, compared to a total urban unemployment rate of 15.6 percent for that same year. Among migrants who have spent less than five years in Argentina, the rate was 11.2 percent.

These low rates correspond to a high demand for unskilled low-wage labor, the circular nature of many regional migration flows (in part fostered by seasonal work opportunities), a large informal economy, and the relatively free movement of workers within the Mercosur region — a South American free trade zone between Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, and Uruguay.

Immigrant populations in Argentina have varied and historically motivated settlement patterns. For the most part, immigrants from neighboring countries can be found in those Argentine provinces closest to their country of origin because early immigrants often replaced rural internal migrants who sought better opportunities in Buenos Aires and other urban centers.

Chilean immigrants can be found primarily in the southern region of Patagonia and in those

provinces along the Andes. Bolivians, Paraguayans and Brazilians mainly settle in the northern provinces of Argentina, closest to their respective countries. These immigrants usually fill agricultural, factory, and service-related occupations.

Uruguayans have the highest proportion of immigrants living in metropolitan Buenos Aires, mainly due to the high-skilled profile of this immigrant group and geographic proximity. The remaining neighboring immigrants, who settle in Buenos Aires, predominantly Paraguayans and Bolivians, fill low-skilled service occupations such as domestic workers.

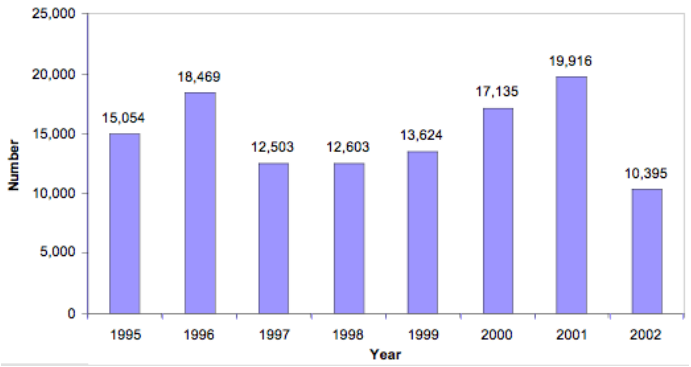
There are smaller, although significant, groups of Middle Eastern and Asian immigrants living in Argentina, primarily in metropolitan Buenos Aires. Armenian, Syrian, and Lebanese as well as Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants have entered in recent years to work in primarily low-skilled occupations. Often times these immigrants enter through family reunification or humanitarian provisions, or without legal authorization.

Immigration Structure and Administration

Argentina's long history of international migration explains its well-established immigration system, which is housed under the Ministry of Interior. Twenty-one delegations and seven migration offices span the country, which is lined with 230 controlled points of entry for land, air, and sea traffic.

Over the years, Argentina's immigrant admissions system has evolved to include three main avenues of entry: permanent, temporary, and humanitarian flows. Generally speaking, permanent immigrant admissions (through family reunification and employment) have steadily increased, although the economic crisis of 2001-2002 caused a noticeable decline in 2002 (see Figure 2). Nevertheless, admissions are expected to rise again as economic and political conditions become more stable.

Permanent immigration Admissions to Argentina by year, 1995 to 2002



Admissions flows under humanitarian (mainly refugee) provisions have never been significant in Argentina, despite its becoming party to the 1951 Geneva Convention in 1961. In 1985, Argentina created a separate government agency, part of the Ministry of Interior, charged with assisting those seeking protection. In 2004, there were approximately 2,600 recognized refugees in Argentina according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) — natives of Armenia, Laos, Cuba, Colombia, and Algeria are some of the more significant populations.

Immigration and Integration Policy Developments

Following the 1990s and a prolonged period of democratic regimes, Argentina has moved from a piecemeal immigration policy approach — characterized by periodic amnesties and sporadic efforts at combating illegal immigration — toward a guided, more open conception of immigration. A series of Mercosur provisions has led this shift, most important of which is the 2002 Free Movement and Residence agreement, which Chile and Bolivia also signed. Numerous bilateral accords and a multiyear process of reconstructing the immigration system have also contributed to this change.

The Mercosur Free Movement and Residence agreement is similar to the EU model of open borders. It grants Mercosur citizens (as well as natives of Chile and Bolivia) an automatic visa and the freedom to work and live within the space, provided they have no criminal record for the past five years. In essence, this agreement serves to regularize regional unauthorized immigrants — a constant policy problem for Argentina in particular.

The new Migration Law passed by Congress in December 2003 includes numerous important policy changes as well, giving migrants universal access to education and health care, free legal representation, the right to a fair trial prior to expulsion, and the right to family reunification. These measures were prompted by the desire to create a comprehensive immigration system based on democratic values instead of the previous military-defined framework, and they were influenced by the growing human rights movement in the region.

As part of the reform, government efforts to support Argentines abroad or those wishing to emigrate also have been developed.

Argentina's most recent policy development is the immigrant regularization program for non-Mercosur citizens residing in the country since June 30, 2004. The majority of these migrants are from China or Korea although some Latin Americans also participated.

Two-year temporary legal status is granted to all successful applicants. Immigrants may then choose to renew their status for another two years before seeking permanent citizenship. This regularization program, similar to other recent policy developments, was created to foster formal employment, immigrant integration, and a universal-rights oriented framework.

Beginning July 7, 2004, unauthorized immigrants had 180 days to apply for regularization. As of November 8, 2005, the program had adjudicated 900 applications.

Argentina in the Global Migration Context

Argentina has evolved from a leading immigrant destination in the early 20th century to a country with a dualistic migration environment: it attracts predominantly regional immigrants while experiencing emigration flows of mainly young, highly skilled natives. Immigration flows are both circular and permanent and, for the most part, fill the low-skilled, low-wage labor demand in both rural and urban settings.

As Argentina's economic and political conditions become increasingly stable, so too does the country's migration profile. Argentina can expect to continue to receive significant regional immigration flows while continuing to act as a sending country. As a result, immigrant remittances will continue to play a role in the country's economy, although, according to current trends, Argentina will remain less dependent on remittances than its Latin American neighbors.

Contrary to global trends, recent migration policy developments in Argentina are framed towards creating a more open immigration regime. In most immigration countries, such as the United States and the UK, security concerns as well as the desire to control and limit increasingly large migration flows are driving policy reform. By opening access to the country, especially for regional immigrants, Argentina provides an interesting case study of free movement for the developing world.

Eschewing more restrictive immigration policies of the past for a human rights and immigrant integration guided system means international migration will continue to influence Argentina's landscape.

Mexico

Immigration into Mexico, compared to emigration of its nationals and transit migration, is comparatively meager.

The foreign-born population increased between 1990 and 2000 by slightly more than 150,000, amounting to around 500,000, about 0.5 percent of Mexico's total population.

Among those aged 5 and older, the U.S. born were the dominant group with 63 percent of the total, up from 57 percent in 1990. Although Mexico is home to a small number of U.S. retirees, the vast majority of U.S. citizens in the 2000 census were children, 90 percent of whom had at least one parent born in Mexico. Moreover, according to INEGI, more than 90 percent of all foreigners below the age of 10 were born in the United States.

Those from Europe, particularly from Spain, accounted for 11.9 percent of all foreign born, followed by those born in Central America (11.2 percent), South America (7.3 percent), and the Caribbean (2.4 percent). The remaining 4 percent came from the rest of the world.

Refugee and Asylum Policy

At specific historical junctures, Mexico has had very generous responses to refugees and asylum seekers, most notably in the 1930s for exiles during the Spain Civil War, and in the 1980s and 1990s for people fleeing their political systems in several South and Central American countries.

In 2000, Mexico ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. In March 2002, the Mexican government began adjudicating asylum claims on its own, thus replacing the eligibility determinations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in place since 1982.

A common complaint by rights advocates is the lack of transparent regulation regarding the adjudication process.

In 2008, Mexico received about 300 asylum applications and granted refugee status to a little more than 100 of the applicants. Exceptionally, more than half of these refugees came from Haiti. Roughly another fifth were from other Latin American countries (Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Venezuela); the remainder came from all over the world.

Mexico experienced a small surge in asylum applications from Hondurans who fled after President Manuel Zelaya was ousted in a coup in June 2009. By the fall, the government had denied at least 13 asylum applications from Hondurans because the government claimed the political situation in Honduras was not related to those individuals leaving the country. However, it is possible for asylum applicants to be granted humanitarian visas and remain legally in Mexico.

Around two-thirds of all asylum applications are filed from detention centers within Mexico. The majority of refugees use Mexico as a route to reach other countries, especially the United States and Canada.

U.S. Immigration Policy and Its Consequences

In February 2001, presidents Fox of Mexico and Bush of the United States engaged their administrations to find mutually acceptable responses to a lingering migration issue that often had placed the two countries at odds.

Interpreted by the main Mexican officials involved as negotiations, the high-level contacts and discussions centered on legalizing the status of Mexicans already residing in the United States without authorization, establishing a guest worker program, enhancing border enforcement conditions, and on increasing the number of U.S. visas available for Mexicans. Expectations of arriving at a far-reaching agreement were high until the September 11, 2001, attacks struck the United States.

This bilateral attempt was meant to find a meaningful answer to the long-lasting Mexico-U.S. migration issue. After the termination of the Bracero program in 1964, Mexico tried, in vain, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to renegotiate temporary worker programs with the United States.

In view of the U.S. unwillingness in those years to engage the issue and the realization that Mexican migrants continued to cross the border and to find work in the United States, the Mexican government eventually retrenched into "a policy of no policy;" i.e., it let migration flows run loose and unmanaged.

At the same time, Washington also recognized that the termination of the Bracero programs did not end Mexican migration to the United States; instead, it simply continued in illegal forms, in the context of a permissive attitude by both countries.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 was the first serious attempt to curtail the migration of *indocumentados*. However, one of the most important long-term unintended consequences of IRCA's generous legalization component was that it helped transform Mexican migration from a predominantly circular pattern to a more permanent one.

Later on, since 1993-1994, the U.S. enactment and pursuit of increasingly robust immigration control policies prompted the Mexican government to shift its position from one of deliberate no engagement to a stance of increasing dialogue with Washington.

At the same time, NAFTA provided a more mature framework for bilateral immigration dialogue and understandings.

Although the dialogue did much to enhance exchanges of information, institutionalize and increase the effectiveness of consular protection, and expand certain forms of cooperation at the border, it did not prevent the deployment of Border Patrol operations or the enactment of the restrictive Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996.

This legislation, together with the strong message sent in 1994 by Proposition 187 in California, convinced many Mexican U.S. permanent residents to naturalize as a way to protect themselves from curtailments of many of their social rights.

This restrictive climate indirectly motivated Mexico to pass a law in 1996 allowing its citizens to have dual citizenship and probably strengthened Mexico's determination to protect its nationals abroad in a more systematic way.

Since the years of the Bracero programs, but particularly since the 1980s, Mexico has built out its consular network in the United States. As of 2009, Mexican had 50 consulates tasked with reaching out to all Mexicans, regardless of their legal status.

Among the policies the Mexican government has implemented is the *matrícula consular*, an ID card for migrants. After September 11, Mexico stepped up its efforts to provide these ID cards. Nearly a million matrículas were issued in 2003. The matrícula, which is valid for five years, can be used to open bank accounts at hundreds of U.S. financial institutions.

As the United States stepped up border enforcement in California in the 1990s, the flows shifted east to the harsh deserts of Arizona. One of the unintended consequences has been an increase in the number of deaths as migrants take ever-greater risks to reach the United States. This has become an important stress point in the U.S.-Mexico relationship.

A New Approach toward the United States

At the end of the Fox government, in 2005, the Mexican government made an unprecedented effort to discuss migration policy. The result was a document entitled "Mexico and the Migration Phenomenon." Both houses of the legislature — in a rare unanimous vote — adopted it in 2006 in a "verbal resolution" (*resolución*).

The document sets forth important guiding principles, recommendations, and commitments to update Mexico's migration policy on topics such as undocumented migration, border and regional security, human smuggling and trafficking, and international cooperation.

Mexico has long sought for the United States to view the management of Mexican migration flows as bilateral in nature. In this instance, however, the key concept was "shared responsibility," indicating Mexico's willingness to do its part regarding migration management.

In the document, Mexico takes explicit responsibility for improving economic and social opportunities in the country and recognizes the important implications migration represents for its development. Explicit mention is made of encouraging and easing the return and reincorporation of Mexicans into their home communities. Components of this strategy include better use of remittances and enhancement of relations with Mexicans abroad.

One of the document's aims was to influence legislative discussions on various immigration reform bills introduced, since 2005, in the U.S. Congress. However, the document did not have the intended effect on any specific piece of immigration legislation, none of which Congress has passed. The most recent immigration reform bill, introduced in early 2010, has not had much traction.

Probably as a reaction to such developments, the Calderón government has opted to use a subtler, low-key approach on migration matters.

Types and Characteristics of Mexican Migrants to the United States

Mexican migration flows have changed in many ways over the years. Recent indicators suggest that the characteristics of migrants are becoming as diverse, in terms of migrants' origin, educational, and occupational levels, as the characteristics of the Mexican population at large.

This development is in line with the recent trend of migration becoming a nationwide phenomenon. According to Mexican municipal-level data, only

a few dozen municipalities failed to register some type of migratory activity between 1995 and 2000.

Mexican migrants tend to come from middle-to-lower segments of Mexico's socioeconomic structure. Most Mexican migration thus still fits into the "manual labor migration" type. Indeed, 61 percent of the 9 million Mexican immigrants age 25 and older in 2008 had less than a high school diploma.

However, greater numbers of professionals and skilled persons are among the migrants. As of 2008, there were about 468,000 Mexican immigrants with a bachelor's degree or higher, representing about 5 percent of all Mexican born age 25 and older. In Mexico, almost 7 million people have at least a bachelor's degree, meaning that nearly 7 percent of all Mexican professionals live in the United States.

According to researchers Elena Zúñiga and Miguel Molina, between 1997 and 2007, the number of Mexicans with a bachelor's degree or higher rose at an average annual growth rate of 6 percent in Mexico, but the number of Mexican-born professionals living in the United States almost doubled, at the rate of 11 percent.

Increasingly, the distinction between circular and settled migrants is becoming blurred. Circular migrants tend to be younger and predominantly male, while settled migrants are more evenly split between men and women, more urban, and better educated (meaning eight years of school). Among settled Mexican immigrants, just 5.3 percent worked in agricultural occupations in 2005, according to researchers Silvia Giorguli, Selene Gaspar, and Paula Leite.

However, many permanent migrants began their journey to the United States as circular migrants, often in unauthorized circumstances, although many also entered legally.

It's also worth noting that Mexican immigrants are still concentrated in California (37.3 percent of the 11.4 million total) and Texas (21.0 percent), as well as Illinois (6.3 percent), according to 2008 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau. But they have settled in states across the West and Southeast over the last 20 years. These include Arizona (5.4 percent), Georgia (2.5 percent), Florida (2.3 percent), North Carolina (2.2 percent), Colorado (2.2 percent), New York (2.1 percent), and Nevada (2.0 percent).

Mexicans in Canada

Although the Mexican-immigrant population in Canada is tiny compared to the population in the United States, it has increased mainly since the 1990s, more than doubling from 22,000 in 1991 to about 50,000 in 2006, according to Statistics Canada.

Economist Richard Mueller has argued that a good portion of Canada's Mexican population consists of the descendants of Canadian Mennonites who settled in Mexico in the 1920s and have since "returned," enabled in part by claims to Canadian citizenship. However, Mueller finds that the number of non-Mennonite Mexican born has grown faster.

Some recent arrivals likely include Mexicans who entered through Canada's points system for highly skilled immigrants. In 2005, enterprising Canadian immigration lawyers saw an opportunity when border enforcement became a hot political topic in the United States. They began advertising legal migration to Canada, both in Mexico and Arizona.

Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), which began over 40 years ago, originally relied on workers from Caribbean countries but has included Mexican workers since 1974. In 2009, about 17,000 Mexicans came to work temporarily on Canadian farms.

Mexico has been among the top origin countries for asylum applicants in Canada. But as the Mexican government stepped up its fight against violent drug gangs in 2008-2009, the number of Mexicans seeking asylum in Canada increased. In response, Canada in July 2009 began requiring Mexican citizens to have visas before they can travel to Canada.

Mexico became Canada's top source country for asylum applications in 2008. Although claims from Mexico have almost tripled since 2005, only 11 percent of claims reviewed in 2008 were accepted.

Ongoing Concerns

The most pressing task facing the Mexican government should be seriously reengaging the United States in negotiations on the migration issue.

Arguing in favor of a thoughtful resolution of these issues is the realization that tightened immigration enforcement is unlikely to change the economic and social realities that build migration pressures.

However, the Calderón administration seems to be aware that U.S. policy is unlikely to change, even more so given the recession and high unemployment in the United States.

The government believes that development and job creation in Mexico are keys to breaking Mexico's migration cycle. But the strategy for job creation rests almost exclusively on sound conditions to attract and promote private — domestic and foreign — investment.

While the Calderón government has prioritized national security, the rule of law, and the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime, it has made several attempts to professionalize migration personnel and to modernize migration facilities to better manage transit migration. Several programs have also been enacted to regularize "transborder migrants" in the southern regions.

A fair amount of rethinking will be needed to honestly address the contradictions of migration policies heavily driven by restrictive considerations in increasingly interlocked contexts. The challenge will be to understand clearly the enduring nature of the economic, social, and communications forces at work even while looking at the entire process through the security lens.

The current dilemmas facing Mexico and the United States with regard to migration are the same old ones. Either the two countries accept the reality of Mexicans entering the United States — whether temporarily or permanently — and open avenues for orderly movement, or both countries engage forcefully and cooperatively to achieve a real "partnership for prosperity" within a framework of multifaceted integration.

Conclusion:

The migration-induced changes taking place in El Salvador today are profoundly transforming the country's economy and society. Yet over the last two decades analysts and policymakers did not sufficiently take into account the impacts, and thus continued to plan for a country that no longer exists. Essentially, El Salvador cannot be understood as a country of 6.2 million people living in 21,000 square kilometers, but rather as a nation with more than eight million citizens living inside and outside the national borders.

Many policymakers continue to try and find ways for migration and remittances to develop immigrant-sending areas, especially on the local level. The UNDP El Salvador report concludes, however, that migration and remittances can contribute to local development (and in fact are already doing so) but they cannot be the motor that drives either the national or local economy.

In short, migration processes alone cannot solve all of El Salvador's economic problems. Local and national development requires local agendas for improving the social, cultural, political, and economic fabric of a community.

Return migrants can contribute with skills learned abroad, and migrant associations in the United States can make investments that stimulate local economic activity or support social services such as education, health care, and recreational activities. The challenge is ensuring that all Salvadorans, not just households with migrants abroad, can benefit from improvements.

Argentina's most recent policy development seems to be the immigrant regularization program for non-Mercosur citizens residing in the country since June 30, 2004. The majority of these migrants are from China or Korea although some Latin Americans also participated.

Two-year temporary legal status is granted to all successful applicants. Immigrants may then choose to renew their status for another two years before seeking permanent citizenship. This regularization program, similar to other recent policy developments, was created to foster formal employment, immigrant integration, and a universal-rights oriented framework.

Beginning July 7, 2004, unauthorized immigrants had 180 days to apply for regularization. As of November 8, 2005, the program had adjudicated 900 applications.

Argentina's economic and political conditions become increasingly stable, so too does the country's migration profile. Argentina can expect to continue to receive significant regional immigration flows while continuing to act as a sending country. As a result, immigrant remittances will continue to play a role in the country's economy, although, according to current trends, Argentina will remain less dependent on remittances than its Latin American neighbors.

Contrary to global trends, recent migration policy developments in Argentina are framed towards creating a more open immigration regime. In most immigration countries, such as the United States and the UK, security concerns as well as the desire to control and limit increasingly large migration flows are driving policy reform. By opening access to the country, especially for regional immigrants, Argentina provides an interesting case study of free movement for the developing world.

Eschewing more restrictive immigration policies of the past for a human rights and immigrant integration guided system means international migration will continue to influence Argentina's landscape.

Sources

Agencia de Noticias Universidad Nacional. 2014. Presencia de Chinos en Colombia Se Ha Duplicado en Ocho Años. *Universidad*

Fielden, Alexandra. 2008. *Ignored Displaced Persons: The Plight of IDPs in Urban Areas*. New Issues in Refugee Research, Research Paper No. 161. Geneva: UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

FLACSO, 2005 "Informe Final Resultado 3.1: Efectos de la Migración en las Expectativas Laborales de los Jóvenes Escolarizados en Cuatro Municipios de Pobreza Severa en El Salvador". Informe preparado para el FISDL.

UNDP, 2005. *Informe sobre desarrollo humano El Salvador 2005: Una Mirada al Nuevo nosotros. El impacto de las migraciones.* San Salvador, UNDP.

Forero Ramírez, Juan Carlos, Alexia Taveau, and Carlos Andres Perez Gallego. 2013. *Dimensión del Delito de Tráfico de Migrantes en Colombia: Realidades Institucionales, Legales, y Judiciales*. Bogotá: UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

Gonzalez, Carlos. 2015. Número de Inmigrantes en Chile Llegaría a un Millón en Ocho Años. *La Tercera*, September 7, 2015

Nacional, November 20, 2014. **.**

Andrade Rojas, Gabriel, Marcos Fabián Oyaga Moncada, Ingrid Paola Hurtado Sánchez, and Juan Sebastián Silva. 2013. *Desplazamiento Forzado Intraurbano y Soluciones Duraderas: Una Aproximación Desde los Casos de Buenaventura, Tumaco y Soacha*. Bogotá: Consultoría Para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento.

Banco de la Republica Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango. N.d. Prehispanic Societies: A Timeline. Accessed March 17, 2017. **.**

---. N.d. Etapas y Sentido de la Historia de Colombia. Accessed March 16, 2017

---. N.d. Los Africanos: Cifras y Origen. Accessed March 17, 2017. **.**

Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH). 2013. *¡Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de Guerra y Dignidad.* Informe General Grupo de Memoria Histórica. Bogotá: Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación.

Chambers, Roberts and William Chambers. 1903. The Chambers Journal. *A Treasure Lake in South America.* Edinburgh: W & R Chambers, Limited.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2004). "Facts and Figures 2003. Immigration Overview: Permanent Residents." Ottawa, ON

El Tiempo. 2011. Las Huellas de los Judíos en Colombia. *El Tiempo*, March 19, 2011

Erazo, Claudia. 2016. Colombia: Las Amenazas al Proceso de Restitución de Tierras. Kaos en la Red, May 12, 2016.

Migración Colombia. 2017. Cerca de 34mil Migrantes Fueron Detectados por Migracion Colombia en 2016. Press release, Migración Colombia, January 12, 2017

Noguera Montoya, Susana. 2016. La Bogotá de los Árabes. *El Espectador*, January 23, 2016.

Office of the High Commissioner for Peace. 2014. *Learn About the Peace Process in Colombia*. Bogotá: Office of the High Commissioner for Peace.

Orozco, Manuel, Laura Porras, and Julia Yansura. 2016. *The Continued Growth of Family Remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean in 2015*. Washington, DC: The Inter-American Dialogue.

Otis, John. 2016. Colombia, FARC Reach Deal to End Armed Conflict. National Public Radio, August 25, 2016.
Pew Research Center. 2016. Origins and Destinations of the World's Migrants, from 1990-2015. Colombia. Data tool, Pew Research Center, May 17, 2016.
Sánchez Mojica, Beatriz Eugenia. 2015. In Transit: Migration Policy in Colombia. In *A Liberal Tide? Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy in Latin America*, eds. David James Cantor, Luisa Feline Freier, and Jean-Pierre Gauci. London: Institute of Latin American Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London.
Sánchez Mojica, Beatriz Eugenia and Roberto Carlos Vidal López. 2013. *Conferencia de Soluciones Sostenibles para La Población Desplazada: Experiencias Internacionales y Nacionales*. Bogotá: UNHCR
Scarpaci, Joseph. 2005. *Plazas and Barrios: Heritage Tourism and Globalization in the Latin American Centro Historico*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
Tovar Pinzón, Hermes. 2006. Emigración y Éxodo en la Historia de Colombia. *Amérique Latine Histoire et Mémoire. Les Cahiers ALHIM, March 7, 2016*
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2015. Colombia: Humanitarian Snapshot: Land Abandonment and Restitution. Data snapshot, OCHA, September 8, 2015.
Latin American News Digest (2005). "Remittances to Argentina at $724 Million in 2004." March 14.
Novick, Susana (2005). "Evolución Reciente de la Política Migratoria Argentina." Paper presented at the XXV Internacional Population Conference, Tours, France, July 18-23
Solimano, Andrés (2003). "Development Cycles, Political Regimes and International Migration: Argentina in the twentieth century." Economic Development Division, No.22, ECLAC/CEPAL: Santiago, Chile, January.
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). 2015. Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Origin and Destination, 2015 Revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev. 2015).
World Bank and Global Development Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD). 2016. Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook. Migration and Development Brief 26, World Bank and KNOMAD, April 2016

Dr Kemal YILDIRIM
Teaches Religion, Civil War, and Prospects for Peace & Conflict Resolution on Immigration Issues and Gender Conflict. He has more than thirty books and around 100 articles published.