Beyond the Border: U.S.-Mexican Migration Accord Has Ushered in Sweeping Change in Mexico in Its First Year

June 8, 2020
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• New Policy Brief:
  One Year after the U.S.-Mexico Agreement: Reshaping Mexico’s Migration Policies
  • Available at: https://bit.ly/1yrUSMexmig
Speakers

Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, Associate Policy Analyst, MPI

Angela Kocherga, News Director, KTEP TV in El Paso and Borderzine; Multimedia Editor, ElPasoMatters.org

Gerónimo Gutiérrez, former Ambassador of Mexico to the United States

Roberta Jacobson, former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico and former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs

Andrew Selee, President, MPI
Andrew Selee is President of the Migration Policy Institute. He came to MPI from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, where he served as Executive Vice President from January 2014 through April 2017.


Prior to joining the Wilson Center as an Associate in the Latin American Program in 2000, he was a professional staffer in the U.S. House of Representatives and worked with the YMCA of Baja California in Tijuana, Mexico. He later served on the National Board of the YMCA of the USA and chaired its International Committee. Dr. Selee holds a PhD in policy studies from the University of Maryland, an MA in Latin American studies from the University of California, San Diego, and a BA in Latin American studies (Phi Beta Kappa) from Washington University in St. Louis.
Ariel G. Ruiz Soto is an Associate Policy Analyst at the Migration Policy Institute, where he works with the U.S. Immigration Policy Program. He also manages MPI's internship program.

His research focuses on the impact of U.S. immigration policies on immigrants and other populations, and the interaction between U.S., Mexican, and Central American migration policies. Mr. Ruiz Soto also analyzes methodological approaches to estimate sociodemographic trends of the unauthorized immigrant population in the United States. His research has been published in *Latino Studies* and in *Crossing the United States-Mexico Border: Policies, Dynamics, and Consequences of Mexican Migration to the United States* (University of Texas Press).

Mr. Ruiz Soto holds a master’s degree from the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration with an emphasis on immigration policy and service provision, and a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Whitman College.
One Year after the U.S.-Mexico Agreement: Reshaping Mexico’s Migration Policies

By Ariel G. Ruiz Soto

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THE U.S.-MEXICO JOINT DECLARATION

• Mexico
  – Strengthen migration controls by deploying its recently created National Guard to assist the National Institute of Migration (INM)
  – Accept more non-Mexican migrants and asylum seekers returned by U.S. as part the expansion of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP, also known as Remain in Mexico)

• The United States
  – Commit to expediting the processing of asylum cases and other removal proceedings under MPP

• Both
  – Cooperate to dismantle human-smuggling networks and their financing mechanisms
  – Addressing the root causes of migration through development investment in southern Mexico and Central
Mexican Enforcement Increased After Agreement, Peaked in June

* Data for 2020 are through May.
MPP Expansion Over Summer 2019 Sharply Increased Returns to Mexico


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Exposure to humanitarian concerns

• Responsibility to provide shelter and basic services falls mostly on strained network of civil-society shelters
• Where shelter is unavailable, migrants establish makeshift camps under precarious conditions
• Wide reports of migrant exposure to physical violence, kidnapping, murder, torture, rape and other violent attacks
Other Agreement Elements Show Mixed Results

• Unclear whether U.S. processing of asylum cases MPP improved significantly

• Gradual improvement in dismantling human-smuggling network, especially transport and buses

• U.S. and Mexico have different development assistance priorities in southern Mexico and Central America
  – Pauses and reductions in U.S. funding
  – Unclear results of Mexican investment

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Notes: The humanitarian protection requests in this figure include applications for refugee status, which are processed by Mexico’s Refugee Agency (COMAR), but not political asylum which is granted by the Foreign Ministry. Data for 2020 are through April.

Mexican Enforcement and Humanitarian Protection Amid COVID-19

- U.S. expulsions at land borders under CDC rule (Title 42), Mexico accepts additional migrant returns
- Protests and critiques of health precautions and conditions in migrant detention centers
- Mexican authorities release and return most migrants in detention to reduce virus spreading
- COMAR (Mexican Refugee Commission) continues to receive and process asylum requests, but with limited staff and delays
- Regional border closures and mobility restrictions
  - Limit migration through Mexico with decreases in apprehensions, and delays returns to Central America
  - Decreases number of asylum requests
TAKE AWAY POINTS

- Increased enforcement and demand for asylum in Mexico exposed significant weaknesses in the systems to manage migration and protect vulnerable migrants
- Without additional capacity and infrastructure, returning large number of migrants may exacerbate the serious challenges Mexican border communities and migrants face
- Modernization efforts will ultimately depend on balancing migration enforcement with humanitarian protection considerations in the face of future U.S. pressure
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Ariel G. Ruiz Soto  
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Angela Kocherga is a multimedia journalist who has dedicated her career to covering the U.S./Mexico border and interior of Mexico for television, newspapers, and radio.

She served as both Bureau Chief in Mexico City and later on the border in El Paso for a group of leading U.S. television stations. She has extensive experience covering mass migration from Central America with an emphasis on children, and she traveled to Honduras and Guatemala to examine the root causes of the exodus.

She has spent years reporting on the U.S. border security buildup, fight over the wall, and emergence of militia groups. In Mexico she reported on the drug war, disappeared persons, and mass murders with continuous coverage on the ground in Ciudad Juarez. She is a 2019 Maria Moors Cabot medalist from the Columbia School of Journalism for courageous reporting and contributing to Inter-American understanding. She calls the border home and lives on the edge of Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua.
Gerónimo Gutiérrez Fernández is Managing Partner of BEEL Infrastructure, a specialized advisory & asset management firm focused on the infrastructure sector in Latin America. Recently, he served as Mexico’s Ambassador to the United States (2017-2018), during a time in which the bilateral relation experienced significant changes and challenges; and he played a prominent role in the negotiation of the United States of America, Mexico, and Canada Agreement.

From 2010 to 2016, he served as Managing Director of the North American Development Bank (NADB). Between 2009 and 2010, he served as Mexico’s Deputy Secretary for Governance and Homeland Security. During this time, he was also a member of the National Security Council’s Executive Committee. From 2006 to 2009, he served as Under Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Foreign Ministry, and from 2003 to 2006, he served as Under Secretary for North America.

He has also held other federal government positions in the Ministries of Economy and Treasury, in the Office of the President, and at Banobras (Mexico’s national public works bank). He worked as part of President-Elect Vicente Fox’s transition team, and as Director of Miguel Estrada Iturbide Foundation.
Roberta S. Jacobson is a Senior Advisor at the Albright Stonebridge Group. She served as the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico from May 2016 until her resignation in May 2018, retiring from the State Department after more than 30 years. In Fall 2018, she taught at the University of Chicago’s Institute of Politics as a Pritzker Fellow.

Ms. Jacobson previously served as the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. She has also held various positions in the State Department’s Western Hemisphere Bureau, embassies in Argentina and Peru, and the White House during her career.

Ms. Jacobson holds a MA in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and a BA from Brown University. She is the author of numerous articles, including, “10 Things You Didn’t Know about U.S.–Latin America Relations” (Americas Quarterly, 2013); “Women and the Rule of Law: A View from the Americas” (The Fletcher Forum, 2014); and “The United States and the Western Hemisphere: A Relationship on the Rise” (The Ambassador’s Review, 2015).
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