Migrants and Migration in Modern North America

Cross-Border Lives, Labor Markets, and Politics

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CHAPTER NINE

The United States–Mexican Border as Material and Cultural Barrier

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The reconfiguration of national borders in the nineteenth century forced American Indians, Mexicans, and Anglo-Americans to confront new material and cultural barriers. By 1800 European colonial powers and indigenous nations had forged borderlands of intercultural mixing and exchange. These borderlands would become "bordered lands" in 1848 when the U.S.-Mexican War fixed the boundaries between the United States and Mexico.[1] Indigenous nations witnessed their homelands divided, their movements restricted, and their hunting grounds reduced in size by the new international boundary. Both federal governments sought to control the movement of goods and people across their shared boundary, but neither had the resources to monitor or completely stem this flow. Throughout the twentieth century the border gradually became more restrictive as both federal governments increased enforcement. Each nation promoted cross-border trade and stronger economic interdependence while seeking to control population movements. By the first decade of the twenty-first century this boundary line and its borderland had become increasingly contested as both governments attempt to impose control while ignoring the needs of local residents. Yet the divide remains permeable to material and cultural forces insistent on crossing.

Indigenous Peoples and the Making of the Border in the Nineteenth Century

European expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries disrupted indigenous societies, forcing Indian nations to migrate, others to resist, and many to adapt to colonial powers. The Spanish forcibly incorporated

some Indians (such as the Pueblos) through missions, while others (like the Apaches and Utes) remained apart and became frequently provoked by violent raids for indigenous slaves. The Comanches traded Indian captives for horses with Spanish colonists, horses for manufactured items with American colonists, and bison products for guns with French traders. Through a combination of gift giving and military force, Spanish settlements established tenuous alliances with several indigenous nations (such as the Pimas, Navajos, and Kiowas).[2] These tentative agreements fell apart in the early nineteenth century as Mexico's struggle for independence from Spain redirected military and financial resources away from the northern frontier. Simultaneously Anglo-American expansion decreased indigenous nations' hunting grounds and agricultural regions, and also pushed some groups into conflict with others and with Mexican communities. Persistent Indian attacks further weakened the Mexican presence, devastated its northern settlements, and compromised its ability to ward off American expansion during the U.S.-Mexican War (1846–48).[3]

Indigenous nations adapted to the changing international boundary by attacking American and Mexican settlements and fleeing across the newly erected border to escape reprisals. Mexicans unleashed a war of extermination against Comanches and Lipan Apaches that paralleled American campaigns against the Kiowas and Comanches. As the raids persisted, the Mexican and American governments blamed each other for harboring Indians and purchasing their stolen livestock. By the end of the nineteenth century the region's indigenous populations had plummeted after suffering years of government campaigns and forced relocations.[4] Indigenous people had lost increasing territories to Mexican and American governments intent on establishing fixed national boundaries during the nineteenth century (see chapter 5).

The new international boundary led to the formation of a Mexican border culture, most pronounced in regions where the new boundary divided Mexican communities that had previously lived on both sides of the Rio Grande. After the river became the international divide, new towns emerged opposite the older settlements; in some cases the new settlements (El Paso opposite Ciudad Juárez) were on the American side, while in others (Nuevo Laredo across from Laredo) they sprouted on the Mexican side. Along the western part of the boundary twin cities and Mexican border culture developed later (Tijuana became paired with San Diego, and Nogales, Sonora, with Nogales, Arizona, in the 1880s).[5] These sets of twin cities were initially economically dependent on one another and on binational trade. Their population was mostly ethnically Mexican with some Anglo-Americans and European immigrants, residents sharing family and friends on both sides. Political and linguistic differ-

ences gradually distinguished American border residents from their Mexican counterparts. In business, politics, and social life Spanish and English became increasingly intermixed, although Spanish remained the lingua franca of the border. Mexican and American border towns fostered bicultural influences by celebrating national holidays jointly. Border residents frequently crossed the river to partake in cultural events, pay social visits, engage in commerce, and attend religious services. Daily migrations across the Rio Grande of workers, merchants, and shoppers helped residents absorb cultural influences from both nations. Complicating this shared culture were antagonisms and suspicions between Anglo-Americans and Mexicans resulting from years of military campaigns over territory.[6]

Mid-nineteenth-century political turmoil fomented conflict along the border and cast a long shadow over race relations across the annexed territories. After Texas gained independence (1836) Anglo-Texan vigilantes and squatters began a systematic campaign against Mexican Texans that forced many to abandon their lands in central Texas and move southward toward the border. Adding to the tensions were the incursions of opposing armies and filibusters. Tensions culminated in the U.S.-Mexican War (1846–48) when the U.S. Army invaded Mexico's territory.[7] American volunteers and the Texas Rangers terrorized Mexico's population, stole property, and desecrated Catholic churches. Although guaranteed equal citizenship rights by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (which ended the war), Mexican Americans in the annexed territories could not obtain civil rights and equal representation. In addition to losing land through legal and illegal means, they witnessed some of their cultural practices, such as attending popular dances and bathing in rivers, legally restricted. Anglo-Americans pointed to Mexican Americans' maintenance of Mexican cultural traditions as evidence of disloyalty to the United States. Residents of Coahulia, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas grew resentful of Anglo-Texans' involvement in armed campaigns to destabilize their state governments, foment a rebellion, and establish another separatist republic with friendlier trade policies than Mexico offered.[8] Tensions were further inflamed when criminals (from either side) fled across the river to escape prosecution. Municipal officials in Mexico (where slavery had been abolished with independence) grew frustrated by American slave catchers who entered the country illegally and attempted to recapture runaway slaves. While African American slaves fled southward, a much greater number of laborers from Mexico headed northward. These migrants crossed the river to obtain higher wages, but also to flee their debts. Through their escape beyond legal jurisdiction, slaves and indebted workers dismantled labor controls along a wide swath of the U.S.-Mexico border and created a culture of free labor.[9]

Several indigenous nations have crossed and recrossed the international boundary to escape persecution and maintain their culture. The Kumeyaay along the California–Baja California border and the Tohono O'odham of the Arizona-Sonora region have witnessed their homelands divided by the international boundary. American expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries drove the Kickapoo from their original Great Lakes homelands to Texas. In response to constant violence from Texans, groups of Kickapoo migrated to Oklahoma and others crossed into Coahuila in the mid-nineteenth century. To avoid the U.S. Civil War, some Kickapoo from Kansas and Missouri crossed into Mexico, where Seminoles and African Americans joined them. Mexico provided sanctuary and land grants to Kickapoo who fought alongside and within its army to repel Comanche and Mescalero raids. Subsequent migrations occurred from Mexico into Oklahoma and back as the U.S. military pursued the Kickapoo into Mexico in an effort to remove them from the border region. In Mexico the Yaquis of Sonora experienced a similar process of persecution as they attempted to remain an autonomous indigenous nation. After years of successfully resisting the Mexican military's war of extermination, some were forcibly removed to southern Mexico to labor on Yucatan plantations, while others crossed into Arizona. Additional exoduses occurred in the early twentieth century as Yaquis joined fellow sojourners as farm laborers and miners in Arizona while others settled among the Tohono O'odham. The Yaqui, unlike the Tohono O'odham, failed to obtain official recognition as American Indians from the U.S. government, making them ineligible for land or federal aid. Like the Kickapoos, the Yaquis escaped government persecution by repeatedly fleeing across the border as they attempted to maintain cultural ties among scattered groups separated by the international boundary.[10] For still other indigenous groups the borderland was the site for careful negotiations in which they sought to adapt their way of life to the changed political and demographic circumstances they faced. The Pima, for example, expanded the market for their agricultural produce to the traders, miners, and settlers who migrated to their homeland in the Gila River Valley of Arizona during the mid-nineteenth century (see chapter 11 in this volume).

International Trade and Foreign Investment

By the early nineteenth century international commerce had become a significant part of Mexico's northern economy. Merchants in Paso del Norte (renamed Ciudad Juárez in 1888) fostered commerce as part of the Santa Fe–Chihuahua Trail (approximately five hundred miles in length). Matamoros, near the Rio Grande's mouth, became a conduit for smuggling into Mexico

before becoming an official port in 1823. From then until 1848 American and European merchants dominated Mexico's northeastern trade. Merchants imported foreign-manufactured items and exported specie and livestock products from Mexico's northeast. The cross-border trade inverted the longstanding economic arrangement by which merchants in Mexico's center supplied the nation's periphery; subsequently traders along Mexico's northern periphery would increasingly supply the nation's north and north central regions.[11] After the U.S.-Mexican War merchants shifted their operations to American border cities like Brownsville (opposite Matamoros) and El Paso (opposite Paso del Norte). The American towns flourished while their Mexican counterparts languished, in part because of the nations' differing trade laws. Mexico imposed import tariffs and taxed the transportation of foreign goods within the country, while the United States established relatively low tariffs and did not tax internal trade. This disparity led to a sharp differential in prices for clothing and food, which cost up to four times more in Mexican than American border towns. The higher cost of goods in Mexico and higher wages in the United States attracted male and female laborers north. Between 1848 and 1873 at least 2,812 indebted workers (accompanied by 2,572 family members) left Coahuila and Nuevo León for Texas; women labored as domestic servants, cooks, and laundresses, men as ranch hands, teamsters, and railroad workers.[12]

National economic and political developments would subsequently influence the distribution of the local border population. To combat the disparity in the cost of living, the states of Tamaulipas and Chihuahua established a free-trade zone in the late 1850s to exempt imports from tariffs along the border. This incentive drew merchants back to Mexico, triggering a population decline in American border towns. During the American Civil War the population of Mexican border towns increased further when American merchants sought refuge there. The free-trade zone fueled the smuggling of American imports into Mexico's interior, and European manufactures into the United States. Because they avoided tariffs, the foreign-made contraband items were priced lower than domestic goods in Mexico (and similarly in the United States), prompting merchants in each nation's interior to complain about the unfair advantage that the free-trade zone gave to border traders. Despite protests from merchants in central Mexico and the loss of tax revenues from the tariff exemptions, the federal government extended the free-trade zone across the nation's entire northern border in 1885. American traders and government officials continued to complain about the free-trade zone's damaging economic impact on the U.S. border communities until 1905, when Mexico repealed the zone's exemptions. The arrival of railroads in the late nineteenth century ushered in another reconfiguration of trade and population as American border towns became the dominant commercial centers.[13]

While the international boundary facilitated legal trade, it also led to a rise in smuggling. Outside the free-trade zone Mexico's import tariffs created an opening for smugglers to profit from contraband. Smuggled imports included tobacco, textiles, and liquor, while silver specie was the main smuggled export. Merchants in Monterrey capitalized on smuggling to convert the city into a trade capital that quickly surpassed Matamoros and Saltillo in population and commerce.[14] Cattle theft flourished in the postwar years because thieves crossed the river to escape prosecution and sell their bounty. While American and Mexican investigative committees reached the predictable conclusion that residents and officials in the other nation harbored thieves, their reports tacitly acknowledged each nation's inability to control the movement of goods and people across their shared boundary. During the Civil War the border's strategic importance grew as the Confederacy shipped cotton to European markets through Matamoros (the only port to escape the Union blockade). The Union and Confederacy recruited Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans as soldiers, and also courted Mexican political parties and military leaders for their support.[15]

Mining attracted Americans south, spurring the development of new communities along Mexico's northwestern border, fostering its economic integration with the United States, and creating an international and multiethnic labor force there. Beginning in the 1850s the discovery of silver and gold deposits spurred several mining booms further west in Baja California. Attracted by the possibility of bonanzas, American miners, merchants, and filibusters flocked to the region. After witnessing several American filibustering efforts in Baja California and Sonora (including that of the infamous William Walker), the Mexican government unsuccessfully attempted to restrict the entrance of foreigners across its northwestern border. Meanwhile the mining booms transformed Tijuana, San Diego, and other border communities from sleepy outposts to vibrant towns.[16]

In the 1880s changes in Mexican laws paved the way for massive foreign investment in mining concerns (see chapter 15). Silver, gold, lead, and copper deposits made Sonora and Chihuahua the most productive mineral regions in Mexico. Railroad development in the late nineteenth century further tied the nation's extractive industries to the U.S. economy. With financing from American investors, the Mexican Central Railroad Company linked Mexico City with El Paso, while the Mexican National Railroad Company, financed by French and English capitalists, connected Mexico City with Monterrey (the northeastern trade capital) and Laredo, Texas. American railways connected U.S. border

towns to Midwestern markets, continuing from there to Canada and the U.S. Northeast. These trade connections demonstrated the increasing continental economic integration and pervasive influence of American capital by the late nineteenth century. Mexico's northern region also benefited from inexpensive labor and proximity to American smelters. Among the workers were Yaqui and Opata Indians, who labored seasonally to supplement subsistence agriculture. Chinese immigrants also entered Arizona and Sonora in the 1870s to work in railroad construction, hotel service, and trade. Some Chinese remained in Mexico to work as farmers, as ranchers, and in skilled trades, while others used Mexico as a corridor to the United States, crossing the border illegally after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (see chapter 14). Further adding to the diversity of northern Mexico, in the 1880s some American Mormons journeyed south after polygamy was outlawed in the United States.[17]

The ascendancy of the Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz in 1876 substantially strengthened U.S.-Mexico economic integration and facilitated foreign ownership and the export of raw materials. Díaz welcomed foreign capital to promote the nation's development of mining, railroads, and export agriculture. The Porfiriato (Díaz's period of rule, 1876–1911) opened the border to external capital and spurred foreign ownership of many of the nation's industries. By 1911 American and European capitalists exercised a majority ownership of mining and railroad operations (U.S. companies owned 80 percent of Mexican railroad stock in 1902); they also controlled several million acres of northern Mexico's land. The American Daniel Guggenheim owned various mines and smelters, including the nation's largest privately owned enterprise. By creating a railroad network connecting northern Mexico to American rail lines, Díaz's administration cemented the economic interdependence of both nations. The railroads increased the border region's importance by facilitating transportation of its agriculture and minerals to distant American markets. Yet this interconnectedness did not yield an equal relationship, because Mexico (like Canada) developed an economy dependent on American core capital and markets. Land values, populations, and manufacturing along Mexico's northern boundary increased, but the nation's economy remained firmly in foreign hands. Although Mexico's annual economic growth rate held steady at 8 percent, only a few Mexicans benefited from the nation's modernization.[18] Land consolidation begat landless peasants, while mechanization forced artisans and skilled workers to find new employment. The railroads accelerated the process of step-migration, as the unemployed moved from small rural areas to larger urban ones, before arriving at Mexican border towns and eventually crossing into American border towns.

Railroad construction in Mexico and the United States coincided with the

explosive growth of the American Southwest's agricultural industry. The concurrent spread of irrigation increased the land usable for commercial agriculture, and the development of the refrigerated railcar allowed produce to reach distant markets. American employers increasingly turned to Mexican immigrants (who traveled by railroad) to harvest crops. Labor agents traveled into Mexico to recruit workers for agriculture, mining, and railroad construction. Subsequently banned from recruiting within Mexico by a U.S. immigration act passed in 1917, contractors waited for immigrants at the border to redirect them to openings across the country. Labor recruiters, who were paid a commission by employers and a transportation fee by laborers, continued to operate a booming business until the 1920s (see chapter 8).[19] Beginning in 1910 and continuing for almost a decade, the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution (which deposed Díaz) pushed Mexicans into the United States. Between 1900 and 1930 an estimated 10 percent of Mexico's population moved across the border. The number of immigrants increased rapidly—while 50,000 Mexicans immigrated in the 1890s, approximately 119,000 immigrated during the first decade of the twentieth century; in the following decade at least 206,000 Mexicans immigrated legally, while many others arrived as undocumented immigrants or refugees. The American economic boom during the First World War further increased the demand for laborers. By 1920 the Mexican-born population in the United States numbered approximately 478,000 (see chapter 1).[20]

Consequences of Immigration

The massive early-twentieth-century population movement had significant cultural impacts on the United States. Drawn by social networks and familiar cultural practices, most Mexican immigrants settled in longstanding Mexican-American communities. Their arrival increased the number of Spanish-speakers in each community, customers of stores catering to Mexicans, and readership of Spanish-language newspapers. Mexican music and other forms of popular culture were reinvigorated, as were ethnic restaurants, cultural celebrations, and Spanish-language churches. Accompanying the immigrant workers were union organizers and political activists, supporters of Mexican anarchists and revolutionary leaders, including the brothers Enrique and Ricardo Flores Magón, who published an exile newspaper and led an anarcho-syndicalist movement from San Antonio, El Paso, and St. Louis. The political upheaval in Mexico also inspired an armed insurrection in southern Texas, where longstanding Mexican-American residents underwent a loss of property and political influence with the arrival of numerous Midwestern farmers. The rebellion, which began with the irredentist Plan de San Diego

proposal (named after a small town near Corpus Christi, Texas), called for a multiethnic alliance of Mexican Americans, African Americans, Japanese Americans, and American Indians to reclaim Mexico's lands lost to the United States. From 1915 to 1916 rebels attacked law enforcement personnel, burned bridges, and sabotaged railway lines. The Texas Rangers and vigilantes retaliated with lynchings and mass shootings, targeting Mexican Americans. As a result ethnic relations deteriorated while Anglo-Texans increasingly suspected Mexican Americans of disloyalty. Cross-border raids by rebels and U.S. military personnel threatened to ignite a war with Mexico until American military forces suppressed the rebellion in 1916.[21]

The large wave of Mexican newcomers intensified an already heated debate in the United States about immigration. Most labor unions opposed further immigration, blaming new arrivals for depressing wages and working as strikebreakers. Influenced by the nativism directed at southern and eastern Europeans, restrictionists charged that Mexicans were racially and culturally inferior, so that their continued admission would degrade American society and create a race problem worse than in the American South. In contrast, spokesmen from the agriculture, railroad, and mining industries argued that Mexicans were needed to work in jobs that few Americans would fill because of low wages and harsh working conditions. Characterizing Mexicans as indolent, lazy, and docile, employers argued that these "backward" traits made them ideal workers. They attempted to reassure opponents by arguing that Mexicans were temporary workers who would not settle permanently but preferred to return to Mexico. Even among Mexican Americans reaction to the migrant influx was mixed. Although commonalities in culture and ancestry tied recent arrivals to long-term residents, internal schisms created tensions and hostility. The divisions emerged from economic competition over housing and jobs. In addition, cultural differences pitted Mexican Americans accustomed to American culture and social freedoms against Mexican immigrants with distinct regional traditions and social mores. Some Mexican Americans sought to distance themselves from recent arrivals to avoid the stigma placed on immigrants, frequently characterized as poor and uneducated peasants. These arguments would recur throughout and beyond the twentieth century as the United States struggled to control immigration while demand for low-wage labor continued unabated.[22]

The borderlands became sites of instability and contestation, especially in periods of political crisis. During the Mexican Revolution arms, troops, and refugees flowed across the border. Mexico's northern states figured significantly in the conflict, because several revolutionary leaders hailed from border states, which provided financial support and access to safety in the

United States. American border towns, San Antonio, and Los Angeles meanwhile served as bases from which political adherents of Francisco Madero and the Flores Magón brothers launched armed attacks against Mexico's government and captured Mexican border towns. Allying with American socialist and anarchist labor unions, the Flores Magón brothers directed workers' strikes in Mexico and armed incursions into Baja California. Military confrontations sparked refugee movements to American border towns, which became overburdened as immigrants crowded into unsanitary and decrepit housing. In northern Sonora, Mexican revolutionaries encouraged civilians to flee to Arizona border towns for safety; Arizonan law enforcement approved the border-crossing practice but remained on alert for incursions into U.S. territory. After the U.S. government recognized a political rival's government, Francisco "Pancho" Villa killed American engineers in Chihuahua and attacked Columbus, New Mexico. In response General John J. Pershing and six thousand troops crossed into Mexico in an unsuccessful attempt to capture Villa. After vigilantes attacked Mexican Americans, officials in El Paso narrowly avoided a riot by imposing martial law. Cross-border raids fueled the deployment of federal troops and Texas Rangers to El Paso. Contemporary American postcards and films prominently highlighted the violence of the Mexican Revolution and depicted lawless Mexican border towns. After Pershing's unsuccessful expedition several American films appeared focusing on the U.S. militarization along the border. Mexico's military conflict was nourished by U.S. arms sales that funneled weapons into Mexico ($270,832 worth in 1911 and $1.3 million in 1915). From the boundary between California and Baja California to those between Sonora and Arizona and between Texas and Chihuahua, battles between Mexican government troops and rebels exploded and heightened tensions.[23]

Meanwhile Mexican immigrants became an indispensable labor force for many industries in the American Southwest. The migration often occurred in family groups, but occasionally single men or women made the journey north. Women joined men as agricultural workers and often harvested crops with children in tow. Other women worked as cooks in labor camps, ran boardinghouses, or took in laundry and sewing work. Migrants journeyed to labor in Midwestern agriculture, railroad, and meatpacking industries. Women also worked alongside men in the sugar-beet harvests and packinghouses, while men made inroads into the auto and steel industries. Whether they participated in the formal or informal economy, women were essential for sustaining immigrant families, often working "double days" by completing household labor after a full day of paid work.[24] The relative proximity of Mexico allowed immigrants to participate in circular migration whereby they journeyed back and forth for several months or years. This circular migration explained the

arrival of approximately 628,000 temporary workers between 1910 and 1920. With a few exceptions most Mexican immigrants could easily cross into the United States until 1917. In that year an immigration law imposed a literacy test and head tax on all immigrants, temporarily decreasing the entry of Mexican immigrants until American employers pressured the federal government for an exemption. The immigration debates eventually led to the quota laws of 1921 and 1924. Employers' dependence on this low-wage labor motivated growers to successfully lobby the U.S. Congress to exempt Mexicans and other Latin Americans from the quotas.[25] Still, restrictionists could take comfort in a renewed federal concern with Mexican immigration when the Border Patrol was established in 1924.

Mexican border cities had attracted tourists by the early twentieth century, but the advent of Prohibition in the United States (with the Volstead Act of 1919) saw a boom in tourism, as Americans made regular visits south of the border to satiate their thirst for liquor and gambling. During Prohibition many American owners of casinos and nightclubs moved their operations to Mexican border cities. The proximity to a large customer base led to the establishment of numerous casinos, cabarets, and nightclubs in Mexican border cities during the 1920s. The vice industry that flourished during Prohibition expanded the shady commerce of border cities like Tijuana and Mexicali that had established red-light districts replete with brothels and opium dens in the preceding decade. These zoned districts offered visitors a crosscultural mix of American jazz, Chinese food, and Mexican games of chance in buildings that blended Mexican, Moorish, and Baroque architecture. Owned by Mexican and American entrepreneurs, the tourist attractions included racetracks for horses and dogs, bullfight arenas, and venues hosting cockfights. Mexican chambers of commerce advertised in American newspapers and magazines to promote tourism. Attracted by the red-light districts, conference business in American border cities grew. Prostitution flourished during Prohibition from the constant flow of American customers across the border. The border's vice industry became a prominent story in American films featuring gangsters smuggling alcohol and drugs; subsequently Hollywood produced films about the smuggling of Mexicans and Chinese across the border. Among the tourists were wealthy visitors, including celebrities and movie stars from California, who ventured south to enjoy hot spring baths, a golf course, a casino, and a private airport offered at Agua Caliente, a luxury hotel in Tijuana that was a joint Mexican and American venture.[26]

The increase in vice tourism financed several municipal projects in Mexico, including transportation improvements and public works. These infrastructure projects were especially critical to meet the demand of a population increase that pushed Tijuana from 1,028 residents in 1921 to 8,384 by 1930, and Ciudad Juárez from 10,621 in 1910 to 40,000 in 1930. Private investors established racetracks, liquor distilleries, and breweries to meet the foreign customer demand. In turn municipal governments added new international bridges, improved water and sewage systems, and paved main thoroughfares. The region's infrastructure development halted when Prohibition ended and vice tourism subsided. Mexican border cities struggled with this era's legacy: an enduring bad reputation from a surge in crime as the drug, alcohol, and gambling businesses led to murders, robberies, and frequent gun battles among bootlegging rings. Even now Mexicans continue their struggle to change the border cities' vice-ridden image and to put forward a more realistic portrait of Mexico's national culture.[27]

With the onset of the Great Depression nativism in the United States increased, and the flow of people across the border reversed. As the nation's economy deteriorated, various local and federal agencies began targeting Mexicans for deportation. In December 1930 Secretary of Labor William N. Doak argued for reducing unemployment by deporting foreigners to free up jobs for citizens. In 1931 he ordered agents of the Immigration Bureau (under the Department of Labor) to identify and deport all undocumented immigrants, beginning with striking workers.[28] This was the federal government's first involvement in the mass expulsion of immigrants. Encouraged by the federal government's actions, state and county agencies eager to avoid providing relief aid sought to persuade Mexicans to leave for other regions. In Los Angeles police raided parks to round up unemployed Mexicans, who were jailed and then forced to work on public works projects. Instead of providing wages, officials gave immigrants bus or train tickets to Mexico. Likewise, city and state relief agencies informed Mexicans that their aid would end and also offered tickets.[29]

Harassment and intimidation induced many immigrants to "voluntarily" repatriate, as did increasing job competition. Fearing increasing discrimination against its citizens and wanting to reverse years of labor drain, Mexico's consulates began helping Mexican nationals return home by facilitating paperwork and paying for their passage. Providing additional motivation was the Mexican government's belief that immigrants had acquired valuable skills as machinists, welders, and factory workers, as well as the acquisition of labor discipline that Mexico believed was necessary for its industrialization.[30] From 1929 to 1937 between 350,000 and one million people returned to Mexico through deportation and repatriation; included in this figure were Mexican Americans (mostly American-born children) who accompanied their Mexican-born families.[31] Portraying Mexicans and Mexican Americans as "foreigners"

and "aliens" rendered them vulnerable to expulsion. Scholars continue to disagree on the federal government's role in deportation, and on the number of returnees resulting from "voluntary" repatriations and forced deportations.

The Bracero Program and Undocumented Immigration

After the reverse migration of Mexicans in the 1930s immigration rebounded with the entry of the United States into the Second World War. The war created labor shortages when Americans left civilian jobs to join the military. The shortages hit the agriculture industry severely, as rural workers migrated to cities for better-paying and more stable jobs. Mexican women found employment in the defense industry and various war-related occupations in the West and Midwest.[32] Agriculture expanded rapidly during the 1940s, because the war reduced American farmers' competition from Europe. The American Southwest became critical, surpassing the Midwest as the nation's main agricultural producer. In response the Mexican and American governments established the Bracero Program in 1942.

The bracero guest-worker program facilitated the employment of male Mexican workers throughout the American West. Although both national governments had a responsibility to ensure that employers and workers fulfilled their obligations, contracts were difficult to enforce. Abuse was common, especially in Texas. Between 1942 and 1947 approximately 250,000 braceros worked in the agricultural and railroad industries. The United States and Mexico formalized a new agreement (Public Law 78) to extend the Bracero Program in 1951 (during the Korean War) and continuously renewed it until 1964. Employers argued in favor of the program because they claimed to need temporary workers even in periods without labor shortages. American agribusiness benefited mightily from the guest-worker arrangement because it obtained workers for arduous, low-wage jobs. The Mexican government sought to continue the program because the braceros contributed to its social security system, and their remittances boosted its economy. Under increasing criticism from religious organizations, labor unions, and Mexican American groups, the U.S. government ended the Bracero Program in 1964. Overall the program employed approximately 4.8 million Mexicans in twenty-two years, often with workers who agreed to multiple contracts over the course of several years. Most braceros found employment in border states (three-quarters of the total worked in California and Texas), but some obtained jobs in the Midwest and the Pacific Northwest (see chapter 1).[33]

The Bracero Program's longevity spurred an increase in undocumented immigration. During the program's operation the Border Patrol caught approximately five million people attempting to enter the United States illegally. Many who were not detected found employment as undocumented laborers. Some were former guest workers who had fulfilled their contracts, returned to Mexico, and then entered the United States illegally to work in the same region where they had previously been employed. Using social networks of friends and family that they had established while working as braceros, these undocumented laborers easily found housing and employment opportunities.[34]

Demographic and economic pressures in Mexico fueled the migration north. Although the Mexican economy had expanded in the 1940s and 1950s, its benefits had been distributed unevenly; the wealthy had made considerable gains, but the working poor's wages had not kept pace with inflation. The nation's industrialization had been accompanied by massive population growth, from 16 million in 1934 to 32 million in 1958. The nation's increasingly urban population fed an internal migration attracted to higher wages in its northern states. The northern states' industries had expanded to supply increased wartime demands for exports and to replace the decrease in American imports (which the United States directed to its war effort). Nuevo León's explosive industrial development made Monterrey second in the nation in manufacturing (after Mexico City). The federal government invested heavily in the border states' agricultural infrastructure, converting it into the nation's most technologically advanced and export-oriented region. Nevertheless, the region lacked enough jobs to absorb the population boom. The proximity of the United States and the lure of higher wages proved too tempting for unemployed workers, who often crossed the international boundary illegally.

By hiring undocumented immigrants, some American employers avoided the Bracero Program's stipulations to pay a minimum wage, provide adequate housing, and respect a work contract—stipulations widely flouted but sporadically enforced. The rise in unauthorized entries reflected the Border Patrol's apprehensions, which soared from 182,000 in 1947 to over 850,000 in 1953. The Cold War's xenophobia, coupled with a rise in anti-immigration sentiment, provided the political motivation for a federal crackdown against Mexican migrants called Operation Wetback, a quasi-military campaign begun in the American Southwest in 1954 by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The campaign spread across the nation and led to the capture and deportation of over one million undocumented Mexicans over several months. Latino civil rights groups, some of which had disagreed over immigration, began to unite in their opposition to the deportations. While the INS dragnets punished illegal immigrants, they also split up families, disrupted Mexican-American communities, and increased ethnic tensions.[35]

Beginning in the Second World War, Mexico and the United States invested

heavily in their border states and created a robust regional economy with strong binational integration. Wartime cooperation strengthened their economic integration as the output of Mexico's extractive industries (e.g. copper and lead) was funneled to armament manufacturers in the American Southwest. The rise in mineral exports necessitated improvements in transportation in Mexico's north. The building of new roads and the modernization of railroads created better access between Mexico's interior and American markets. The transportation improvements facilitated overland trade and boosted tourism as the number of Americans crossing surged from 8 million in 1940 to 39 million by 1960. Sales to tourists rose from 15 percent of all Mexican exports of goods and services in 1940 to 27 percent in 1960. The United States rewarded Mexico's wartime cooperation by providing technological innovations and expertise to improve its agricultural industry. Both federal governments supported water projects; by 1960 the amount of irrigated land had more than doubled since the Great Depression. Moreover, bilateral cooperation fueled a surge in trade throughout border cities, from 1 million tons of goods in 1930 to 3.3 million in 1960.[36]

The wartime economic trends accelerated in the following decades to facilitate international trade and more closely tie the Mexican and American economies. In the postwar years the border region's economy shifted from mining and agriculture to manufacturing, technology, and services. The amount of irrigated land continued rising, but so did land consolidation. Agribusiness concerns replaced family farms, and operations grew increasingly mechanized throughout the region. Mexican border states accounted for a larger share of the nation's agriculture, fishery, forestry, and livestock. In the United States 20 percent of all farm products originated in the four border states, with California alone boasting 13 percent of national production. However, fewer border residents worked in the agricultural industry because of technological innovations and the rise of other industries. While the region remained an important source of metals and minerals, the region's economy increasingly depended on manufacturing after 1960.

The expansion of the defense and technology industries in the United States saw a corresponding increase in manufacturing and assembly plants in Mexico. The Mexican government's adoption of the Border Industrialization Program in 1965 helped redirect the economy toward *maquiladoras* (assembly plant operations), which attracted American and Asian corporations. The program permitted companies to import raw materials and components duty-free to use in the manufacture of electronic and textile products that were exported to the United States. The proximity to the U.S. market and the availability of a low-wage workforce (mostly nonunionized) provided additional

motivation. The number of maquiladoras mushroomed after the mid-1970s; 80 percent were situated in the border states, although they expanded into Mexico's interior after 1972. Laborers assembled electronics, clothing, and furniture that accounted for 17 percent of U.S. imports in 1987. By 1996 the number of maquiladoras in Mexican border cities had grown to 2,200, employing some 700,000 workers. Assembly-plant employment (which paid wages 25 percent higher than in other regions of Mexico) fueled migration to the border cities. The maquiladoras employed a majority female workforce, which indirectly contributed to an increase in male emigration as men sought jobs in the United States.[37]

By the late twentieth century a transborder consumer market had developed that pulled Mexicans north for manufactured items and Americans south for entertainment and health services. The northern states' strong demand for American manufactured goods motivated Mexico to attempt to redirect Mexicans' consumer spending from American to Mexican border cities. By permitting Mexican border merchants to import American-made products duty-free, a law in 1971 attempted to promote retail sales and keep consumer spending within Mexico. The program achieved mixed success: Sales of imports increased, but it discouraged the manufacture of similar products in Mexico and ultimately sparked even more demand for American goods. This consumption surged as Mexican assembly-plant workers spent as much as 40 percent of their wages in American border cities. These preferences led to a continuous flow of consumer money from Mexico into the United States for the purchase of appliances, clothing, and groceries. The peso devaluations that began in the mid-1970s accomplished what legislation could not by curbing Mexicans' spending. Retail sales in American border cities fell precipitously after currency devaluations throughout the 1980s. In turn, the dollar's increasing purchasing power encouraged Americans to visit Mexican border cities to obtain medical and dental care. As health costs soared, more Americans crossed the border to obtain medical services and inexpensive pharmaceuticals (often without a prescription). Entertainment and tourism brought additional American dollars into Mexico. In particular, Mexican border nightclubs with lower drinking ages continue to attract American teenagers. A flood of college students during spring break generates seasonal revenues for beach resorts along the Gulf and Pacific coasts. Moreover, the economy of Baja California has received infusions of dollars from occasional American movie productions and from real estate purchases by retirees.[38]

The Twenty-first-Century Border

The growth of the drug trade and the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment during the last two decades of the twentieth century contributed to the increasing militarization of the border. Americans' appetite for illegal drugs fueled the expansion of Latin American trafficking networks and the concentration of Mexican distribution rings. Smuggling drugs across the U.S.-Mexican border delivered approximately $13.8 million in sales per year. This lucrative trade has unleashed a rash of violence among smugglers and government forces, and among competing traffickers, that has left more than eleven thousand dead since 2006. While the U.S. government criticizes Mexico for losing control to drug cartels, the Mexican government has called on the United States to stop the flow of American-sold weapons that feed the violence. The United States has beefed up border security by employing sophisticated surveillance equipment, deploying National Guard units, and constructing new physical barriers. Funding for the Border Patrol increased from $200 million in the 1980s to $1.6 billion in 2006, and the number of agents from 2,500 to over 12,000 during the same period. Mexico has deployed more than 45,000 soldiers to battle the drug cartels throughout the nation, especially to border cities like Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Matamoros, where the soldiers supplant local police. The targeted infusion of officers and surveillance equipment has transformed the U.S.-Mexico border into the world's most militarized boundary between two peaceful nations (see chapter 17).[39]

In the 1990s the Border Patrol launched several operations to add agents near major crossing routes in urban areas. The increased patrols in the San Diego, Nogales, and El Paso areas resulted in the shift of smuggling routes to more remote desert regions and expanded the business for *coyotes* (human smugglers), who facilitated an estimated 90 percent of the one to two million annual unauthorized entries.[40] Along the perilous desert routes undocumented border crossers died as they ran out of food and water, suffered extreme temperatures, or became lost in mountain and desert passageways. Tragedies mounted when smugglers of human traffic crashed overloaded vans while engaging in high-speed attempts to escape Border Patrol pursuits. The number of recorded border-crossing deaths of migrants increased from 241 in 1999 to 472 in 2005, most occurring in the Arizona desert region near Tucson. In response to the border crossers' plight, several humanitarian groups began placing water tanks along migrant routes and deploying patrols that offered food and medical assistance.[41]

The construction of a "border wall" has become one of the most polarizing issues in recent years. In 2006 the U.S. Congress passed the "Secure Fence

Act," authorizing the construction of approximately seven hundred miles of additional sections of a double-layered border wall and the extension of a "virtual fence" of advanced surveillance equipment along other parts of the international boundary. While some residents welcomed the wall, others argued against it, citing the likely decline of tourism, change in daily border life, and affront to binational relations. The planned barrier met with vigorous opposition from local residents and from environmental and immigrant rights advocates. Opponents argued that the border wall would not stop unauthorized entry but merely divert immigrants to the thirteen hundred miles of the boundary that were left unfenced. To hasten construction the Department of Homeland Security obtained over thirty-seven waivers to cultural and environmental protection laws.[42] In Arizona the wall cut across land owned by the Tohono O'odham Nation, which opposed the construction because the barrier would make it more difficult for tribal members to visit relatives and other Tohono O'odham in Mexico. Along the Texas border (which accounts for some 1,254 miles of the 2,000-mile divide), property owners filed lawsuits to prevent the construction of the wall on their property, and local mayors complained about wall levees that would need to be removed during hurricanes. Bending to public pressure, the government accommodated some requests, such as the one from the University of Texas, Brownsville, which successfully argued against construction of the fence across its campus. Nevertheless, the wall's construction resulted in floods in southern Arizona, the destruction of sixty-nine graves of the Tohono O'odham, and the severing of wildlife corridors that threaten to decrease the number of pronghorn antelopes, ocelots, jaguars, and other endangered species.[43]

The U.S.-Mexico border continues to pose challenges for both nations. The significance of the border is apparent in its attention from the press, politicians, and the public. For many immigrants it has replaced Ellis Island as the unofficial port of entry. These new arrivals have contributed to reinforcing cultural traditions in Mexican-American communities and expanding them to regions without a previously significant Latino population. Mexican music, food, and traditions have spread beyond the Southwest borderlands to unlikely outposts in Alaska and Iowa.[44] Since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the United States has remained Mexico's first trading partner and its most significant foreign cultural influence (to the consternation of some Mexicans). Both governments have exerted more control over their shared boundary, but residents have also persisted in undermining restrictions. The United States continues to pressure the Mexican government to control its northern border if it wishes to obtain future American government aid and assistance. The fortified "border wall" seems like a relic

of bygone eras, when nondemocratic regimes attempted to keep people from crossing international boundaries. Yet it has not stopped drug smugglers and undocumented immigrants, who have dug tunnels and used ramps to bypass the structure, or taken to transporting contraband by air and sea.[45] The border wall has succeeded in poisoning binational relations and confirming to borderland residents that distant central governments continue to misunderstand the region's needs. Fewer immigrants are making the journey north because of the declining American economy, but the increased security has also kept undocumented workers in the United States longer as circular migration becomes more difficult.[46] As in the nineteenth century, the U.S. demand for contraband goods and inexpensive labor persists. Moreover, American politicians and a segment of the public remain wary of immigrants who might become permanent U.S. residents and eventually press for full citizenship rights.

Notes

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