

**TRANSNATIONAL REALITIES AND
ANTI-IMMIGRANT STATE POLICIES:
ISSUES RAISED BY THE EXPERIENCES OF
CENTRAL AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS AND
REFUGEES IN A TRINATIONAL REGION**

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Transnational Realities and Anti-Immigrant State Policies: Issues Raised by the Experience of Central American Immigrants and Refugees in a Trinational Region¹

The purpose of this paper is to suggest an interdisciplinary cross-border conceptual framework for research about the largest groups of Latinos in California after Mexicans: Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants and refugees of the 1980s and 1990s. In addition to sketching the outlines of this specific research, I shall explore the effects of anti-immigrant state policies in an age of transnational realities. Because I am drawing on a particular case study and because those policies are themselves changing rapidly, I do not propose definitive or generalized conclusions. However, this study, together with others, does raise questions about (a) the effectiveness of restrictive state policies in actually stopping/controlling immigration, and (b) the collateral political effects of such policies, both for the immigrants themselves and for their different sites of residence and action.

The approach presented here is regional in scope, in that it draws upon the experiences of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees and immigrants who have crossed two borders within a region that is becoming more integrated. These two borders (Guatemala/Mexico and Mexico/California) are becoming nodal points in the contradictory

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pressures between economic transnationalization and restrictive immigration policies imposed by nation-states. Cross-border flows of capital and goods (many of them state-promoted or -assisted), as well as U.S. foreign policies affecting the case of Central Americans, are among the realities that have made these borders more porous and have stimulated increased immigrant flows. Yet at the same time, the U.S. government is attempting to stem the flow of (both labor and political) migrants through increasingly restrictive immigration/refugee policies, and is pressuring the Mexican government to prevent Central Americans, in particular, from ever reaching U.S. soil. Hence, this study suggests broader questions about the contradictory roles of the state in relation to cross-border movements of capital and people—a central concern of immigration research within a world-systems framework.

The 1980s saw a great upsurge in the numbers of Salvadorans and Guatemalans coming to the U.S. (especially California) for a mixture of political and economic reasons—civil war, violence and repression (and in the case of Maya indigenous Guatemalans, a literal holocaust), compounded by devastating economic crises that left over 85% of the population living below the poverty line in both countries. Despite the fact that many came as refugees during the 1980s, today the Salvadoran and Guatemalan communities in California can be viewed as more broadly binational or even trinational in several respects. First, their experiences have brought most of them from their home countries through an "intermediate space" (Mexico) to the U.S. (in this case, California), and for some, back again, by choice or coercion, to their countries of origin. That is the "trinational region" or space within which they move across two borders. Second, they have established cross-border circuits and linkages which, as I shall argue below, are difficult to break, even in the face of anti-immigrant state policies. Third, these experiences are transforming the identities and behavior of these immigrants, making many of them actors in more than one nation. Like their migrations, this research adopts a regional, cross-border perspective; therefore the rapidly changing conditions in all three parts of this region constitute the backdrop for this study.

During the 1980s, as a result of the prolonged civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala, combined with and intensified by the economic crises, a new, much larger wave of immigrants left their home countries for Mexico and the U.S. In the 1990s, the prospects for stable peace and development in the home countries continue to appear as crucial variables in shaping the decisions of Salvadorans and Guatemalans about cross-border migrations in both directions.

Within this region, Mexico has played a very particular (and increasing) role as a space and a player mediating between the U.S. and Central America—all the more so in the age of NAFTA and its projected extension to Central America. Today, the endless complexities and contradictions of Mexico itself are affecting the conditions for Central American transmigrants to the U.S. More generally, as we shall see, rapidly changing events in both Mexico and the U.S. (particularly in California) will have repercussions for Salvadorans and Guatemalans throughout the region.

This paper is structured in four parts. The first establishes the structural context, which I am referring to as a trinational region. The second describes briefly the in-progress empirical research projects. The third and fourth suggest that this case study can contribute toward addressing broader questions: how effective are anti-immigrant state policies in the face of transnational realities within an increasingly integrated region? And, if their effectiveness is only relative, what are other political consequences of these policies for the region? I will end by suggesting briefly some theoretical implications for cross-border reconceptualizations of democracy in the Americas and for immigration research grounded in world-systems perspectives.

Trinational Region as the Structural Context

The structural context is the emergence of a trinational region which is undergoing a process of integration, spanning the U.S. (particularly California)/Mexico/Central America, and becoming inter-linked economically, politically and socio-culturally. In regard to economic integration, there is already an extensive literature within a general world-systems framework (e.g., Immanuel Wallerstein, Alejandro Portes, María Patricia Fernández Kelly, Robert Bach, Saskia Sassen, Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng) on the complementarity of capital and labor flows, particularly within economic systems characterized by relations of unequal exchange. This has received wide discussion, most recently in relation to NAFTA in terms of the linkages it creates, as well as the disruptive/displacing effects of economic integration for some sectors of the population on each side of the border. Economic crises throughout the region are also likely to increase migratory flows in the 1990s, as during the 1980s. Furthermore, even at the height of economic recession and anti-immigrant hysteria in California, the demand for low-waged labor, both agricultural and urban (service sector) continues—with these jobs being filled by Central Americans as well as Mexicans.

In this region, the process of integration is political, social and cultural, as well as economic. Politically, the 1980s civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador contributed to the integration of the region through the deep involvement of both the U.S. and Mexico (each in its own way) in relation to those civil wars and their peace processes. These are linkages based on security and diplomacy considerations. Ironically, the Reagan administration's policies of supporting counterinsurgency wars during the 1980s was a factor that indirectly stimulated the exodus of Central Americans to Mexico and the U.S. At the same time, Mexico's role as a site for Central American refugees increased significantly. Other political linkages were forged by opponents of U.S. policy (sanctuary cities, church activists, asylum lawyers, and human rights groups in the U.S. and Mexico). Today the construction of peace (a volatile peace in El Salvador, and the endlessly difficult efforts to reach peace in Guatemala) has become a factor

whose progress will affect people's living conditions in the home countries and their migration decisions.

Socially, the movement of people has itself become a structural factor: prior Central American migrations have created "bridges" (based on kinship, household, and community networks) which new migrants are crossing today. These prior relationships and interactive networks have created an increasingly integrated social region of California/Mexico/Central America through which people move north and return. As with other transnational communities, older generations of Salvadorans and Guatemalans frequently paved the way for the 1980s refugees; they, in turn, have laid the groundwork for the 1990s immigrants.² An important concrete indicator of the significance of these transnational family and community networks is the fact that remittance flows from the U.S. to the home countries have become a pillar of the economies of both El Salvador and Guatemala, estimated respectively at \$1 billion and half billion a year. In the Salvadoran case, remittances are far greater than the \$600 million in coffee export earnings during the current boom in coffee prices.

A final point about this region: it is a zone of multiple conflicts and growing instabilities today—from the wars and uncertain peace in Central America, to the compounded crises of 1994-95 in Mexico, to economic recession in California and elsewhere in the U.S. Anti-immigrant initiatives, such as Proposition 187 (denying education, health, and social services to undocumented immigrants), can also be expected to increase social conflict and have destabilizing consequences. This entire complex, then, forms the material basis or framework for understanding the cross-border movements of Central American immigrants and refugees as social actors.

² The pioneering work by Frank Bonilla and the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños about "circuits and cycles of migration" has proven useful for understanding transnational Latino communities. (In the case of Salvadorans and Guatemalans, see note 9 below.) As Fernández Kelly and Portes put it, "Migrants walk across the invisible bridges created by particular capital flows and political linkages" (1992:253). From a different vantage point, Basch et.al. (1994) refers to "the creation of social fields that cross national boundaries," in which people link nations.

Salvadorans and Guatemalans in California and Mexico

Within this trilateral region, most Salvadoran and Guatemalan migrants to the U.S. have had two borders to cross, two different sets of passage (and in some cases, adaptation) experiences. Some end up in California only after an extended stay in Mexico. Our project aims to examine how they were transformed by these experiences, and, to complete the circle, how those who return to El Salvador or Guatemala may play new roles there as a result of their experiences in Mexico and California. Taking households as the unit, some of them will have family members in all three countries. We are seeing the constitution of new transnational social actors, whose behavior and identities are being redefined in a variety of ways.³

Our focus on Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants/refugees of the 1980s and 1990s, as opposed to previous generations, delimits them more specifically not only in terms of the greatly increased numbers, but also in class terms (generally lower middle/working class and peasant, not professional or entrepreneurial). The vast majority entered the U.S. via Mexico, without documentation. In some cases of indigenous Guatemalans, entire communities came collectively and continue to live collectively in "daughter communities." Given the close association between the political and economic disasters leading to their emigration, as documented in the vast literature on Central America during the 1980s, the line between political and economic motivations is often blurred. (Hamilton & Chinchilla, and Stanley address this question directly.) But in general, we can say that political violence was a more important factor in the 1980s than in the 1990s, particularly for Salvadorans.⁴

Precise numbers regarding Central Americans in the U.S. are virtually impossible to establish, given that a high proportion are undocumented, but all counts show the dramatic

³ In a recent review of the immigration literature, Massey et al. refer to the emergence over time of a "culture of migration that is distinct from the culture of both sending and receiving countries" (p. 738).

⁴ The importance of civil wars and political violence in the case of Salvadorans and Guatemalans can be seen by contrasting their large wave of immigration during the 1980s with the far smaller migration from Honduras, where poverty levels were similar, but were not accompanied by civil war or an equivalent level of political violence.

increase during the 1980s. Although estimates vary considerably, some mid-1990s approximations suggest up to 1.2-1.5 million Salvadorans and 800,000 to one million Guatemalans (including permanent legal residents, those in legal limbo with temporary work permits, and undocumented).⁵ The main increase in legal immigrants for both groups occurred in 1989 and 1990 (a combination of new admissions and legalizations); nevertheless, for both groups, at least half are estimated to be undocumented. INS figures greatly underestimate the numbers (because they only count "deportables apprehended"), but they do show clearly the increased numbers—in the mid-1980s for Salvadorans, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s for Guatemalans. For both groups, by far the largest numbers of both documented and undocumented are in California: according to the 1990 Census, almost 60% for both Salvadorans and Guatemalans; and according to 1992 INS statistics, the percentages in California are even higher for undocumented.⁶

Since the civil wars were a major factor in the exodus of the 1980s, many came as refugees, but entered the U.S. via Mexico without that status and without documentation of any kind—in contrast with refugees from other countries such as Cuba, who entered the U.S. directly and with refugee status. Among those who applied for asylum once they were here, 97% of Salvadorans and 99% of Guatemalans were turned down during the 1980s—a situation that only began to be rectified with the ABC class action lawsuit won in December 1990 and the granting of Temporary Protected Status to Salvadorans (TPS) in 1991.⁷ By the end of Fiscal

⁵ The 1990 Census reported 565,081 Salvadorans and 268,779 Guatemalans. In addition to generally recognized undercounting (in large part because of the high proportion of undocumented), this does not include post-1990 entrants—which is particularly problematic in the case of Guatemalans, because the Guatemalan migration increased more during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

⁶ Los Angeles has become the second capital city to both groups, with 300-500,000 Salvadorans and 250-400,000 Guatemalans by 1994 (estimates vary significantly)—in both cases, and especially for Guatemalans, far more than the number counted in the 1990 census.

⁷ The ABC class action lawsuit (*American Baptist Church v. Thornburgh*) won in December 1990 established that the INS had "wrongfully discriminated" against Salvadoran and Guatemalan asylum applicants (by arbitrarily dismissing their cases on foreign policy grounds), and called for their cases to be re-heard. Several hundred thousand were saved from deportation pending a new hearing; today, over four years later, they remain in a legal limbo, but do have work permits. Given the huge backlog of cases pending, some will doubtless find a way to regularize their status. But those who came after 1990 are not protected by the ABC decision. Between 1991 and 1994, Salvadorans had another

Year 1994, there were some 126,500 asylum cases pending for Guatemalans (30% of all pending asylum cases) and 72,000 for Salvadorans (plus 187,000 TPS cases.) These numbers do not include the many thousands who never applied for asylum out of fear. This accumulation suggests that restrictive U.S. immigration policies since the mid-1980s, and U.S. hostility toward these asylum seekers specifically, did very little to deter Salvadorans and Guatemalans from deciding to leave their home country and undertake a violent and dangerous trip through Mexico and into the U.S. In fact, the largest numbers came during the years when the INS was systematically denying asylum to virtually all from these two countries who sought it.⁸

Turning now to their passage through Mexico, which is a crucial part of their migration circuit, especially for Guatemalans, I am building on the extensive research about Guatemalan migrants and transmigrants by Manuel Angel Castillo and Rodolfo Casillas (focusing primarily on Mexico's southern border, in Chiapas and surrounding states).⁹ This includes some refugees of the 1980s who were never incorporated into the UN camps (as many as 150,000), and who are not recognized in Mexico as refugees. Some of them have become integrated into Mexican society and its labor force and do not plan to return to Guatemala. Many have gone from the southern border states of Mexico to the cities, or other points north,

avenue for legalizing their status: TPS/DED (Temporary Protected Status/Deferred Enforced Departure), temporary safe haven programs. However, as of 1995, the TPS program was ended, giving the 187,000 Salvadorans affected nine months to find another way to legalize their status. Meanwhile, Guatemalans never enjoyed any TPS or DED program, and efforts to gain such a program failed, despite the lack of a peace accord to end the 35-year civil war, and despite the continuing high level of political violence and repression there. From 1992 through 1994, the number of Guatemalan asylum applications was by far the highest for any country in the world (42% of the total in 1992, 23% in 1994). In a year when 44,000 applications were received (1992), only 63 were granted.

⁸ The influx of Salvadoran asylum-seekers slowed down in 1992, when the civil war was over. With the termination of the TPS program this year, the number of asylum cases will likely increase, but the end of the war will make their cases far more difficult to win. Both Salvadoran and Guatemalan asylum-seekers will face an even more difficult situation in the future: among the current asylum "reforms" is denial of work permits to applicants awaiting a decision.

⁹ Hence, among Guatemalans in Mexico, I am not focusing on the seasonal contract laborers who come across the Guatemala/Mexico border "legally" (50-60,000 a year), in something like a Bracero program, or border residents who move back and forth across that border, some on a daily basis. Nor am I focusing on the 45,000 Guatemalan political refugees of the 1980s who have been living in the UN camps in southern Mexico, and whose goal is collective and organized return to Guatemala (now in progress.)

and some end up coming to the U.S. Even those who initially remained in southern border areas may now be more likely to come to the U.S., given the instability in southern Mexico, and given that they will not be able to get refugee status in Mexico. This figure also includes Guatemalan transmigrants who consciously pass through Mexico to get to the U.S.—often through networks that are extremely exploitative and abusive, especially for women and children. Reliable statistics are even more difficult to obtain in Mexico than in the U.S., but studies by Casillas and Castillo leave no doubt that those numbers are also growing, and that their experiences in Mexico are significant for some who end up in California.

That much said about the initial decisions to leave their home countries and come through Mexico to the U.S., let us turn to their decisions to remain in the U.S., return home, or move back and forth. This is the focus of the collaborative study in northern and southern California in which I am involved.¹⁰ Our project revolves around interviews with 600 Salvadorans and Guatemalans in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas, two of California's "global cities." This survey attempts to determine how a variety of factors, including the winding down of the 1980s civil wars in their home countries, is affecting their decisions to stay in the U.S. or return home. Other factors include legal status, arrival date and length of stay, strength of family/community networks, and the changing political-economic climate in California.¹¹

¹⁰ This study on Salvadorans and Guatemalans in California is being conducted by Nora Hamilton, Norma Chinchilla, Carlos Córdova, and myself. It is one of several major studies, and will dovetail with work done by others in California and elsewhere in the U.S. (for example, Nestor Rodríguez and Jacqueline Hagan in Texas, Allen Burns in Florida, Terry Repak in Washington D.C., and Sarah Mahler in Long Island.)

¹¹ Our questionnaire is quite broad and will yield much additional information about these transnational individuals, families, and communities. We are currently conducting the interviews (300 in each area), primarily with those who came during the 1980s and 1990s, but also including some from earlier migrations, to see the contrast. Snowball sampling is used, with an orientation toward a stratified sample that will replicate data from the 1990 census with regard to national group, etc. Our interviews include both documented and undocumented, and are drawn from a wide range of networks, including soccer clubs, business associations, refugee assistance organizations, churches, etc., and distributed over gender and generational groupings, as well as between Salvadorans and Guatemalans. In addition to the interviews, we will be integrating available statistical information from the Census, the INS and other sources—despite the limitations of such information, taken by itself. A second phase of this project will attempt to assess the impact of the decisions to remain or return on families and communities both in the U.S. and "back home," and the creation of transnational identities.

Although we do not yet have final results, we are seeing one possible trend: even after the war is over, many Salvadorans are not deciding to return in the near future.¹² The formal end of the war is no longer the primary consideration in making the decision to stay or return—some because they have become incorporated here, some because of doubts about their economic future in El Salvador. If they came largely as refugees, the determinants of their decision to remain or return are far more complex, and can be expected to also vary along gender and generational lines. Even in the hostile political climate of California today, Salvadorans do not seem to have been induced to return permanently by anti-immigrant policies or denial of asylum (although that may lead many of them to advise their friends and relatives not to come in the immediate future.) Certainly, they retain very close ties to El Salvador and follow events there closely. It is possible that many who have the option will want to move back and forth. The situation and mind-set of the Guatemalans is quite different since the low-intensity civil war there is not fully over and political violence remains widespread.

Anti-Immigrant State Policies and Transnational Realities

What does this case suggest about the effectiveness of anti-immigrant state policies within an increasingly integrated region—particularly in an era of a greater NAFTA which will incorporate Central America, and state-promoted cross-border flows of capital and goods? Specifically, in the medium or longer range, how effective are anti-immigrant U.S. policies (now complemented by Mexican policies) in relation to Central American migration through Mexico to the U.S.? It will take many years to have definitive answers, but we can suggest some preliminary working hypotheses.

¹² This confirms informal surveys reported in 1993 on *Univisión*, in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and in *La Opinión* (Los Angeles) to the effect that a very high percentage no longer considered themselves refugees. For earlier studies, see Chávez, Flores & López-Garza (1990) and Córdova (1987.)

Since the mid-1980s, U.S. immigration policies have become increasingly restrictive.¹³ During the 1980s, this stance toward Salvadorans and Guatemalans in particular was largely a function of U.S. foreign policy, which supported the counterinsurgency armies of those two governments and regarded refugees as "subversives"—hence the denial of virtually all asylum claims. In the post-Cold war era of the 1990s, it is primarily for domestic political reasons that these asylum-seekers and immigrants are being treated as if they constituted a threat to U.S. "national security." The post-Cold War redefinition of U.S. national security doctrine actually includes immigration as a top priority concern. Salvadorans and Guatemalans are particularly affected by all of the border-focused anti-immigrant measures and by increasingly restrictive "reforms" of asylum laws, as well as the end of TPS for Salvadorans.

An additional component since the mid-1980s is U.S. growing pressure on Mexico to collaborate in keeping Central Americans out of the U.S. Specifically, the INS has been working with the Mexican migration agents (particularly on Mexico's southern border) to turn back Central Americans before they can ever come through Mexico to cross into the U.S., where some could exercise the right to seek asylum and others would find work. The Mexican government denies this collaboration, but it is documented in the U.S., with Congress openly allocating funds to reimburse Mexico for the expenses of interdiction and deportation (see Frelick.) In any case, Mexican deportations (mainly of Central Americans) have increased one hundredfold, from 1,308 in 1987 to around 130,000 a year since 1990. (Casillas 1995:12)

Because of its historic role as a mediator between the U.S. and Central America, as well as an "intermediate space," Mexico is caught in a complex dilemma between its diplomatic and national security concerns vis-à-vis Central Americans. Within this trilateral region, Mexico's relative weight in Central America has been increasing throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Mexico has been not only a space through which Central Americans pass, but also a major player in the Central American peace negotiations, with its own interests and definitions

¹³ For the purposes of policy analysis, I am shifting from the California to the U.S. level because national laws have far greater impact than state laws; additionally, anti-immigrant initiatives that premiered in California are spreading to other states and are being taken up in Congress.

of "national security," and, in this regard, often an opponent rather than a supporter of U.S. policy. In addition, Mexican business interests now project increasing investment, and therefore seek greater stability, in Central America. Today, however, the situation is vastly complicated by Mexico's own crises, especially in the context of the Chiapas uprising and greater militarization on the border with Guatemala. In short, just at the moment when Mexico is becoming the centerpiece of this trilateral region, its policies toward Central Americans are more contradictory and less predictable than ever.

Despite the escalation of anti-immigrant measures by both the U.S. and Mexico, it is far from clear how effective state policies which treat immigration as a "national security" issue will prove medium- or long-range in actually keeping out Salvadorans and Guatemalans. As seen above, the hostile reception here did not stop them from coming during the 1980s. Since then, the pace of regional economic integration has greatly quickened, while the demand for cheap labor in California remains as high as ever, and, by now, pre-existing immigrant social networks are already in place. As Espenshade, Kossoudji and others have suggested, the threat of apprehension at the U.S.-Mexico border has only limited deterrent effect unless it is applied massively and absolutely (which would make California literally a police state)—although we can expect that the deterrent effect will be greater for Central Americans who risk deportation to their home country than for Mexicans. Increased interdictions and deportations by Mexico have not stopped the influx of Salvadorans and Guatemalans; although they have doubtless reduced the numbers. And in terms of those already in the U.S., it seems likely that, short of massive deportations or passage of extremist legislation, many individuals and families who have the option will do what they can (including naturalization) to remain, while maintaining ties to their home countries.

In short, I suggest, anti-immigrant state policies do not necessarily control the actual behavior of people whose lives have been transnationalized. These measures may temporarily affect the direction of the flow, but they will not decrease cross-border movements of people, disrupt the migration circuits, or stop the process of regional integration. In the case of

Salvadorans and Guatemalans specifically, the numbers of new migrants will be significantly affected by the extent to which the end of the civil wars brings stable peace and economic opportunity—equitable rather than neoliberal development. And even apart from that, migration will doubtless continue, through by-now established and to some extent self-perpetuating networks and patterns.¹⁴ Even if the end of the wars, combined with the crackdown in the U.S., were to encourage a larger number of Central Americans to return home (by free choice or by increased deportations), the trilateral practices and collective cross-border links and circuits that have developed during the last fifteen years are likely to persist, with Salvadorans and Guatemalans continuing to move back and forth across borders in this trilateral region.

The final contradiction of anti-immigrant state policies, which undermines or relativizes their effectiveness perhaps more than all of the above, is that labor migrants are not truly "unwanted" in the U.S.; the proposals for a new Bracero-type program precisely at the height of anti-immigrant measures, are an oft-repeated pattern in U.S. immigration history. Today, in Portes' words, "core-bound immigration is not an optional process, but one driven by the structural requirements of advanced capitalist accumulation." (1995:12) Public perceptions in the U.S. that immigrants are "taking American jobs" or "over-using public services" must be understood largely as a function of the fact that the costs of immigration are socialized (worse yet, at a time of economic recession), while the benefits are privatized. Clearly, there are many different agendas in regard to immigration policy; those who advocate stopping the flow are less likely to prevail, in the long run, than those who seek to control it (in ways adverse to the immigrants themselves).

¹⁴ Sarah Mahler (1995) goes even farther, arguing that Salvadoran society has become so "vested in migration," so permeated by the culture and industries of migration, that the flow will be only minimally deterred by restrictionist U.S. policies or the end of the war. In addition, studies by Nestor Rodríguez and others emphasize the role of rapid travel and communications. On these points more generally, see also Portes (focusing also on the role of transnational entrepreneurs); both he and Massey refer to the "cumulative" and "self-perpetuating" nature of migration.

Political Effects and Theoretical Implication

All of the above raises serious questions about the medium- or long-range effectiveness of anti-immigrant state policies, but there are other consequences. The creation of an integrated region is already in process; but what kind of region will it be, politically? Treating immigration as a national security issue, I suggest, will likely have serious anti-democratic and de-stabilizing consequences. Specifically, it subjects the human beings involved to conditions of greater vulnerability, with diminished human and civil rights. Just as banning abortion only leads to coat-hanger abortions, so too the criminalization of border crossings does not stop immigrants (although it can reduce them) but, above all, makes it far more dangerous and abusive to those involved. To put it another way, anti-immigrant state policies can certainly punish undocumented entrants, regardless of its effectiveness in restricting their entry. More broadly, they also lead to exclusionary politics in the U.S., as I argue more fully in another paper.

Jorge Castañeda, writing about Mexican immigration, has postulated a "de-democratization" of California, referring to the creation of a two-tiered system of citizens/non-citizens as a form of electoral apartheid. But de-democratization has had a spread effect in California and elsewhere in the U.S. It began by treating undocumented immigrants as a national security problem; it has rapidly spread to attacks on legal resident immigrant communities; and it could ultimately affect Latino citizens, as happened with the massive deportations of Mexican-American citizens during the 1930s. But even beyond that, given the multiple initiatives to change the 14th Amendment of the Constitution so as to deny citizenship to children born in the U.S. of undocumented parents, a basic principle of "American democracy" is in danger of being profoundly undermined.

All of the above, has specific implications for Latin America. First, even in terms of the stated goals of U.S. policy for the hemisphere, both Mexico and Central America will be politically and economically destabilized rather than stabilized as a consequence of these measures. To cite only the most obvious example, cutting off remittances from immigrants (one

of the survival mechanisms of economies in crisis) will doubtless undermine economic "stabilization" programs in both Mexico and Central America. By contrast, permitting free movement of peoples would build a stabler as well as a more humane integrated region.¹⁵ That is the European approach, at least among the EC countries. Second, and related to the above, treating immigration as a national security issue does more to undermine than to promote democracy in Latin America, since it institutionalizes new forms of exclusionary politics in inter-American relations and in the countries involved (e.g. militarization of Mexico's borders).

In the case presented here, Salvadorans and Guatemalans have begun to play a role in struggles for democratization in all three areas of this region and are engaging in "transnational grassroots political practices," as some have called them (e.g., Smith 1994).¹⁶ In addition, having begun as targets of exclusionary politics in their countries of origin, some of these Salvadorans and Guatemalans are carriers of resistance strategies, and are learning to use these against exclusionary politics in the U.S. (e.g. working in coalitions around immigration issues).

But they will need solid support from progressive movements in the U.S. and Mexico. In the U.S., this suggests the need to build a new civil rights movement with an internationalist orientation, to fight for the rights of Latino and other immigrants, and to build cross-border coalitions and alliances. Such a movement would go beyond defensive focuses (e.g., against restrictive legislation), to initiate campaigns for strict application of international refugee conventions, for an international charter or Bill of Rights (even an Ombudsman), and

¹⁵ As Luis Guarnizo concludes his study of Dominican return migration, "While the formal Dominican economy is restructuring itself to redefine its mode of insertion into the world economy, migrants are laying the groundwork to further this process of globalization: a growing Dominican population overseas with a thriving ethnic economy, plus a continuous flow of tangible and intangible resources between both countries, are apt pillars to support this process" (1993).

¹⁶ To cite just one incipient example: a group of Guatemalan "Displaced Persons living in the U.S." gained representation in the multi-sectoral Assembly of Civil Sectors in Guatemala, which is deeply involved in the peace process and the democratization of Guatemala, and, in the U.S., this same group has been part of a coalition seeking to gain TPS status for Guatemalans. Like other transnational Latino communities described by Basch et.al., "by living their lives straddling several nation-states, they are affected by, pose special challenges to, and contribute to hegemonic processes in several separate states". (1994:15).

international unions for workers who move across borders (including their treatment at those borders). It would also push for hemispheric codes establishing and enforcing minimum wage rates, basic working conditions, etc. In short, it would set limits on the degree of exploitation of Latin American workers within the U.S. as well as in their home countries. These should be among our priority concerns as 21st century U.S.-based citizens of an increasingly integrated transnational region.

Finally, let us consider briefly some theoretical implications of the above. First, the great upsurge in cross-border immigration suggests the limitations of the nation-bound concept of democracy as nothing more than elections—and even more so the neoliberal idea that the internationalization of capital will automatically "democratize" these regions (which is the working assumption of NAFTA and of U.S. policy in Latin America generally). On the contrary, free trade agreements can only be compatible with a more integral notion of democracy that includes its social dimension if they are based on upward harmonization of wage, environmental, and political standards, rather than downward harmonization, as is currently the case. In a transnational era, furthermore, democracy must include mechanisms to ensure accountability of states to civil society across borders, to counter the undemocratic tendencies of and pressures from transnationalized capital. More generally, as I argue in more detail elsewhere (Jonas 1996), democracy and citizenship must be fully reconceptualized for the 21st century to address the rights of people who move across borders and of transnational populations as citizens of an increasingly integrated region.

Second, just as immigration research grounded in a structural world-systems framework has been greatly enriched by ethnographic and network research and perspectives, so too, it can gain a new dimension from examination of the political implications of anti-immigrant state policies and the new opportunities for political action on this issue by individual and collective actors in civil society. This more explicitly political focus can be useful not only to activists, but also to researchers and theorists developing a multi-dimensional paradigm or approach to immigration. It can shed light on the contradictory roles of the state

as it seeks to enhance cross-border flows of capital and goods while restricting cross-border movements of people, and on the intersection of transnational realities and state policies—ongoing concerns of world-systems analysis.

Third, and related to the above, at a more general level, we need a thoroughly interdisciplinary approach. The project described here combines structural and policy analyses with survey research, ethnographic interviews, and statistical analysis. This particular study, and immigration research more generally, exemplifies the broader need and the opportunity, already identified by leading world-systems scholars, for a new paradigm for the social sciences—including its interaction with what has traditionally been considered the "humanities."¹⁷

A final note on levels of analysis, going back to our starting-point: this paper has attempted to present an approach that is multi-level—regional as well as global and local. By themselves, global structural analyses risk explaining too little by explaining too much. Strictly community or local focuses, on the other hand, can become problematic when their conclusions are generalized too readily. But a combination of both, which additionally incorporates a "middle" or regional cross-border level, permits a focus on the specific dynamics of a particular area such as the trinational region examined here. This multi-dimensional spotlight seems particularly appropriate to illuminate the complex dynamics of immigration in the Americas of the 21st century.

¹⁷ See, for example, Gulbenkian Foundation Commission Report (1992), and Quijano, Wallerstein, and Bonilla, among others. On the last point, which has received increasing attention in cultural studies, Quijano & Wallerstein note that the Americas are undergoing "growing decolonization of the production of culture, of the arts, and of scientific knowledge," despite the pressures from globalizing capital.

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