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**STATE AND EMIGRATION:  
A CENTURY OF EMIGRATION POLICY IN MEXICO**

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**Center for Comparative Immigration Studies**  
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**STATE AND EMIGRATION:  
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**Inside the Sending State:  
The Politics of Mexican Emigration Control**

**ABSTRACT**

The social science of international migration has generally ignored labor emigration control policies. In the critical case of Mexico, however, the central government consistently tried to control the volume, duration, skills, and geographic origin of emigrants from 1900 to the early 1970s. A neopluralist approach to policy development and implementation shows that the failure of emigration control and the current abandonment of serious emigration restrictions are explained by a combination of external constraints, imposed by a highly asymmetrical interdependence with the United States, and internal constraints, imposed by actors within the balkanized Mexican state who recurrently undermined federal emigration policy through contradictory local practices.

## **Inside the Sending State: The Politics of Mexican Emigration Control**

If 'the state' was once left out of the social science of international migration, recent analyses partially have brought it in. Scholars increasingly attend to the role of *receiving* country governments in shaping migration flows (Dowty, 1987; Calavita, 1992; K. Fitzgerald, 1996; Zolberg, 1999; Massey et al., 1998; Meyers, 2000; Cornelius et al., 2004). The transnationalism literature has opened a window into the study of *sending* country governments by examining policies toward *citizens already abroad* (Itzigsohn, 2000; Morawska, 2001; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller, 2003; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003; Smith, 2003a, 2003b; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003); and the role of sending states has been studied in the contexts of *highly-skilled* (Iredale, 2000; Lowell and Findlay, 2001; McDonald and Crush, 2002) and *refugee* emigration (Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo, 1989). Yet little sociological attention has been paid to sending countries' broader stances towards *labor* emigration (Schmitter Heisler, 1985; Green and Weil, forthcoming). The widespread use of coercion to restrict emigration has ended in what Zolberg (forthcoming) calls the 'Exit Revolution', but the percentage of countries with diverse policies aimed at lowering emigration still rose from 13 percent in 1976 to 24 percent in 2003 (United Nations, 2003:47). In short, processes of emigration control, in both formal policy and implementation, continue to be overlooked despite their prevalence and pleas for their theoretical inclusion (Massey et al., 1998; Hollifield, 2000).

This paper addresses that deficit by examining emigration politics in Mexico, a critical case given that Mexico-U.S. migration is "the largest sustained flow of migrant workers in the contemporary world" (Massey et al., 1998:73). I argue that the Mexican federal government's efforts to control the volume, duration, skills, and geographic origin of emigrants have been constrained from without and within. From without, powerful actors in the U.S. government recurrently permitted or even stimulated illegal migration and thus undermined Mexican emigration policy, albeit with moments of policy convergence. From within, municipal governments defied restrictive federal policy by using emigration as an escape valve to alleviate local political and economic crises. Bureaucratic balkanization, the unintended consequences of various state-building processes, and the systemic corruption of officials and their migrant clients further blocked the implementation of federal policies. Conflicts within the state have not been about whether there should be any emigration at all, but rather, what kinds of people should be allowed to leave under what conditions, and how to control internal and international labor markets concurrently. A historical 'ethnography of the state' explains the failure of Mexican emigration control and suggests a neopluralist perspective to elucidate the politics of international migration in other local, national, and international contexts.

### **STATE EMIGRATION CONTROL**

Like the politics of immigration analyzed by Calavita (1992), I argue that the politics of emigration are best understood by a neopluralist approach disaggregating 'the state' into a multi-level organization of distinct component units in which state incumbents and other political actors compete for their interests. A neopluralist perspective differs from a classical pluralist perspective in that it highlights the unequal power relations between different interest groups that are often based on class inequalities, the *sui generis* interests of state incumbents, and the extension of this perspective to include states that are less than fully democratic (see Mann 1993). Even in Mexico's corporatist system prior to 2000, where the government

institutionalized deep vertical linkages to different economic sectors under a single party umbrella, multiple actors and groups within and without the state negotiated policy outcomes (Hazán, 2001). Government policies in Mexico have influenced migration patterns, but these effects were not so much caused directly by federal emigration policies as they were by local policies and the unintended consequences of Mexican state-building in areas like asserting control over the Catholic Church, economic development, and agrarian reform.

The understanding of the state in this paper departs from the realist perspective on international migration that implicitly regards the state as a unitary actor that pursues its “national interests” in competition with other states. The realist perspective hides the state-society connection in a black box (Mann 1993). For example, Schmitter Heisler (1985) argued that sending states encourage long-term but temporary emigration. Emigrants who stay abroad for long periods are more likely to achieve the economic success needed to send more remittances, though at the risk of decreasing remittances as they settle. When emigrants eventually return, the sending country retains the human capital that it invested in them by paying for their education before they left. The problem with such realist accounts of states rationally pursuing their national interests is that they elide the domestic, multi-level struggles over what those interests are, not only in the economic sense, but also in the realm of political and ideological interests (Keohane and Nye, 1987). Defining an interest is itself an ongoing domestic political struggle.

If there is an argument for a realist approach, it is that international migration policy is the competence of central governments whose policies are oriented towards other central governments in the world system of states. Sending country policies are constrained by the sending state’s embeddedness in what are frequently relationships of ‘asymmetric interdependence’ with more powerful receiving countries (Keohane and Nye, 1987; Aleinikoff, 2002). In practice, however, the different parts of ‘the state’ do not so neatly coordinate functions and apportion their competences as theorists of the state claim (see Tilly, 1975:70; Poggi, 1990). The monopolization of international migration policy as a competence of the central government is a secular trend across a wide range of countries, but it is a historical accomplishment that cannot be assumed in light of intra-state efforts to undermine official policy. It is not only that international migration policies are outcomes of two-level games in which both state and civil society actors have inputs on the development of a government policy – the position of the ‘general equilibrium’ perspective in international relations (see Putnam, 1988). There may also be multiple and even contradictory policy outcomes within each state. Local political actors had considerable autonomy from central state agencies in regulating emigration in much of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe (Cinel, 1991; Torpey, 2000). Studies of contemporary, provincial-level policies towards emigrants abroad have shown that subnational policies are not simply the relics of early state formation (D. Fitzgerald, 2000; Goldring, 2002; Smith, 2003a, 2003b; Moctezuma Langoria, 2003). Local emigration policies are the counterpart to increasingly important local immigration policies (Bauböck, 2003). Ignoring the local and assuming that the nation-state is the *natural* unit of analysis simply reveals the unconsciously nationalist biases of the social sciences (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003).

While the academic tendency to ignore emigration policies implies that they either don’t exist or don’t matter, all major European states had significant emigration controls at some point. The main purpose of the Iron Curtain was to keep citizens *in* rather than to keep foreigners out. States can execute those who attempt to leave, force emigrants to pay stiff exit fees, refuse to issue passports, prevent departure with personal property, and strip emigrants of their nationality

(Cannistraro and Rosoli, 1979; Dowty, 1987; Weiner, 1992; Patton, 1995; Zolberg, 1999; International Organization for Migration, 2003; Green and Weil, forthcoming). Discursive techniques are also available, like publicly deriding emigrants as traitors to the motherland (Colomer, 2000; Gold, 2002). Local governments have multiple pressure points where they could limit the transmission of vital records, assistance with lost or stolen remittances, and other bureaucratic transactions with emigrants. In short, governments have a potentially large and effective tool kit to make emigration an unpleasant experience, especially as many emigrants leave home with at least the illusion of returning.

Most Western European states stopped trying to restrict emigration in the nineteenth century because of a shift from a mercantilist policy of hoarding population to *laissez-faire* capitalism allowing workers greater freedom of movement to sell their labor, and the related ascendancy of a right to exit in liberal political philosophy (Zolberg, forthcoming). Yet Mexico effectively stopped trying to control emigration during the early 1970s when an import-substituting industrialization model of national economic self-sufficiency continued to reign (Aguilar Camín and Meyer, 1993). A shift in economic policies cannot explain that shift in emigration policy, because the transition to a neoliberal, export-oriented economy in the 1980s *followed* the *laissez faire* emigration policy of the 1970s. Likewise, an ascendant liberal political ideology does not explain the shift towards *laissez faire* emigration policies in the 1970s, because the formal Mexican liberalism proclaiming a right to exit dates back to the 1857 and 1917 Constitutions. Formal liberalism coexisted with authoritarian regimes that subjected the right to exit to significant qualifications and situational interpretations.

In the long view, there is no linear trend in Mexican emigration policy. I will argue that the shifts in federal policy over the last century are explained by stages of state-building and historical conjuncture. Specific areas of state-building, like developmental policies leading to rapid population growth and weak supports for small-scale agriculture, stimulated expansive emigration policies. State attempts to control labor markets by exporting only surplus labor in the capitalist sector of specific agricultural regions created expansive, but narrowly targeted, emigration programs. On the other hand, state-led nationalism directed against the United States was a force for restricting emigration. The waning of that form of nationalism has facilitated policies of ignoring and then encouraging emigration. Historical conjunctures like the U.S. Great Depression and World War II had contradictory effects on the level of emigration control, with the former encouraging restriction and repatriation and the latter mass, temporary exit.

The Mexican case suggests two main factors limit the ability of central governments to enforce their emigration preferences. First, bureaucratic balkanization at different levels of government limits state capacity to put formal rules into practice. The ideal-typical Weberian bureaucratic state of corporate cohesion and clear channels of authority is far removed from the empirical experiences of many countries in the developing world like Mexico (Rueschemeyer and Evans, 1985; Knight, 2001). Second, sending states tend to be in dependent relationships to destination states, or in the case of a semi-peripheral country like Mexico that is relatively large and prosperous, in a relationship of “asymmetric interdependency” in which Mexico is by far the weaker partner (Petras, 1981). A weak international position circumscribes the policy options of sending states.

## METHODS

This study is based on a review of all Mexican migration laws from 1909 to 1996 and archival and interview research conducted between June 2002 and September 2004 in the Mexican state

of Jalisco, which has consistently been among the top three states of origin of Mexican migrants (Durand, Massey, and Zenteno, 2001). I conducted research in the Jalisco state government archives to see the interactions between federal, Jalisco, and municipal migration policies and in the municipal archives of Arandas, Jalisco, to see how policies were enacted and even created on the local level. Twenty-five politicians and government officials in Guadalajara and the *municipio* (county) of Arandas, as well as a chain referral sample of a dozen former Braceros, were interviewed. I selected Arandas to provide the historical depth of a ‘revisit’ (Burawoy, 2003) of economist Paul Taylor’s classic 1933 study. The extent to which experiences in Arandas were representative of Mexico more generally (see Durand and Massey, 1992:4) is assessed by drawing on records of published federal and state policies and contemporary accounts from other parts of Mexico. Although the study does not provide intensive evidence of other localities in Mexico to which Arandas can be compared systematically, the advantage of examining one locality so closely is an understanding of practices on the ground that cannot be assumed from formal policy statements at the federal level.

#### ‘BLEEDING MEXICO WHITE,’ 1900-1925

From the beginning of Mexican migration to the United States, the Mexican federal government raised concerns about the effects of emigration. Controlling population movement was part of the central government’s increasing ‘embrace’ of the population in peripheral areas of the country with weak infrastructural links to Mexico City. Identifying citizens through censuses and civil registries and keeping track of them as they move is a necessary precursor to policing, taxing, conscripting, and regulating labor markets. Citizens outside of the country largely escape the state’s ability to extract their resources or discipline them for criminal infractions (Torpey 2000). These material faces of state-building were complemented by an ideological face of state-led nationalism. The Mexico City government sought to legitimate the central state’s growing control over peripheral regions and unify an ethnically stratified population around the common foreign menace of the United States (Cardoso, 1980; Knight, 2001). Emigration was threatening to the nationalist project because it symbolized to both foreign and domestic audiences Mexico’s weakness vis-à-vis its neighbor. Mass emigration underscored the negative push factors in Mexico and positive pull factors in the United States.

In 1904, Mexican federal and state authorities ordered municipal governments to stop issuing travel documents used by U.S.-bound workers. The Secretariat of the Interior claimed that the certificates fomented emigration and actually made it harder for bearers to enter the United States legally because they were so obviously looking for work in contravention of U.S. law. In fact, although U.S. law banned the entry of workers already holding contracts, labor migration itself was legal and practically unregulated on the U.S.-Mexican border, suggesting that the Secretariat was deliberately spreading misinformation as part of its goal of discouraging emigration. The Secretariat further argued that many of the migrants were “people from the low class.” Encouraging them to emigrate by expediting travel documents would “make the condition of our needy compatriots [in the United States] more precarious, with the danger that the most severe and unfavorable comments about the economic and political situation of Mexico will continue to be made.”<sup>1</sup> The humiliations of emigrants in the United States were interpreted not only as the humiliations of individuals, but also of the Mexican nation and state. In addition, federal and local authorities feared that masses of unemployed migrants waiting to cross the border “could eventually turn dangerous” and that emigration was creating labor shortages in the states of Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato. In repeated orders to municipal and state



governments, the Secretariat of the Interior attempted to avoid these problems by initiating emigration control a thousand kilometers from the border.<sup>2</sup>

The question of *how* to stop emigration was another matter. The Secretariat of the Interior noted in 1910 that propaganda by governors and municipal officials to dissuade the departure of mostly illiterate migrants was of “very scarce result.” Source state governors repeatedly asked the Secretariat to restrict or prohibit emigration, but federal officials usually argued that constitutionally, they could dissuade but not prevent exit.<sup>3</sup> The constitution leaves room for situational interpretations, however. Article 11 of the 1857 Constitution in effect until 1917 established freedom of exit and travel within the country subject to administrative restrictions in criminal and civil matters.<sup>4</sup> Exit in the 1917 Constitution was restricted further by reference to a separate body of migration law and Article 123, specifying that municipal authorities must ensure that workers emigrating abroad have signed contracts detailing wages, hours, and repatriation costs borne by the employer.<sup>5</sup>

[FIGURE ONE ABOUT HERE]

The 1910-1920 revolution sent hundreds of thousands fleeing north (see Figure 1)<sup>6</sup> and revealed the intra-state contradictions of Mexican emigration policy. The United States allowed entry to 70,000 contracted workers from 1917 to 1921 as a unilateral wartime emergency measure. In violation of Mexican law, the contracts were not visaed by U.S. consuls. Confusion reigned about whether the Secretariat of the Interior, Foreign Relations, or Commerce and Work was responsible for enforcing the labor contracts and preventing abuses by U.S. employers. Yet the Mexican federal government did not try to block the exit of contracted workers, largely because the presidency and Secretariat of Foreign Relations (SRE) did not want to antagonize the United States during a moment of extreme Mexican vulnerability. At the same time, the government of President Carranza was concerned about the conscription of Mexican nationals by the U.S. military during World War I and accelerated an emigration dissuasion campaign in 1918 to convince potential migrants that strong measures were being taken to prevent the exit of uncontracted workers. In practice, this was the bluff of a weak government without a coherent policy. The Federal Department of Railroads, complying with a directive from the Department of Work to subsidize passage for unemployed workers traveling within the country to find jobs, brought hundreds of unemployed workers to the northern border, many of whom then crossed into the United States without contracts in violation of the Secretariat of the Interior’s policy (Alanís Enciso, 1999; Aguila, 2000).

On the subnational side, the governments of sparsely populated northern states like Sonora and Chihuahua prohibited the exit of scarce workers by instructing the migration offices in Ciudad Juárez and Nogales to deny workers exit permits and to prevent the operation of *enganchadores* (labor recruiters from U.S. companies). In 1918, Tamaulipas raised its international bridge fees to discourage emigration, which was pulling away labor from its industries. The following year, the government of Jalisco restricted the issuance of passports to appease local industrialists and farmers complaining of worker shortages and asked municipal presidents to select poor emigrants most in need of Jalisco state aid to finance their return from the United States, a service provided to 1178 Jaliscienses.<sup>7</sup> Given that Jalisco was heavily populated, the putative fear of labor shortages there was more about being forced to pay higher wages to attract laborers, rather than the absolute shortages that sometimes occurred in northern states (Corwin, 1978; Alanís Enciso, 1999; Aguila, 2000). While John Martinez (1972:48)

claimed that during this period, “The fact is that Mexico did not really desire to stop the emigration,” the neopluralist perspective adopted here shows that to consider “Mexico” as a unitary actor is mere reification and confuses government interests with the capacity to enforce formal policy.

Following the end of World War I, the Carranza government feared the prospect of massive deportations of Mexican workers no longer needed by the United States. Carranza selectively financed repatriations as a preemptive measure to avoid national humiliation, underlining the way that U.S. policy could shape Mexican policy even before the U.S. government acted. Mexico City sponsored fifty thousand repatriations at a cost of \$1 million during the 1921-1922 U.S. depression (Reisler, 1976; Alanís Enciso 1999). Such expenses prompted the federal government to suspend its program in 1923 and once again rely on periodic public warnings and a 1925 ban on selling railway tickets in the interior to laborers heading to the United States.<sup>8</sup>

A 1926 migration law gave authority to the Secretariat of the Interior to prevent workers from leaving Mexico without contracts approved by the municipal president in the place of origin. To enforce this law and fine violators, emigration control officers were deployed along the border, in trains, and in major cities of the interior (Landa y Piña, 1930). The 1917 Mexican prohibition of *leaving without* a contract, combined with the 1885-1952 U.S. prohibition on *entering with* a contract, meant that Mexican labor migration to the United States was illegal according to the laws of at least one of the countries. While the United States made exceptions for Mexicans to the ban on contracted workers during the ‘wartime emergencies’ of 1917-1921 and beginning in the 1942 Bracero program (Reisler, 1976), from 1921 to 1942, U.S. policy meant Mexico could not enforce its own contract laws aimed at protecting emigrants.

Prominent officials considered the failure to stop emigration a disaster. In a series of Mexico City newspaper articles, consular functionary Enrique Santibáñez (1991 [1930]:86) called the presence of almost half a million native Mexicans in the United States “a veritable hemorrhage suffered by the country.” A study published by the Secretariat of the Interior claimed emigration was “bleeding Mexico white” (Fabila, 1991 [1932]:50). Discourses about the bleeding of Mexico to gringo advantage reflect a period of intensive state-led nationalizing.<sup>9</sup> The national political class widely agreed that emigration should be dissuaded (Durand, 1991).

#### THE CRISTERO RUPTURE, 1926-1929

Civil war opened a major cleavage between federal emigration policy and actual practices of local governments. The central state’s effort to weaken the Catholic Church as an institutional competitor and impose the direct rule of Mexico City over peripheral areas resulted in civil war with Catholic ‘cristero’ rebels between 1926 and 1929. A less intense, second war sputtered through the mid-1930s. The sustained war was waged primarily in the central-western states of Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, and Zacatecas - states which already contributed 60 percent of Mexican emigrants to the United States (Gamio, 1930; Meyer, 1976). Despite federal efforts to restrict emigration, from the perspective of local government in war-torn areas, encouraging emigration was an escape valve of unquestioned utility. The experience of Arandas in the Los Altos de Jalisco region illustrates the contradictions of emigration control practices among different levels and agencies of government.

At three different periods during the war, the federal army throughout Los Altos forcibly concentrated peasants into towns to monitor the population and deny refuge to rebels. Local governments with limited resources were forced to deal with the influx of impoverished peasants

(Meyer, 1976). Motivated to “avoid violence due to the scarcity of food,” the municipal president of Arandas formed an aid committee comprised of local elites that donated food to the concentrated peasants.<sup>10</sup> The easiest way to ameliorate the crisis was simply to encourage people to leave. Several thousand Arandenses joined an estimated 200,000 internal migrants and nearly 340,000 U.S.-bound emigrants on the move between 1926 and 1931 (Taylor, 1933; Krauze, 1998; González Navarro, 1994). During the 1920s and early 1930s, the municipal government of Arandas issued hundreds of *salvoconductos* (safe conduct passes allowing the bearer to pass government checkpoints) for men, and less frequently, their families, seeking work in the United States or other parts of Mexico.<sup>11</sup> Although local governments effectively controlled the issuance of documents that were used for both domestic and international travel,<sup>12</sup> the federal government had long complained about this practice, noting that according to federal law, only migration inspectors, municipal presidents in border towns, and governors in the interior had the authority to issue passports for travel to the United States.<sup>13</sup> The 1926 migration law created a new passport regime controlled by the SRE abroad and by the Secretariat of the Interior within Mexico. In practice, municipal governments continued to issue their own documents for travel to northern border states, thus resisting federal attempts to control international migration by preventing U.S.-bound emigrants from ever leaving their source communities in the Mexican heartland.

Within ‘the state,’ there were plural interests in different ministries and levels of government. On the one hand, the government of Arandas sought to expel population. This required the cooperation of the federal army, which had imposed martial law and checked safe conduct passes on the roads. The army offered leading *cristeros* amnesty and a safe conduct pass to the United States if they surrendered. Some *cristeros* accepted those terms and joined the church hierarchy and parish priests in U.S. exile (Taylor, 1933; González Navarro, 2001). On the other hand, the Secretariat of the Interior continued its propaganda campaign against emigration and *enganchadores* (Cardoso, 1980). The agencies of the federal government focused on crushing the *cristeros* and imposing central control over the region thus indirectly undermined the Secretariat of the Interior’s emigration strategy. In war-torn areas, local governments, economic elites, and the army eagerly opened the economic and political escape valve at a critical moment when emigration soared to relative levels not seen again until the 1980s (see Figure 1). In an attempt to provide better cooperation between federal agencies, the 1930 Law of Migration established an Advisory Council of Migration led by the chief of the Secretariat of the Interior’s Department of Migration and including representatives from seven other federal secretariats (Secretaría de Gobernación 1996).

A second *Cristero* War in the mid-1930s pitted Catholic rebels against federal projects of agrarian reform and monopolizing education (Meyer, 1976). As during the first *Cristero* war, municipal presidents ignored repeated federal instructions to “make intense propaganda” to dissuade emigration.<sup>14</sup> In practice, local authorities provided hundreds of travel documents for emigrants.<sup>15</sup> The Arandas oligarchy representing ranching and commercial interests actively encouraged emigration as an escape valve to prevent a concentration of landless laborers who might turn agrarianist (Taylor, 1933). First, elites wrote letters of recommendation for workers seeking travel documents from the municipal president. Acquiring an international passport required the signature of “three persons of recognized honorability” in the applicant’s place of residence. Given low literacy rates, the requirement effectively meant a recommendation of at least three elites.<sup>16</sup> Second, elites provided loans to finance emigrants’ journey north even if it offended their ideological sensibilities that emigrants were potential traitors.<sup>17</sup>

As during the first Cristero War, policies in other spheres undermined the official emigration strategy, which was a lower priority for the federal government as a whole. Agrarian reform was intended to reduce the pressures on peasants to emigrate, yet where the policy was enacted, it often prompted peasants to migrate to raise the capital they now needed to work their land (Durand and Massey, 1992; Aguila, 2000). In Arandas, simply the threat of federal land reform that never happened on a significant scale in the region prompted the oligarchy controlling the Arandas government and economy to undermine official emigration policies by encouraging the exit of potential agraristas (Taylor, 1933; Martínez Saldaña and Gándara Mendoza, 1976). Regional strongmen known as *caciques* controlled large swaths of rural Mexico during this period. As is often the case at the local level, state autonomy from economic elites was especially limited (Knight, 2001). The *lack* of local government's autonomy from economic elites created *increased* local government autonomy from the federal government. This mechanism diminished the capacity of the federal government to implement emigration policy.

#### MASS REPATRIATION, 1930-1941

As it was being undermined from within, Mexican emigration policy was hit by an avalanche from without. Encouraging repatriation had been federal policy since the Porfirian era (1877-1911),<sup>18</sup> but the state's ability to control the flow of repatriates and design effective reintegration programs was sharply limited by Mexico's asymmetric interdependence with the United States. With the onset of the Great Depression, U.S. officials at all levels of government began using multiple forms of suasion and even deportation to repatriate an estimated 400,000 Mexicans. Trying to make the best of a difficult situation by framing repatriation as the calling home of the nation's sons by a state dedicated to protecting all of its workers (Alanís Enciso, 2003), the Mexican government cooperated with U.S. authorities and paid for thousands of repatriates' transportation home from the border.<sup>19</sup> Government officials and academics (who were often one and the same) like Manuel Gamio (1930) had long dreamed that repatriates would be engines of economic, cultural, and political modernization based on their exposure to the more 'advanced' society of the United States. Yet an influx of 400,000 repatriates threatened greater social and political unrest than smaller, earlier repatriations.<sup>20</sup> The quasi-governmental National Repatriation Committee in 1932 appealed to municipal presidents for donations for returning peasants to avoid "the danger of seeing our cities filled with ever greater groups of people without work." By contributing to projects placing repatriates in rural areas, local authorities could "address the "problem of [job] displacement that is beginning to develop" and "stave off this evil before it assumes the character of social disorder."<sup>21</sup> The key to resolving this problem, in the government's view, was the *distribution* of labor across Mexico's territory. The government initiated agricultural colonies with modern farming methods, mostly in sparsely populated northern states.

To the government's disappointment, most repatriates returned to their heavily populated states of origin in the Central-West, where they did little to transform local agriculture. The government rarely backed repatriate agricultural colonies with sufficient planning or resources (González Navarro, 1994). Moreover, Mexican capacity to respond to repatriations in the 1930s was severely limited by push factors in the United States that were out of Mexican control. If the Mexican government had not adequately integrated smaller streams of early repatriates, it could hardly do better when faced with 400,000 returnees in a single decade.

## THE BRACERO (DIS)AGREEMENTS, 1942-1964

Mexican federal policy shifted dramatically in 1942 to encourage massive temporary labor migration. As late as 1941, the Secretariat of the Interior warned municipal presidents that workers who attempted to enter the United States “would only swell the ranks of the prison populations already serving sentences for violating migration laws.”<sup>22</sup> The policy changed within a matter of months in 1942 when the U.S. and Mexican governments negotiated a series of agreements that ended in 1964, providing for 4.6 million *bracero* contracts for temporary agricultural work in the United States. There were a further 5 million apprehensions of illegal immigrants by U.S. authorities during the same period (García y Griego, 1983; Durand and Massey, 1992). The proximate cause for the shift in Mexican policy was a sudden increase in the symmetry of its interdependence with the United States, brought on by the historical conjuncture of a wartime alliance with the Allied powers and increased U.S. demand for agricultural workers. These circumstances allowed the Mexican government to negotiate a favorable bilateral agreement that in theory would exchange a pool of unemployed laborers for a source of remittances and modernizing influences (García y Griego, 1983; Cohen, 2001). From a long-term perspective, the shift towards promoting mass, temporary emigration was caused by the unintended consequences of consolidated state-building. First, nationalist arguments against emigration as a betrayal of the fatherland in its moment of crisis lost much of their resonance as the economy grew, politics stabilized, and the threat of armed U.S. intervention faded (see Morales, 1989; Knight, 2001). Second, an increase in life expectancy prompted by the state’s creation of a system of clinics and hospitals and infrastructural improvement of sewers, potable water, and trash collection began to create pockets of excess population (Knight, 2002; Bean and Stevens, 2003).

Long-standing disagreements between Washington and Mexico City over government supervision of contracts, wages, and working conditions erupted in October 1948. Mexican officials pressured the U.S. government to make concessions by refusing to allow workers to cross into the United States. Under pressure from employers, U.S. immigration officials opened the border at El Paso, allowing an estimated 4000 illegal entrants across in three days. Mexico responded by abrogating the agreement, which was not renegotiated until August 1949 (R. Craig, 1971; Cohen, 2001). Similarly, when the U.S. government adopted a policy of unilateral contracts in January 1954, the governor of Jalisco warned municipal presidents that “federal forces will exercise strict vigilance to prevent [emigrants from leaving], and those involved will suffer countless penalties.”<sup>23</sup> Mexican troops clashed with thousands of rioting workers attempting to cross the border illegally. Successful crossers were welcomed by American immigration officials and shipped to the fields (R. Craig, 1971; Cohen 2001).

By turning a blind eye when convenient, American immigration *practice*, which often directly contradicted American *law* (Calavita, 1992), once again undercut Mexico City’s stance on emigration. Mexico City attempted to restrict illegal migration while important elements of the U.S. government encouraged it. Through the mid-1950s, a similar cycle in which the Mexican government promoted *bracero* emigration and then suddenly tried to stop *all* emigration continued with the vicissitudes of the guest worker negotiations. Unfortunately for Mexico, the United States had the option of replacing Mexicans with workers from other areas like the Caribbean, whereas Mexican labor emigration was exclusively dependent on the United States (R. Craig, 1971). Given the asymmetries in their relationship and a proven inability to stop emigrants from leaving, the Mexican government had few means of forcing U.S. concessions.

### *SELECTING BRACEROS*

Establishing the types of workers eligible to participate in the bracero program was negotiated within the Mexican government and the corporatist pillars of labor unions and peasant unions. Mexican federal and state authorities argued that excessive emigration, particularly when aspirants abandoned existing jobs, was detrimental to the economy of major sending states. The labor sector of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party opposed the Bracero program because of fears that the stock of industrial workers from which it derived its strength would decline. Industrialists and large farmers complained of worker shortages, and leaders of the *ejido* agricultural sector based on a corporatist land tenure arrangement feared that the emigration of *ejido* members would sap productivity (Lázaro Salinas, 1955; R. Craig, 1971; de la Garza and Szekely, 1997). Economic interests did little to oppose the program *actively*, however, most likely because significant shortages were localized (Hancock, 1959).

The Inter-Governmental Commission on Emigrant Worker Affairs ordered municipal presidents to prepare registries of applicants. Only unemployed men 20-40 years old who were physically fit for agricultural labor were eligible. *Ejido* members, peasants actively involved in the current agricultural cycle, public employees, employees of private companies, skilled workers,<sup>24</sup> and those who had not completed their military service were ineligible.<sup>25</sup> According to formal rules in effect for most of the program, the first stage of selecting braceros was a municipal lottery. Winners then traveled to contracting centers in selected cities. Jalisco authorities in 1952 specified that the municipal lottery was only necessary if there were more eligible aspirants than the municipal quota.<sup>26</sup> That year Arandas officials reported the lottery was unnecessary because exactly 100 aspirants had presented themselves for the 100 slots available!<sup>27</sup>

In the three main traditional sending states of Michoacán, Jalisco, and Guanajuato, there were generally 20 aspirants per contract awarded (González Navarro, 1994). In practice, bribery was the modal form of obtaining a bracero contract (Moore, 1961; R. Craig, 1971; Arias, 1992). *None* of the 12 former braceros interviewed in Arandas in 2003 were selected through the formal municipal lottery system. “Only a few got lucky [in the lottery], and a lot of us wanted to go,” explained a 72-year-old Bracero who had five contracts from 1956-1962. He obtained his contracts by giving “a little gift” to friends in the Secretariat of the Interior in Mexico City. On at least one of their trips, nine of the twelve had paid a domestic *coyote* between 200-400 pesos to enroll them with corrupt government officials in Mexico City or at the contracting centers in northern cities like Monterrey and Empalme (author interviews, 2003). Participating in the formal program involved corruption as well. A 65-year-old bracero contracted in 1958 and 1959 said that obtaining a letter of good conduct from one’s municipal president, a necessary requirement at the regional contracting centers, was difficult for someone living in the countryside.

Well, there were little problems, because sometimes [municipal officials] didn’t know you. But working through friends, through someone you knew in the municipal president’s office, they gave you a letter. Because sometimes [the officials] didn’t want to give you a letter just because you went and asked for one. It was more like, “You’re my friend and you help me, so here’s a little donation.”

Aspirants saw little reason to wait for the next lottery when bribery might be necessary in any case and the services of coyotes, the same term used for their international smuggling counterparts, were available. An 81-year-old who had nine contracts from 1954-1964 said he

never bothered with the lottery because there was no guarantee of being selected. “I heard so-and-so was signing people up, so I contacted him... With a coyote we didn’t lose time,” he said. Throughout Mexico, bribery to get on the rolls was so common that a 1957 report estimated it was a \$7.2 million business (R. Craig, 1971:134; Lázaro Salinas, 1955). Most restrictions on eligibility were meaningless in practice (Moore, 1961; Espinosa, 1998; author interviews, 2003). Even the official rolls of hundreds of Arandenses applying to become braceros listed carpenters, blacksmiths, bakers, shoemakers, barbers, and other skilled workers who were formally ineligible regardless of their employment status.<sup>28</sup> When asked about the requirements for bracero aspirants, a former municipal president during the 1950s said, “We didn’t ask them anything... They asked to be put on the list, and we put them on. There was no investigation of whether they were eligible or not.” A commissar of the only ejido in the municipio of Arandas estimated that the majority of ejidatarios were braceros during the period (author interview, 2003). According to early federal estimates, 20 percent of braceros had land despite the prohibition on their exit (Secretaría del Trabajo, 1946).

The federal government announced periodic campaigns against corruption and passed a 1950 law providing for prison terms and fines for coyotes and enganchadores (Moore, 1961; González Navarro, 1994). On the orders of the Secretariat of the Interior, municipal officials or designated leaders accompanied contingents of braceros selected in the municipal lottery to the contracting centers to ensure that only legitimate braceros were contracted.<sup>29</sup> While efforts to squelch informal practices failed overall, the federal and state governments appeared to have made a significant effort to crack down on corruption if only to better control the distribution of workers *within* Mexico. As I discuss in the following section, even though Mexico as a whole had surplus labor that could be exported to the United States, government at all levels restricted or facilitated the movement of Braceros in the Central-West source regions and northern states in accordance with the availability and price of labor in local Mexican markets.

### *DOMESTIC BRACEROS*

Domestic migration policy had long adopted many of the methods of international emigration policy, including campaigns of labor recruitment, emigration dissuasion, and repatriation. For example, in the 1920s the federal Department of Labor paid for hundreds of surplus domestic migrants seeking work around Tampico, Veracruz, to return to their hometowns. Municipal presidents on the opposite coast were ordered to “use all the means at your disposal to deter the emigration of workers to the port.”<sup>30</sup> The Department of Labor created a more formal program in 1935 to match workers with jobs municipio by municipio.<sup>31</sup>

The corporatist state made an even greater attempt to control labor during the Bracero program. Domestic and international emigration of ejido members was similarly restricted.<sup>32</sup> The governors of Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán banned the contracting of braceros between 1943 and 1944.<sup>33</sup> The governor of Jalisco praised the campaign to prevent “the immoderate flow of Jalisciense braceros, with the purpose of protecting the productive activities of the State, as it has become increasingly noticeable that in agricultural work, in skilled work, and in the factories, there is a growing scarcity of human resources that would guarantee the filling of local demand.”<sup>34</sup> Municipal officials in the state of México and state officials in Coahuila and Baja California adopted similar policies, citing 1930s laws giving the government authority to restrict emigration when there was a shortage of workers. Governments also regulated labor they needed for their own projects. The state of Oaxaca demanded a 100-peso fee from braceros to release them from their *faena* obligations to perform community work like building roads and public

buildings (González Navarro, 1994). In Janos, Chihuahua, local authorities refused to apply for a bracero quota despite bitter local protests because they needed workers for infrastructure projects (Hancock, 1959).

Allocation of bracero quotas was organized by the Bureau of Migratory Farm Labor Affairs, which assigned quotas to the governors of selected states, who then apportioned the quota among municipios (R. Craig, 1971). In principle, bracero quotas were allotted to municipios based on their unemployment rates.<sup>35</sup> In practice, the percentage of the state's quota given to a municipio tended to remain stable once established (Hancock, 1959), unless congressional representatives intervened to increase municipal quotas on behalf of their clients.<sup>36</sup> The attempted matching of workers and jobs reached its apogee in 1953 with the creation of a federal Labor Exchange office.<sup>37</sup> Cooperation with the Labor Exchange appears to have been spotty. The government of Arandas informed the exchange in 1953 that there was “neither need nor excess of workers,” implying that labor supply and demand were neatly matched. That same year, official Arandas records showed 507 unemployed workers meeting bracero requirements, the highest annual number recorded in the extant archives from 1942 to 1964!<sup>38</sup> Potential braceros preferred to work in the United States for higher wages than to migrate internally, and local officials had no incentive to send them elsewhere in Mexico where wages were lower.

The federal government, in conjunction with governors, municipal presidents, and large agriculturalists in northern states, developed a more effective plan to regulate internal labor markets. During the 1950s, braceros in several areas were required to work in domestic agriculture before being contracted as U.S. braceros. The Bracero program paradoxically reversed the historical problem faced by northern businesses, which for years had recruited migrants from the Mexican interior only to see them lured over the nearby border by higher wages (Reisler, 1976; Mora-Torres, 2001). In the border state of Tamaulipas, the federal Secretariat of the Interior authorized the creation in 1956 of a commission “to deter the continuation of economic losses in the region.” The commission informed municipal presidents in the sending regions that bracero aspirants bound for the contracting center of Monterrey must first pick cotton for a minimum of 20 days in Tamaulipas. They would then be given a work certificate that would give them priority in the bracero queue.<sup>39</sup> In effect, this was an internal bracero program tightly linked to the international program. Similar programs existed in the 1950s and 60s in the northern states of Sonora, Baja California, and Chihuahua (González Navarro, 1994). Aspirants were required to pick between one and two metric tons of cotton in Sonora before receiving U.S. contracts. There were 20,000 braceros working in Sonora in 1955 and 30,000 in Tamaulipas (Hancock, 1959; González Navarro, 1994; author interviews, 2003). Laws against transporting bracero hopefuls without contracts were used to prevent workers from leaving the cotton fields before picking their quota.<sup>40</sup> As always, there were creative ways to circumvent government regulations. A 63-year-old veteran of four bracero contracts in the late 1950s told of leaving the Sonoran cotton fields one year for a family emergency and being refused a ride by passing trucks whose drivers feared a fine if they were caught with an ineligible bracero aboard. He finally stowed away on a truck whose driver stopped to buy a snack. Where the cotton quota for domestic braceros was determined by weight, savvy workers filled sacks with more dirt than cotton and were able to fill their quota much faster. As the same bracero veteran described the process in Sonora, “We put a big handful of dirt in the sack... no less than a kilo, eh? And we threw it in, *cabrón* ... Then we gave the sack a few kicks so the dirt would go to the bottom of the sack.” Coyotes also bribed officials at the contracting centers to allow aspirants to avoid the picking requirement in the first place (author interviews, 2003).



Given the failure of previous Mexican policies managing emigration, the moderate success of the internal bracero program is impressive. Northern states took advantage of their place as areas of bracero transit and recruitment to redirect temporarily part of the U.S.-bound flow. The federal government cooperated with northern farmers because the internal bracero program was an efficient way to solve simultaneously the problems of a temporary regional labor shortage and permanent national labor excess. Yet the requirement that braceros first work in Mexican agriculture was only successful to the extent that it coincided with migrants' willingness to work outside their home regions. Where the requirement was considered onerous, aspirants circumvented formal rules through private exchanges with individual agents of the state building political power bases or simply fattening their purses. The bribe, in other words, is another instance in which actors *within the state apparatus* undermine formal policy.

### THE POST-BRACERO ERA

Through the early 1970s, the Mexican government unsuccessfully attempted to revive the bracero agreements that ended in 1964. The U.S. government saw little reason to resume the program while undocumented immigrants continued to meet U.S. labor demand. Both governments grew to accept, at least tacitly, massive undocumented migration. From the Mexican government's perspective, emigration appeared practically impossible to regulate. The rapidly increasing size of the Mexican population, which rose from 20 million in 1940 to 48 million in 1970, meant serious emigration restriction was not desirable in any case. Whereas the 1947 Law of Population outlined the government's ongoing efforts to increase population through natural growth, immigration, and repatriation, the 1974 Law of Population noted that population increases were a growing strain on the economy and the provision of state services like education. Population growth was to be limited through family planning. Thus, emigration policy shifted from taking "measures to prevent and avoid emigration" and fining workers who emigrated without a contract in 1947 to "restrict[ing] the emigration of nationals when the national interest demands it" and removing the penalties for leaving without a contract in 1974. In October 1974, President Echeverría informed President Ford that Mexico no longer sought a renewal of the Bracero Program (Corwin, 1978; Rico, 1992; Secretaría de Gobernación, 1996; de la Garza and Szekely, 1997; Massey et al., 2002).

Mexico's policies towards emigrants *already abroad* changed dramatically in the early 1990s, however, as the ruling party and newly competitive opposition parties vied for the favor of the six percent of Mexico's population living in the United States, which rose to ten percent by 2000 (see Figure 1). Emigrant rights groups formed to demand the right to vote in Mexican elections from abroad, a right for which the groundwork was laid in 1996 legislation, but for which the enabling legislation has been subject to continued negotiation. The Mexican Congress passed a dual nationality law in 1997, and most points of the Mexican political spectrum emphasize the inclusion of Mexicans outside the country in the greater Mexican 'nation'. During the 1990s, the Mexican consulates began to devote more resources to legal protections of Mexican nationals in the United States. The SRE's Program for Mexican Communities Abroad (PCME) has sought to culturally nationalize Mexicans in the United States by promoting Mexican patriotic events and the study of Mexican history and the Spanish language. The PCME built on existing grassroots efforts by migrants to organize themselves based on their hometowns and home states of origin. The PCME creates institutional linkages between the clubs and the Mexican government at the federal, state, and municipal levels that are the basis for matching funds programs like 2x1 and 3x1 in which migrants and Mexican government agencies jointly

develop infrastructure projects in migrants' hometowns of origin. The *Paisano* (compatriot) Program has aimed to ease the return of vacationing migrants by eliminating police solicitations of bribes (Sherman, 1999; D. Fitzgerald, 2000, 2004; Goldring, 2002; Smith, 2003a; 2003b; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003).

While emigrants are becoming a more important part of Mexican politics, the fundamental story of emigration policy since the end of the *bracero* program is one of continuity in accepting both legal and illegal labor emigration as inevitable while making minor efforts to restrict the migration of the most highly educated. President Vicente Fox took office in 2000 extolling migrants as 'heroes' but encouraging them to return to jobs in Mexico they could find by dialing a toll-free jobs hotline - Chambatel (Lloyd, 2001). In 2003, applicants from both in and outside Mexico filled only 26,510 jobs using the phone service and its internet equivalent, Chambanet.<sup>41</sup> These heirs to the 1930s labor exchanges were seen among many migrants as empty political posturing, and the presidential discourse of repatriation has faded (author's field notes, 2002-03). Officials have been moderately concerned about the thirty percent of Mexico's scientific and engineering graduates and ten percent of its population with a university degree living abroad in 1990, making Mexico the world's third largest source country of university-educated migrants (Lowell and Findlay, 2001). In response, the National Science and Technology Council (CONACYT) inaugurated a 'brain repatriation' program to bring back Mexicans who completed advanced degrees abroad and to retain recent PhDs working in Mexico (Licea de Arenas et al., 2003).

Emigration control is now the purvey of the Grupo Beta migrant protection police first formed in Tijuana in 1990 and later extended across the northern and southern borders. In 2000, the 75 Grupo Beta agents stationed on the 2000-mile U.S. border arrested around 100 coyotes a month for violating the ban on human smuggling in Article 138 of the 1996 amendments to the General Law of Population. A debate within the Mexican government arose in June 2001 over whether Grupo Beta could apply coercion to prevent emigrants from crossing in the most dangerous areas. The ultimate decision was that migrants could not constitutionally be prevented from leaving, and in August 2001, Grupo Beta gave up its policing functions altogether and focused on protecting undocumented migrants from bandits, conducting rescue operations, and supplying information about how to cross safely (Associated Press, 2001a, 2001b; *Migration News*, 2001). The Secretariat of the Interior's National Migration Institute has a multimedia campaign asking citizens to report coyotes to a toll-free telephone number and to avoid crossing illegally into the United States in dangerous wilderness areas in which hundreds of migrants die every year. In 2005, it began distributing over a million copies of a comic-style booklet for undocumented migrants with detailed tips on how to avoid the major risks of undocumented crossings through tactics like following power lines north and always keeping the coyote in sight. A disclaimer on the back of the booklet summarizes the government's current stance towards illegal migration:

This consular protection guide does not promote the crossing of the border by Mexicans without the legal documentation required by the government of the United States. Its objective is to publicize the risks that [such crossings] imply, and to inform about the rights of migrants regardless of their legal residence.<sup>42</sup>

As described earlier, the right to exit in the Mexican Constitution has always been subject to situational interpretations and tempered by qualifications. The 1974 General Law of Population still in effect requires departing labor migrants to present themselves to Mexican

migration authorities and show a work contract visaed by the destination country consulate and proof that they met the entry requirements of the destination country (Secretaría de Gobernación, 1996). Clearly, undocumented migrants hiking across the Arizona desert do not meet these requirements. There are no longer penalties for violating this article in the General Law of Population, however. The argument for a constitutional right of exit is a convenient way of legitimating the federal government's minimal efforts to restrict unauthorized emigration.

The efforts of the Vicente Fox administration (2000-2006) to negotiate a new guest worker program and amnesty for undocumented Mexicans in the United States were an active promotion of emigration for the first time since the Bracero era. Based on extensive interviews with Mexican policymakers, Rosenblum (2004) reports that a fundamental philosophical shift has taken place in the Mexican Foreign Ministry away from the "policy of no policy" that prevented the Mexican government from attempting to influence the unilateral 1986 U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which rapidly accelerated a trend towards permanent settlement by legalizing 2.3 million Mexicans. The Fox administration in 2002 even eliminated the long-standing requirement that applicants for Mexican passports complete their military service obligations.<sup>43</sup> The permanent emigration of ten percent of the population is seen as desirable by many officials given rising remittances that reached 13.8 billion dollars in 2003 (*Migration News*, 2004; but see Lozano Ascencio, 2003), and hopes that Mexicans will become an ethnic lobby in the United States (D. Fitzgerald, 2000). There are two major explanations for the new policy of actively encouraging both temporary and permanent emigrants. First, federal emigration control has historically failed in Mexico, so emigration policy is focused on extracting economic and political resources from citizens abroad. Second, a policy of close political and economic alignment with the United States has weakened nationalistic arguments against migrating to the northern colossus and provided an opportunity to couple migration with bilateral issues like trade and investment policy. Although the U.S.-Mexico relationship remains one of unequal partners, the level of interdependence is increasing (Rosenblum, 2004).

The creeping centralization of emigration policy over the twentieth century started to reverse itself in the 1990s as the Mexican government decentralized much of its apparatus – reinforcing the methodological imperative of examining the elaboration of plural emigration policies at all levels of government. The state of Zacatecas, which has the highest international emigration rate in Mexico, has been in the vanguard of creating provincial-level policies aimed at organizing emigrants in the United States by provincial origin and incorporating them into the political and economic life of the sending region. Since 2003, Zacatecanos living abroad may even run in Zacatecas congressional and municipal elections (Moctezuma Langoria, 2003). Ties between provincial governments and emigrants have been a vehicle for spreading Mexican partisan politics to the Mexican population in the United States, for example, through the U.S. visits of gubernatorial candidates or incumbents seeking emigrants' political support. That has prompted the party in control of the federal government to respond with its own programs to avoid being left out of the transborder game.

Noting Zacatecano success, the SRE has encouraged all states to create their own emigrant affairs offices and participate in the National Coordination of State Offices of Attention to Migrants (CONOFAM). For instance, the Jalisco office coordinates or promotes migrant-sponsored infrastructure projects; the organization of Jalisciense hometown clubs in the United States; visits by municipal presidents to U.S. cities with large Jalisciense populations; annual meetings in Jalisco of Jalisciense émigré leaders; and Jalisciense fairs in U.S. destination sites promoting Jalisciense products and binational health and educational programs. The Jalisco

Secretariat of Economic Development runs a separate “For my Jalisco” program that promotes migrant investment in micro-industries in the areas of highest emigration. Coordination between the state offices and the SRE has been subject to tensions within the SRE over to what extent provincial-level offices should be allowed to carry out foreign policy functions that the federal government has tried to monopolize over the last century, but the state-level organizations have had the blessings of Presidents Zedillo (1994-2000) and Fox.<sup>44</sup>

As there are no bilateral guest worker programs between the United States and Mexico, individual Mexican states administer the H2B guest worker program unilaterally designed by the U.S. government. For example, since 2001, the Jalisco Office of International Affairs has recruited workers and helped them to apply through the U.S. consulates to fill positions mostly as golf course landscapers. In 2004, 136 H2B visas were issued with the office’s assistance. The SRE notes that H2B is not a bilateral program and the individual states are not required to participate, but the alternative is to leave the program to what one state official called “a mafia” of former H2B holders that arrange the paperwork for newcomers for an exorbitant fee. In response to a new breed of enganchador charging \$1500 to \$4000 in recruitment fees, where only about \$100 is considered legitimate, the government of Zacatecas in 2001 went a step further by negotiating a pilot program with the U.S. consulate in Monterrey that recruits temporary workers under the direction of the Zacatecas government. While these guest worker programs operate independently of the Mexican federal government, they are a window into the sort of large scale, truly bilateral programs that are the federal government’s goal.<sup>45</sup>

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

For most of the twentieth century, the Mexican federal government had a clear, if ineffective, policy to control what *types* of people left, *where* they came from, *when* they left, and the *conditions* of their exit and return. The instruments of emigration control included propaganda campaigns, refusal to issue travel documents to certain occupational and geographic categories of workers, material incentives to repatriate, requirements that emigrants first work in domestic agriculture, and even coercion at the border or on train routes. The Mexican federal government attempted to regulate emigration most closely during the Bracero Program, trying to turn emigration on and off like a valve during its negotiations with the United States. For example, the federal government urgently called for more Braceros from the municipios in May 1948. When the federal government abrogated the agreements only nine days later, it demanded that municipal presidents warn bracero aspirants of the “grave harm” they risked by emigrating without contracts.<sup>46</sup> Alas, the valve is only a metaphor, and humans do not respond as quickly and compliantly as a mechanical device. Given the general failure of these methods to control emigration, it is little wonder that the Mexican federal government eventually abdicated in the 1970s in favor of unregulated exit.

The key to understanding the yawning gap between macro emigration policy and historical practice is to look “*inside* the state,” to use Calavita’s (1992) term, and *across* the country at local practices. The balkanized Mexican state has lacked the capacity to enforce the policy dictates of the central government. This was especially true in the crucial period of the 1920s when massive emigration became a well-established social phenomenon in the source communities (see Knight, 2001). When it served their interests, local officials fomented emigration to the United States even as the federal government tried to deter it. This was the case in Los Altos de Jalisco during the Cristero wars. Knowing the extent to which local governments sought to expel population in other areas would require further historical research, but given the

close overlap between the areas of Mexico most affected by the Cristero conflict and the areas of highest emigration, it seems unlikely that the experience of Los Altos was idiosyncratic. What is clear from a wider body of existing historical research and the findings of this study is that when local and state governments saw emigration draining local labor supply, and thus driving wages higher, they tried to restrict emigration by applying pressure on the federal government, as the governors of Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán successfully did from 1943 to 1944. Local governments in Mexico seem to be less autonomous from the interests of economic elites than are their central government counterparts (Knight, 2001), leading to a patchwork of emigration control practices depending on the interests of local elites. The most successful local and state governments to manage the labor drain were northern states able to tie international migration to internal migration by requiring braceros to fill the labor demands of large-scale agriculture. The corporatist state attempted to manage the local supply and demand of labor by distributing it within Mexico first and then exporting sectoral excesses to the United States. From the perspective of some local governments, however, the distribution of labor elsewhere within Mexico was of limited concern, and federal policies were often ignored or subverted.

For the last century, the federal government has attempted to monopolize the ‘legitimate means of movement’ (Torpey, 2000) and strip local governments of this competence. The early modeling of international passport policy on the example of more developed states occurred at a moment when the Mexican state simply did not have the administrative capacity to enforce its own regulations. The result was a ‘decoupling’ of formal policy and practice that is common among weak states attempting to adopt exogenous cultural models of what modern states ‘are supposed to do’ (see Meyer et al., 1997). From 1904 to the 1950s, the federal government repeatedly ordered municipal authorities in sending areas to stop issuing their own international travel documents.<sup>47</sup> By 2003, the federal government had successfully monopolized this competence and was expediting passports through a decentralized network of 114 municipal liaison offices of the SRE, where municipal and federal authorities share the costs of providing services to local residents (author field notes, 2003). Although municipal authorities continue to issue their own letters of recommendations to migrants, who are often unclear about the bureaucratic migration requirements in both countries, these letters are of little value because U.S. consular officials say they do not take them into consideration (author interviews, 2004). Over time, the fact that international migration takes place in a system of states that only recognize passports issued by the central governments of other states has contributed to the centralization and standardization of Mexican emigration policy.

Within the Mexican federal government, diverse aspects of the state-building project had unintended consequences on emigration policy. First, the attempt to crush the secular power of the Catholic Church indirectly caused local army commanders and municipal authorities to promote emigration as an escape valve during the Cristero War. Second, in some areas like Arandas, even the 1930s agrarian reform that theoretically gave peasants a stake in staying provided a further impetus for the local oligarchy to encourage their exit (see Durand and Massey, 1992 for a discussion of other mechanisms by which the agrarian reform promoted emigration). Third, government policies channeling resources for economic development to major cities and large-scale, export-oriented agriculture in northern states rather than support for small-scale agriculture in the Central-West exacerbated an excess of unemployed rural labor in the Central-West (Grindle, 1988). Fourth, government improvement of infrastructure, sanitation, and health systems created a sharp decline in mortality leading to a population boom. With more farmers in 1960 than in 1910, emigration provided an outlet for the country’s overall surplus

population (Knight, 2002; Bean and Stevens, 2003). Different features of state-building thus worked at cross-purposes, even if unintentionally so, with efforts to restrict emigration.

Emigration policy options for Mexico have been restricted sharply by the policies of the United States, towards which Mexico has historically had a relationship of asymmetric interdependency. Mexican bans on the emigration of laborers *without* contracts in 1917 were difficult to implement, because the United States already had banned the immigration of laborers *with* contracts in 1885. During the Bracero program, the U.S. government periodically opened its borders as a tactic to undercut Mexico's bargaining position seeking better conditions for contracted workers. Mexico opposed illegal migration while the INS often tacitly allowed it. In the 1970s, the U.S. government generally turned a blind eye to border control, having found that jobs would be filled by undocumented migrants without the bother or expense of maintaining a bilateral program. Mexico's diplomatic claims that international migration should be addressed as a bilateral issue have been rebuffed by the response that U.S. immigration policy is an issue of national sovereignty to be determined by the U.S. government. Bilateral talks that appeared to be moving towards some sort of legalization and guest worker program in 2001 prior to the events of September 11 incorporated much of the language and positions of the Mexican proposal. The moment may arrive when domestic U.S. interests of ethnopolitics and securing a legal source of cheap labor coincide with the Mexican position to permit a bilateral agreement (Rosenblum, 2004). Without such a convergence, there is little that the Mexican government can realistically do to shape the flows of U.S.-bound migrants.

The Mexican government's room for maneuver has been restricted further by social processes like a culture of outmigration, structural reliance on migrant remittances, and a migration industry of smugglers, church shelters, and travel agents. Social networks linking particular source and destination localities are particularly important for circumventing state controls because they are conduits through which experienced migrants provide new migrants the money and information needed to cross the border illegally (Massey et al. 1998). Emigration control is path dependent in the sense that early failures, which allowed the establishment of mass emigration against the stated intentions of the government, limit the development of institutions and policies that would effectively control emigration today (see Krasner, 1984). Deeply embedded migration streams alter the social landscape and become part of a process of cumulative causation that propels the persistence of international migration in ways that are difficult for governments to control (Massey et al. 1998).

Governments around the world have tried to control the volume, duration, skills, and geographic origin of emigrants using a large tool box of positive and negative incentives (Lowell and Findlay, 2001; International Organization for Migration, 2003). Such policies continue in countries as diverse as Russia, Cyprus, Zimbabwe, Argentina, Morocco, Jamaica, and Romania (United Nations, 2003). Unlike the nineteenth century, when mass emigration often flowed from the European core of the world system to peripheral colonies and the new republics of Latin America, the current era is dominated by flows from the periphery to the core. Understanding emigration policies thus demands attention to asymmetric inter-state relationships. The extreme degree to which Mexican emigration is directed to a single destination country is unusual (IFE 1998), but migrations in similar contexts of dependency are common between formerly colonized sending countries and their metropole destinations and within the colonial and post-colonial labor market of southern Africa (Petras, 1981; Patton, 1995). More research is needed to describe and explain how emigration policies have developed, both as formal regulations and as actual practices on the ground. Federal systems of government like Mexico are structurally more

conducive to multiple and even contradictory emigration policies, but research on immigration policies suggests that even unitary systems like that of France contain multiple policies at the local level, which may operate at cross-purposes with national policies (Guiraudon, 2002). Whether the same is true of unitary states of emigration merits further study.

Realist assumptions about ‘sending states’ following ‘their’ interests are inadequate analytic frames in this research program given the multiplicity of interests that are subject to contestation within the institutional arena of the state. A neopluralist perspective must not only explain the multiple *inputs* from domestic and foreign actors on a given migration policy outcome (Almond, 1988; Putnam, 1988), but also the multiple *outputs* that can take the form of various and even contradictory policies at different levels of government and across localities. Local governments during the bracero era were able to deter local emigration or temporarily divert some U.S.-bound migrants to fill the needs of northern agriculture. State governments are once again entering the international migration game by facilitating the unilateral U.S. H2B guest worker program and by targeting the affections and remittances of the citizens of their provinces in the United States. Finally, attention to a plurality of policies and interests is a reminder that the sending country policies that most affect the size, composition, and timing of migration flows may not even be emigration policies at all. In Mexico, policies related to civil war, agriculture, and demography have most directly shaped Mexican migration to the United States. The multi-level approach adopted here of examining intra-state negotiations, subversions of official policy by state personnel acting autonomously from formal directives, and asymmetries in inter-state relationships, promises to explain why specific migration policies are adopted, and why those policies often fail to achieve their goals.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> AHJ (Archivo Histórico de Jalisco) G-8-1904. All translations are the author's.
- <sup>2</sup> AHJ G-8-1909; 1910; 1911
- <sup>3</sup> AHJ G-8-1910; *El Informador* [Guadalajara], 1 Sep. 1918.
- <sup>4</sup> *Constitución Federal de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, 1857
- <sup>5</sup> *Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, 1917
- <sup>6</sup> Cardoso (1980) estimated an exodus of 1 million. American authorities recorded 220,000 legal entries during the decade (Bean and Stevens, 2003:55).
- <sup>7</sup> AHJ, Informe a la Legislatura de Gral. Manuel M. Diéguez, Gobernador. 1919.
- <sup>8</sup> AHJ G-8-1923. See also Alanís Enciso, 1999, 2003.
- <sup>9</sup> Similar metaphors were common in Italy when a period of mass exit and nationalizing coincided (Cinel 1991).
- <sup>10</sup> AMA (Archivo Municipal de Arandas) P/ April, May 1927
- <sup>11</sup> AMA P/1927-1964.
- <sup>12</sup> AHJ G-8-1925
- <sup>13</sup> AHJ G-8-1919
- <sup>14</sup> AMA P/ 1932, Sep. 1933, April 1934, July 1934
- <sup>15</sup> AMA P/1930s
- <sup>16</sup> AMA P/1927-1940
- <sup>17</sup> Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Series 2, Ctn 1, Field Notes 1:18, Book 1, Oct. 18-Nov. 8, 1931.
- <sup>18</sup> AHJ AG-1-1911; Aguila 2000.
- <sup>19</sup> AMA P/1932
- <sup>20</sup> *El Informador*, 19 April, 1921.
- <sup>21</sup> AMA P/1932. While encouraging the repatriation of laborers, hundreds of political exiles were denied permission to return to Mexico (García y Griego and Alanís Enciso, 2003). As in the Soviet Union (Dowty, 1987), the government distinguished between labor emigrants and political dissidents, trying to keep the former in and the latter out.
- <sup>22</sup> AMA P/ Oct. 1940, Sep. 1941
- <sup>23</sup> AMA P/ Jan. 1954
- <sup>24</sup> AMA P/ May 1948, AMA P/ July 1951, Feb 1952, March 1953; see also González Navarro, 1994:281.
- <sup>25</sup> AMA P/ Sep. 1948, Sep. 1951, Feb. 1952; see also Hancock, 1959.
- <sup>26</sup> AMA P/ Feb. 1952
- <sup>27</sup> AMA P/ May 1952
- <sup>28</sup> AMA P/ Bracero rolls from May 1948, July 1951, 1952
- <sup>29</sup> AMA P/ March 1951, Sep. 1951, Feb. 1952, May 1953, March 1953, May 1961
- <sup>30</sup> AHJ T-1-920-925
- <sup>31</sup> AMA P/ Aug. 1935
- <sup>32</sup> AMA P/ 1944, 1953
- <sup>33</sup> AMA P/ Aug. 1943, Dec. 1943, March 1944
- <sup>34</sup> AHJ, *Informe a la Legislatura de Gral. Marcelino García Barragán, Gobernador*. 1945
- <sup>35</sup> AMA P/ July 1951, April 1953
- <sup>36</sup> AMA P/ July 1963
- <sup>37</sup> AMA P/ March 1953
- <sup>38</sup> AMA P/ March 1953
- <sup>39</sup> AMA P/ May 1959
- <sup>40</sup> AMA P/ March 1953
- <sup>41</sup> [www\\_chambanet\\_gob\\_mx.htm](http://www.chambanet_gob_mx.htm). *Chamba* is slang for work.
- <sup>42</sup> [www.inami.gob.mx](http://www.inami.gob.mx)
- <sup>43</sup> <http://www.sre.gob.mx/comunicados/comunicados/2002/ene/b-04.htm>
- <sup>44</sup> Archivo de la Dirección de Asuntos Internacionales, Gobierno de Jalisco, 1995-2004 (ADAI)
- <sup>45</sup> ADAI, 1995-2004; author interviews with Jalisco state officials, 2004
- <sup>46</sup> AMA P/ May 1948
- <sup>47</sup> AHJ G-8-1904; AHJ G-8-1919; AHJ G-1-1920; AMA P/ April 1953



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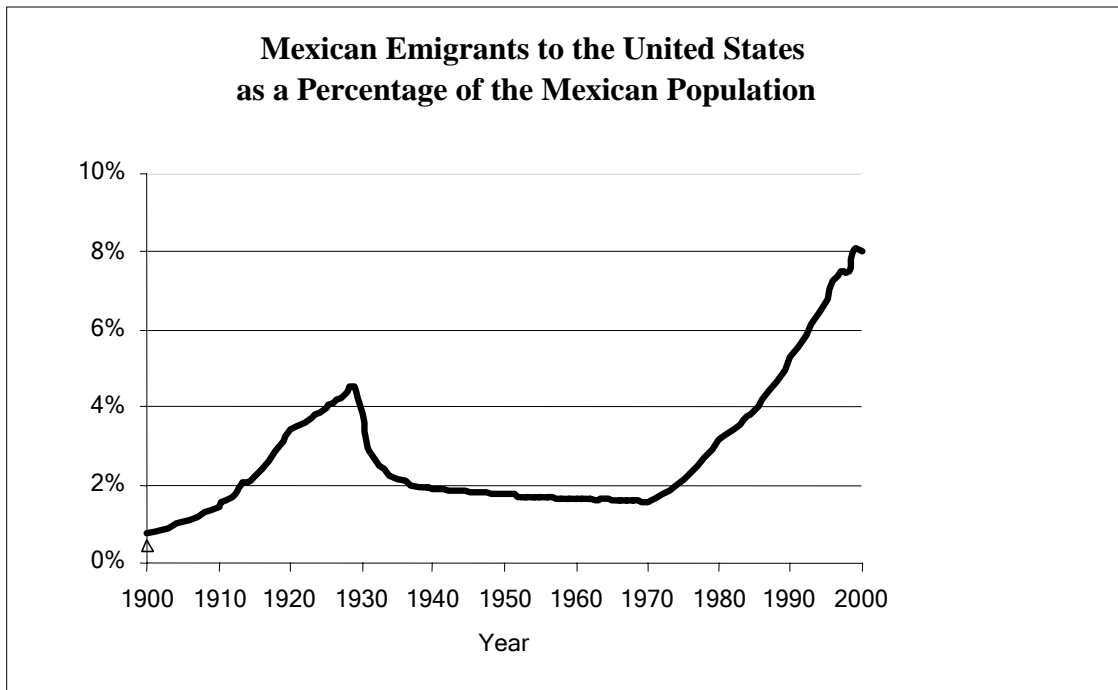
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**Figure 1**



Sources: Calculated from decennial U.S. and Mexican Census data taken from the Mexican Migration Project NATLHIST file 2002. [mmp.opr.princeton.edu](http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu).