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All Hail the Market: Immigration and Economics in a Post-Cold War Western Hemisphere

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN MIGRATION STUDIES

By: Jorge Ambriz

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UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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All Hail the Market: Immigration and Economics in a Post-Cold War Western Hemisphere

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May 15, 2020

Master of Arts in Migration Studies

Abstract

The end of the Cold War lifted the United States to the role of the sole economic superpower, and an opportune moment to address hemispheric issues was presented to Washington policymakers. By the end of the 1980s, hemispheric forced migration was on the rise, with a large portion of those forced to flee from Central America. This moment coincided with the decade characterized by an increasingly connected world, where globalization in the form of economic linkages were being proposed in the Summit of the Americas, hemispheric meetings that began in the 1990s in hopes of addressing hemispheric issues. While the free movement of goods is characteristic of neoliberal policies, the movement of people was met with resistance. The increasingly restrictive immigration policies of the 1990s provided little relief for seeking refuge in the United States. The unintended consequence of obliging to a neoliberal project is the displacement of people. This study examines the response and justification of the Clinton administration towards forced migration from Central America. Specifically, this study compares the discourse of neoliberal economic integration to the discourse of the shift toward increasingly restrictive immigration policies.

Key words: neoliberalism, globalization, economic integration, immigration policy, Central America-US foreign relations, US foreign policy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Historical Context	2
Theoretical Frameworks	3
Methodology	7
Chapter II: Literature Review	8
US Imperial Interests in Central America	8
Evolution of US Immigration Policy	11
US Economic Policy as Foreign Policy	14
Chapter III: Policy Approaches & Analysis	16
Justifications and Approached to Immigration Policy	17
The Road to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA)	20
Border Militarization	21
Criminalization of Migration	23
Economics and Immigration Policy	25
Legacy of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA)	29
Economics and a Post-Cold Western Hemisphere	29
Summit I: Miami Summit	31
Summit II: Santiago Summit	32
Summit III: Quebec City Summit	34
Legacy of the Summit of the Americas	36
Chapter IV: Conclusion	37
Further Research	38
Bibliography	40

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Chapter I: Introduction

Migration from Central America is a story of forced displacement. From the first major waves fleeing the Civil Wars of the 1980s and 1990s to the most recent migrant caravans, the general trends of migration from the region point to a steady increase with each passing decade. Scholars have divided the eras of Central American migration into four general eras: pre-1970s, described as mostly intraregional, cyclical movement; the 1970s-1990s, described as conflict-related migration, fleeing civil war, repression, and military rule; the 1990s-2000, described as migration related to economic transition and global labor demand; and 2000-Present, described as a mix of economic and security related reasonings, especially after Honduran coup of 2009.¹ This study focuses on the role of hemispheric politics during the 1990s and early 2000s, specifically the interplay between the discourse of immigration policy and the attempts at a hemispheric economic consensus directed at Central America from Washington policymakers. Immigration policy during the 1990s took an increasingly draconian lean in terms of enforcement and admittance, more so with the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996. The same year NAFTA was signed between Mexico, Canada, and the United States, the 1994 inaugural Summit of the Americas began the discussion of a hemispheric free trade agreement and an attempt to facilitate trade and privatize industries in the hemisphere.

This shift is an important turning point in both immigration and economic policy with lasting consequences, evident by the recent major waves of forced migration from Central America. It is under this context that a few questions arise that lead this study: How did the hemispheric move to liberalize trade and markets in the 1990s, championed by the United States,

¹ Manuel Orozco, "Recent Trends in Central American Migration," *The Dialogue* (May 14, 2018), <https://www.thedialogue.org/analysis/recent-trends-in-central-american-migration/> (accessed September 30, 2019).

contribute to out-migration from Central America? How were U.S. restrictive immigration policies specifically affecting Central American migrants justified despite the move toward market values of the 1990s? How did U.S. relations with Central American governments during this crucial period contribute to a deterioration of country conditions?

Historical Context

Central America was in conflict throughout much of the Cold War. After decades of repressive regimes, revolutionary movements emerged and waged war against the political status quo. El Salvador had been under a military dictatorship since before World War II that came to ahead with the start of the civil war of 1980. Nicaragua plunged into violence with the ousting of Anastacio Somoza in 1979. Guatemala experienced egregious human rights violations on its most vulnerable populations at the hands of a repressive regime. The region did not escape the Cold War geopolitical context, with renewed attention by the Reagan administration as it waged ideological war with the Soviet Union.²

The United States intervened in all the Central American conflicts of the 1980s, mostly by providing monetary aid as well as logistics and training to deter the perceived spread of communism, accelerated under the Ronald Reagan administration. The geopolitical landscape dictated policy approaches, with US policymakers typically siding with military governments justified by needing to rid the region of communism despite numerous reports of human rights violations.³

² Fabrice Lehoucq, *The Politics of Modern Central America: Civil War, Democratization and Underdevelopment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 94.

³ Lehoucq, *The Politics of Modern Central America*, 31.

The end of the Cold War coincided with the signing of peace accords in Central America; first in Nicaragua in 1990, then El Salvador in 1992, and Guatemala in 1996. The international community facilitated the negotiations, and it seemed the region was ready to move forward. Yet this same international community could not adequately address the displacement of people that started in the late 1970s and continued into the 1990s. There was also a shift in the driver of migration. Migration during the Cold War was a direct result of the regional conflicts. Post-Cold War migration is mainly characterized as forced migration of circumstance, despite the surface level rise in overall GDP of Central American economies throughout the decade.

The Summit of the Americas were a series of summits, beginning in 1994, that brought together leaders to discuss common issues in the hemisphere. Spearheaded by the Clinton administration with Miami hosting the inaugural meeting, these meetings generated declarations and plans of action as a recommendation for signees to implement back in their respective nations. Although forced migration was already an unaddressed hemispheric issue, the summit meetings focused more on an economic consensus rather than directly address the circumstances that initiated the forced migration.

This was an opportune moment to address the root causes of migration that had initially begun with the outbreak of the regional civil wars, yet the approaches to economic policy and the restrictive immigration policy of the decade helped to further set the stage for continued forced migration from the region.

Theoretical Frameworks: Beyond Push-Pull Theory

The complexities of international migration cannot be explained by a single unifying theory. Instead, a combination of theories is implemented to disentangle the intricacies of the

migration process. Perhaps the most referenced theory of international migration is the macro-focused Push-Pull Theory, first proposed by Everett S. Lee (1966) examining European migration of the 1950s and 60s.⁴ Lee identified four main factors that account for the movement of people: 1. Factors associated with the area of origin (push factors), 2. Factors associated with the area of destination (pull factors), 3. Intervening obstacles, and 4. Personal factors.⁵ Written in an era of cyclical migration and less restrictive admission policies, this model attempted to reveal the migratory structures and processes of the time, concluding the migratory process as one tied heavily to economic variances in both sending and receiving countries.

Douglas S. Massey (1998) called this analysis too simple an explanation, calling attention to the postindustrial context of the mid-1990s onward. Massey calls Lee's explanation too "neat," too dependent on the equilibrium of economic growth and contraction.⁶ Massey also points to the time Lee was writing, where cyclical migration was the norm and not the restrictive admission policies that characterized the rise of neoliberalism during the 1990s and early 2000s. This tightening up of admission policies reduced the application of standard economic models by impeding the free circulation of labor.⁷ Massey calls for an expansion of Push-Pull theory that incorporates the increasingly complex processes of international migration. Massey identifies a duality of factors he terms the Initiation and Perpetuation of International Migration. In other words, what begins the movement people, and what keeps the movement of people going. By incorporating these intersecting factors, Massey argues this approach better addresses the root causes of forced migration, thus revealing the structural and systemic conditions for the

⁴ Everett S. Lee, "A Theory of Migration," *Demography* 3, no. 1 (1966): 47-57, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2060063>.

⁵ Lee, "A Theory of Migration," 49-50.

⁶ Douglass S. Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12.

⁷ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 14.

movement of people.

Neoliberalism and Securitization

The case of Central American migration in the 1990s can be situated in the global and regional movement towards trade liberalization and the embracing of market values while at the same time increasing securitization of immigration policies, a dynamic first explored by Saskia Sassen (1999) reflecting on 1990s migration.⁸ Didier Fassin (2012) refers to this dynamic as the “contradictions of globalization,”⁹ where there is an almost paradoxical attempt by the Global North at limiting the movement of migrants from the Global South while “expanding the uniform space of neoliberal capitalism to expedite the flow of commodities and finance.”¹⁰ Most recently, a HAAS Institute report (2017) explores this dynamic in the context of forced migration.¹¹ The report takes a worldwide viewpoint, and notes the role of the movement to allow the free flow of capital with as little barriers to that movement as possible, all while being met with “the continued creation of barriers to the movement of people.”¹² This move towards Securitization is at odds with the language of Neoliberalization, instead targeting the people forced to move and enacting “extreme vetting” through stricter admission policies, and the militarization of borders. The HAAS report summarizes this dichotomy as “one of both the free flow of capital from the Global South to the Global North, and the mass restriction of the flow of people from the Global

⁸ Saskia Sassen, “Transnational Economic and National Migration Policies,” in Max J. Castro, ed., *Free Markets, Open Societies, Closed Borders? Trends in International Migration and Immigration Policy in the Americas* (Coral Gables, North-South Center Press, 1999), 7-32.

⁹ Didier Fassin, “Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries: The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011), 214.

¹⁰ Gregory Feldman, *The Migration Apparatus: Security, Labor, and Policymaking in the European Union* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 78.

¹¹ HAAS Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, “Moving Targets: An Analysis of Forced Global Migration,” (Research Report, University of California Berkeley, 2017).

¹² HAAS Institute, “Moving Targets,” 23.

South to the Global North.”¹³

David Harvey (2007) defines the shift toward neoliberalism as “maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market.”¹⁴ This dynamic characterized Central America during the 1990s, where economic integration and the liberalization of trade were hailed as possible avenues for regional prosperity, yet the same decade witnessed increasingly draconian implementation of immigration policies.

The Neoliberalization-Securitization Dichotomy sets up the conditions for the Initiation of International Migration proposed by Massey and can be situated within the broader World Systems Theory. World Systems Theory, first proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein, analyzes forces operating at the macro level, where core regions (“Global North”) are at a constant advantage at the expense of the periphery (“Global South”). Under World Systems Theory, migration from the periphery is described as “a natural consequence of capitalist market penetration across national boundaries.”¹⁵ Colonial and imperial structures had facilitated the exploitation in the past, and since the 1990s has been made possible by “neocolonial governments and multinational firms that perpetuate the power of national elites who... participate in the world economy as capitalists themselves.” International migration, then, emerged as “a natural outgrowth of disruptions and dislocations that inevitably occur in the process of capitalist development.”¹⁶ In the case of Central America, the push factors are revealed country destabilization in the region, a direct result of market neoliberalization and border and immigration policy securitization.

¹³ HAAS Institute, “Moving Targets,” 26.

¹⁴ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

¹⁵ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 18.

¹⁶ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 37.

Methodology

The methodology used in this research study is a discourse analysis, examining the documents that were generated by the Summit of the Americas in 1994, 1998, and 2001, and comparing emerging themes and justifications with the discourse of immigration debates and policies dealing with Central American migration of the 1990s. The Plan of Actions from the Summit meetings were intended as blueprints for leaders to implement appropriate policies back in their home countries, and in this study are analyzed to reveal the themes that were discussed and what the priorities of those in attendance were. The documents are housed in the Summit of the Americas Secretariat's website. The analysis is limited to the first three summit Plan of Actions largely due to the three meetings taking place before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which drastically shifted the landscape of both economic and immigration discourse. Presidential remarks, press conferences, and media appearances from members of the Clinton administration from 1992 to the signing of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 are chosen for analysis in order to understand the justifications for the shift in approach to immigration policy. These documents are accessible through the online archive *American Presidential Project*, hosted at the University of California, Santa Barbara. For this study, it is important to identify language and context used by the Clinton administration in the lead up to the signing of the law.

The parallel analysis of this study reveals the contradictions of an increasingly globalized hemisphere, where the neoliberal shift in hemispheric geopolitics was met with the securitization efforts through a shift in immigration policy that accompanied the liberalization of trade, and thus a unilateral attempt at stopping the results of migration rather than a collaborative approach at addressing the root causes of forced migration out of Central America. The language of the

summit documents, hailing cooperation and urging an implementation of a hemispheric economic consensus as a means for prosperity, is at odds with the discourse of immigration policy, which approached the issue in a top-down, nationalistic and increasingly draconian approach that characterized US immigration policy of the 1990s. In order to understand the most recent headlines of unaccompanied youth and detention of migrants, it is crucial to understand the shifts that happen during the time period of this study.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In order to address the research questions posed in this study, three main bodies of literature warrant examination. The first is an exploration of literature on the evolution of US interests in Latin America. As much as possible, this analysis focuses on the approach toward Central America, up to the end of the Cold War. Next is an examination of the evolution of immigration policy, also as specific as possible as it relates to Central America. The last piece of literature is of economics as a foreign policy tool. The status of the literature reveals the need for scholarship on the intersection of the three, namely the intersection of US economic policy and immigration policy, and the role of the US policymakers in pushing for economic integration and while at the same time building barriers for entry. This is by no means an extensive exploration of the history of US foreign policy. Instead, what follows functions as a primer, providing context for the analysis that follows.

US Imperial Interests in Central America

There is a deep scholarship of US-Central American relations, with many noting the historical self-interested approach by the US towards the region. The approach to foreign policy

towards Latin America has gone through different iterations since the declaration of the Monroe Doctrine almost two hundred years ago. The Monroe Doctrine, first enshrined in U.S. foreign policy in the early 19th century, has been the justification for many interventions in Latin America.¹⁷ This piece of legislation was the justification for westward expansion of the first half of the 19th century, which saw the United States annex large portions of Mexico under the auspice of Manifest Destiny. Cyrus Veaser (2002) chronicles the early years of the 20th century and argues that government takeover of the San Domingo Improvement Company essentially tied economic influence to foreign politics.¹⁸ Imperialism through economics, also known as Dollar Diplomacy, tied economics as leverage for influence on the physical occupation of countries not fitting the US hemispheric mold. Thus, an active embrace of imperialism as policy emerged as a staple of US foreign policy, which manifested in Central America through the active occupation of Nicaragua during the Banana Wars from 1912 to 1933.¹⁹

The Franklin Roosevelt administration brought with a change in approach with the Good Neighbor Policy, which proposed a policy of mutual interaction between the United States and Latin American, though maintained a presence through the military training of leaders. Leslie Gill (2004) examines the role of the School of the Americas during this time, and documents the indoctrination of Latin America's future military leaders, many of whom would essentially become proxies for American interests in the region.²⁰ The Cuban Revolution ended the Good Neighbor Policy with the revolution's alignment with the Soviet Union, and the failed Bay of

¹⁷ Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2011)

¹⁸ Cyrus Veaser, *A World Safe for Capitalism: Dollar Diplomacy and America's Rise to Global Power* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002)

¹⁹ Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005)

²⁰ Leslie Gill, *The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004)

Pigs invasion was perhaps the peak of Cold War activity in the western hemisphere.²¹

The Cold War was a particularly violent time in Central America, with most of the region engaged in civil conflict. William M. LeoGrande (1998) chronicles the relationship between United States and Central America during the Cold War, specifically the return of Cold War politics by Ronald Reagan. LeoGrande argues that the renewed attention to Central America was an extension to the Vietnam debate, where the United States had failed to maintain a presence.²² Trevor McCrisken (2003) continues and expands this examination of the legacy of Vietnam and Vietnam Syndrome, where the failure in Vietnam heavily influenced the foreign policy approach towards Latin America as a whole, implementing a win-at-all-costs strategy.²³ David F. Schmitz (2006) chronicles the relationship between the United States and right-wing governments during the Cold War, concluding that these relationships with right-wing dictators were deliberate efforts to keep Central America within its sphere of influence.²⁴

Two major works written in the early-1990s provide context of how US foreign policy was perceived just a few years removed from the 80s to 90s shift. Ronald Cox (1994) takes an economic examination of the relationship between the United States and Central American. The analysis of the book centers around the role capital and corporate interests played in justifying involvement in Central America. Cox briefly covers the shift between the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations, and highlights the increasing shift to neoliberal policies under Bush.²⁵ Also

²¹ David Bernell *Constructing US Foreign Policy: The Curious Case of Cuba* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

²² M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

²³ Trevor B. McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: US Foreign Policy since 1974* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

²⁴ David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1965-1989* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁵ Ronald Cox, *Power and Profits: U.S. Policy in Central America* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

written in the early 1990s, Walter LaFeber (1993) provides historical context of U.S. involvement going back more than a century.²⁶ Although somewhat dated, these are included in this literature review because of the importance of having literature close to the happenings this study is undertaking. These two pieces also provide clarity in examining and chronicling why the United States insisted on involvement in the region.

Despite the de-escalation of the regional civil wars in the 1990s and the signing of peace accords, country conditions in Central America did not notably improve. Fabrice Lehoucq (2012) argues that weak and inconsistent authoritarian regimes early in the decade gave rise to guerilla movements. A lack of equitable economic growth contributed to political market failures, in turn preventing the development of stable political structures.²⁷ Regardless of the changing geopolitical landscape, the United States has kept a stronghold in the region. Greg Grandin (2006) refers to this approach towards Latin America as an “imperial training ground” for policies then implemented during the post-9/11 regime change campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.²⁸ Although the nature of US foreign policy approaches evolved since the invocation of the Monroe Doctrine, from a physical presence and embrace of imperial practice to an economic and ideologic influence, the common trend of maintaining influence in the region persisted into the era of this study.

Evolution of US Immigration Policy

Race and class have historically been drivers of inclusion and exclusion into the US

²⁶ Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993).

²⁷ Fabrice Lehoucq, *The Politics of Modern Central America: Civil War, Democratization and Underdevelopment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²⁸ Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of New Imperialism* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2006).

polity. Bill Hing (2004) implicates the racial and political subtexts of US immigration policy, highlighting major immigration policy reforms and enforcement strategies that exemplifies what he calls the “constant battle to define America.”²⁹ By examining policy shifts such as the Asian Exclusion acts of the late 1800s, the 1917 literacy law, the national origin quotas of the 1920s, the political and social exclusion of the 1952 immigration overhaul, and the clampdown on asylum applicants throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Hing concludes that immigration policy has largely been dependent on race lines. The influence of race has historically dictated who is included in the US citizenry.

Geopolitics has also influenced the direction of immigration policy. Paul A. Kramer (2018) points to the relationship foreign relations has had in influencing “selective openings” in US immigration politics.³⁰ Long seen as a domestic issues, Kramer calls for a reexamination of immigration policy through a transnational lens. Alberto J. Perez (2003) examines the case study of the differing politics between Cuba and Haiti, and how that has influenced at different times admission or exclusion into the United States.³¹ The example most relevant to this study is the wet foot, dry foot policy, which was a policy reinterpreted and used as a justification for providing citizenship to Cuban nationals fleeing communism.

Douglass Massey and Karen Pren (2012) examine the consequence of increased restrictions of legal entry from Latin America. They argue that the boom of migration from Latin America occurred in spite of rather than because of the increasingly restrictive changes to

²⁹ Bill Ong Hing, *Defining America Through Immigration Policy* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004), 7.

³⁰ Paul A. Kramer, April 2018, “The Geopolitics of Mobility: Immigration Policy and American Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century,” *The American Historical Review* 123 (2): 393-438, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/123.2.393> (accessed April 13, 2020).

³¹ Alberto J. Perez, “Wet Foot, Dry Foot: The Recurring Controversy Between Cubans, Haitians, and the United States Immigration Policy,” *Nova Law Review* 28 (2): 437-465, <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/nlr/vol28/iss2/16> (accessed April 24, 2020).

immigration policy. By erecting barriers in the form of stricter immigration policies, the changes to immigration policy beginning in the 1980s effectively brought an end to traditional cyclical migration.³² Marc Rosenblum and Kate Brick (2011), writing for the Migration Policy Institute, examine the role of the shifting nature of immigration policy and how it has affected migration flows from Mexico and Central America.³³ They highlight the changing demographic of migrants, noting the shift from Mexican migration to Central America migration of the past two decades. Interestingly, the report falls short in implicating the 1996 Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act, instead opting to focus more on Bush-era doctrine of immigration policy.

Recent Central American immigration scholarship has focused on the role of immigrant-right groups responding to the indifference of U.S. policymakers. With the recent headlines of the exodus of migrant caravans of recent years, this body of literature is growing. Historian of displaced and mobile populations Maria Cristina Garcia has two books that breakdown the trends of Central American migration. Her first book *Seeking Refuge* (2006) looks at the movement from Central America to the three northern neighbors of Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Particular focus has been placed on the role of immigrant-right groups responding to the indifference of US policymakers, as well as an examination of the complex relationship between the receiving countries of Mexico, the United States, and Canada, and the vastly different experiences of each.³⁴ Her most recent book *The Refugee Challenge in Post-Cold War America*

³² Massey, Douglas S., and Karen A. Pren. 2012. "Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge from Latin America," *Population & Development Review* 38 (1): 1–29. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2012.00470.x> (accessed December 12, 2019).

³³ Marc R. Rosenblum and Kate Brick, "U.S. Immigration Policy and Mexican/Central American Migration Flows: Then and Now," *Migration Policy Institute* (August, 2011), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/RMSG-us-immigration-policy-mexican-central-american-migration-flows> (accessed January 20, 2020).

³⁴ Maria Cristina Garcia, *Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

(2017) builds on her previous work, giving special attention to the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.³⁵

US Economic Policy as Foreign Policy

This section highlights the intersection of immigration and economic policy, what this study argues is the force that serves to drive irregular migration from Central America. An excellent primer on the use of economics as a tool for foreign policy is Daniel Sargent's (2017) "American Foreign Economic Policy," which examines the entirety of US history through an economic lens. Sargent's piece highlights the use of economics as a tool for maintaining influence, despite the changing landscape of economic history since the Monroe Doctrine. Most relevant to this study is the post-Bretton Woods analysis, particularly the post-Cold War years that convinced US policymakers "that untrammelled free markets represented the only credible means for nations to achieve development and prosperity."³⁶ The Washington Consensus is key term used to describe this market-oriented approach favored by the IMF, the World Bank, and U.S. Treasury, and for the purposes of this study will be used here on out to describe the approach directed by US policymakers in hemispheric economic discussions.

The scholarship of the interplay of immigration and hemispheric economic policy and its implications on Central American migration is growing. Edited by Christopher Mitchell (1992), this early work examines the trends of US foreign relations with Latin America and the handling of migration. The response to this movement of people has been shaped by foreign policy

³⁵ Maria Cristina Garcia, *The Refugee Challenge in Post-Cold War America*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁶ Daniel Sargent, "American Foreign Economic Policy," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, August 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.52> (accessed February 18, 2020).

directives.³⁷ A discussion on the effects on sending and receiving countries is undertaken through a variety of lenses in Wayne Cornelius, Thomas Espenshade, and Idean Salehyan, eds. (2001). A theme that emerges in a few of the chapters is the role of highly skilled labor and its effect on local markets, both sending and receiving. There is an argument made for making high skilled labor permanent, using this economic opportunity as a means for immigrant integration.³⁸

The 1980s marked a shift in global economic trends, where the economies of highly developed countries underwent deregulation and internationalization, opening economies to foreign investment, regional and international markets, and imports of goods and services.³⁹ Marc Rosenblum (2004) examines the role of migrant-sending states in influencing US migration policy. Economics, relieve unemployment pressures, remittances, but economic drawbacks and social ones as well.⁴⁰ Sending states have successfully influenced immigration policy, showcased in the passage of NACARA and the push for temporary protected status.⁴¹

The literature on the history on the evolving nature of US imperial aspirations in Central America, the evolution of immigration policy, and the intersection of economic and immigration policy reveals the need for further research in the era this study is situated. This study is specifically focused on the gap in literature regarding the intersection of the neoliberal hemispheric movement (the Washington Consensus) and the passage of restrictive immigration policies by the US during the Clinton administration. The 1990s presented a unique opportunity

³⁷ Christopher Mitchell, ed., *Western Hemisphere Immigration and United States Foreign Policy* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1992).

³⁸ Wayne Cornelius, Thomas Espenshade, and Idean Salehyan, eds., *The International Migration of the Highly Skilled: Demand, Supply, and the Development Consequences in Sending and Receiving Countries* (La Jolla, CA: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California San Diego, 2001).

³⁹ Sassen, "Transnational Economies," 14.

⁴⁰ Marc R. Rosenblum, "Moving Beyond the Policy of No Policy: Emigration from Mexico and Central America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 46, no. 4 (Winter, 2004): 91-125. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/174212/pdf> (accessed November 28, 2020).

⁴¹ Rosenblum, "Moving Beyond the Policy of No Policy," 114-15.

to address the crisis of forced migration. Instead, the obsession with the Washington-led economic model, repeatedly recommended through hemispheric summit meetings of the 1990s and early 2000s, ignored the root causes that exacerbated the number of migrants to leave their homes. By examining both the economic and immigration discourse during the time, this study reveals the shortsightedness of the Clinton administration in handling immigration through the neoliberal lens that led attempts at hemispheric economic integration. By approaching immigration policy through the same neoliberal lens, it approached the hemispheric economic discourse, the Clinton administration failed to address the root causes of forced migration out of Central America.

Chapter III: Policy Approaches and Analysis

Justifications for approaches to immigration policy has largely followed geopolitical happenings. For purposes of this study, it is important to note the evolving justifications of immigration discourse, with special attention placed on the years following the Cold War, and contrasting it with the discourse of a proposed economic hemispheric consensus in the following section of the chapter. The United States emerged as the sole superpower after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and policymakers were able to influence neighbors to adhere to US interests. Important pieces of immigration legislation were passed during this decade, essentially shifting the trajectory of immigration discourse to one that militarized the border and criminalized migrants, while highlighting the need to preserve national interests and promoting economic agreements as possible solutions to address forced migration.

The analysis of the Summit of the Americas discourse on the proposed economic integration of the hemisphere in the second part of this chapter is a stark contrast to the approach

of the immigration discourse that follows. Where the immigration discourse called for a closure of borders and a buildup of increasingly restrictive measures, the economic narrative called for collaborative efforts to open regional markets through a breakdown of tariffs, privatization of nationalized industry, and free trade proposals. The joint discourse analysis of the documents and conversations reveals the justification for the passage of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act that built barriers in the same era that proposed an opening of markets and a coveted Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). The Clinton administration approached immigration policy through the lens of neoliberalism and free trade. As a result, the inefficiency of 1990s immigration policy failed to address root causes of Central American migration.

Justifications and Approaches to Immigration Policy

An important piece of legislation specifically addressing Central American migration during the Cold War was the granting of general amnesty under Ronald Reagan through the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). The policy granted amnesty for most undocumented people that could demonstrate they had been in the United States prior to 1982 without a criminal record.⁴² The control portion of the law implemented employer sanctions and increased funding and resources for border enforcement.⁴³ However, IRCA did not fully address the status of refugee or asylum seekers, largely because of the Reagan administration's assertion that Central American migration was economically motivated and thus not eligible under the current asylum requirements.⁴⁴ At the signing of the legislation, Reagan remarked that "the

⁴² Rosenblum, "Moving Beyond the Policy of No Policy," 106.

⁴³ Rosenblum, "Moving Beyond the Policy of No Policy," 107.

⁴⁴ Rosenblum, "Moving Beyond the Policy of No Policy," 107.

problem of illegal immigration should not...be seen as a problem between the United States and its neighbors. Our objective is only to establish a reasonable, fair, orderly, and secure system of immigration into this country and not to discriminate in any way against particular nations of people.”⁴⁵ This approach undertaken by the Reagan administration, even as rhetorical as it was, is a stark contrast to the approach of the 1990s, especially that of the Clinton administration.

The 1990s

The decade began with the signing of the Immigration Act in 1990, signed by George H.W. Bush. The 1990 law was framed as an addendum to the 1986 law, which worked to tighten immigration enforcement. The discourse of immigration and its enforcement also shifted with the passage of this law. On his remarks when signing the 1990 law, George H.W. Bush framed the law as opening the “front door” to increase legal migration, where the 1986 law effectively closed the “back door.”⁴⁶ He credited the 1990 law as one that “provides needed enforcement authority.”⁴⁷ Bush also highlighted the strength of the law in facilitating deportation of “aliens who, by their violent criminal acts, forfeit their right to remain in this country.” This framing of migration as “[jeopardizing] the safety and well-being of every American resident,” perhaps inadvertently, contributed to the justification for a restrictive shift in the approach to immigration policy.⁴⁸

Asylum claims also underwent a bureaucratic shift with the 1990 law. The law sent out a crew of asylum officers, with instructions for a stricter interpretation of “well-founded fear”

⁴⁵ Ronald Reagan, Remarks on Signing the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/254470> (accessed September 18, 2019).

⁴⁶ George Bush, Statement on Signing the Immigration Act of 1990 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265173> (accessed August 30, 2019).

⁴⁷ Bush, Statement on Signing the Immigration Act of 1990.

⁴⁸ Bush, Statement on Signing the Immigration Act of 1990.

claims of asylum.⁴⁹ This essentially made it much more difficult to be granted asylum, showcased by the number of successful asylum claims following the passage.⁵⁰

The 1990 Act also contributed to the beginning of the militarization of the US-Mexico border. The move to militarize the southern border was manifested by an increase in border patrol funding.⁵¹ These policy directives were justified by the Bush administration as an effort to secure the US border, framed as “the front lines of the war on drugs,” and to an effort to “[clarify] the authority of Immigration and Naturalization Service enforcement officers to make arrests and carry firearms.”⁵²

Unique to Central American migration, the 1990 Immigration Act created Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for migrants fleeing countries designated by the Attorney General as dangerous due to armed conflict, environmental disasters, or other extraneous circumstances.⁵³ El Salvador was the only Central American nation to be designated due to the violence of the civil war. There was also conflict in Nicaragua and Guatemala as well, although these countries did not get the same designation. These countries only received TPS designation in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in 1998.⁵⁴ It seems the politics between the United States and other Central American governments friendly to US interests and to avoid admitting guilt in their role in the civil wars.

⁴⁹ David L. McKinney, “Congressional Intent, the Supreme Court and Conflict among the Circuits over Statutory Eligibility for Discretionary Relief under Immigration and Naturalization Act § 212(c),” *The University of Miami Inter-American Law Review* 26, no. 1 (Fall, 1994): 107. <https://jstor.org/stable/40176377> (accessed March 29, 2020).

⁵⁰ Andorra Bruno, *Immigration: U.S. Asylum Policy*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service (February 19, 2019): 11-12, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45539> (accessed March 19, 2020).

⁵¹ McKinney, “Immigration and Naturalization Act,” 102.

⁵² George Bush, Remarks on Signing the Immigration Act of 1990 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265168> (accessed August 12, 2019).

⁵³ Jill H. Wilson, *Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service (November 2, 2017): 2, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RS/RS20844> (accessed March 14, 2020).

⁵⁴ Wilson, *Temporary Protected Status*, 6.

There was an interesting remark by George H.W. Bush when signing the legislation concerning temporary protected status. Since temporary protected status gave “exclusive authority” to the Attorney General to allow “otherwise deportable aliens to remain here temporarily because of their nationality or region of origin,” Bush asserted that his administration would not interpret that provision “as detracting from any authority of the executive branch to exercise prosecutorial discretion in suitable immigration cases. Any attempt to do so would raise serious constitutional questions,” further cementing executive power of who gets to stay and who gets deported at the discretion of the Attorney General.⁵⁵ George Bush went on to lose to Bill Clinton, who in part argued the Bush administration was not tough on irregular migration.

The Road to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA)

Immigration was on the radar of the Clinton administration early, critiquing what was perceived as a lax stance by the Bush administration. Speaking at an economic conference in California three weeks after taking office, Clinton laid out his administration’s approach to immigration and reassured a “commitment to the States that have been overwhelmed by immigration problems.” Clinton highlighted the “increased costs brought on by immigration” as a contributor to the problems facing California, and likened it to the problems of financial institutions, a reduction in the defense industry, and a collapse of real estate as the major problems afflicting California.⁵⁶ Clinton very early on set out to frame the issue as a states’ rights

⁵⁵ Bush, Statement on Signing the Immigration Act of 1990.

⁵⁶ William J. Clinton, Teleconference Remarks to the California Economic Conference Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/218461> (accessed August 10, 2019).

issue, and spent much of the time prior to the signing of the IIRIRA catering to the growing anti-immigration sentiment of California at the time.

The Clinton administration responded to irregular migration by militarizing the border and criminalizing migration, justified as a national security threat, and touting an economic consensus as the preferred solution. Immigration emerged as a central theme in the two terms of the Clinton administration. The approach to immigration policy by the Clinton administration can be best summed up as grossly short-sighted and reactionary, having failed to truly address the root causes of irregular migration and instead retroactively addressing the results of that migration.

Border Militarization

The Clinton administration approached immigration policy in a result-oriented approach, failing to address root causes of irregular migration. A major theme of Clinton's immigration policy approach was the militarization of the Mexico-US border. This was done two ways: an increase in the budget of the US Border Patrol and a shift in enforcement approach at the border. Under the Clinton administration, the budget of the US Border Control sharply increased, justified under the guise of a national security threat. The budget of US Border Patrol almost tripled while Clinton held office, from 326 million to more than a billion by the time Clinton left office.⁵⁷ At a 1993 press conference announcing the appointment of Doris Meissner as Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Clinton framed the immigration discourse as one where “[the United States could not] afford to lose control of our own borders

⁵⁷ Department of Homeland Security, “U.S. Border Patrol Fiscal Year Budget Statistics Border Patrol Program Budget – FY 1990 through FY 2013,” Data Catalog; Data.gov, December 2, 2019, <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/u-s-border-patrol-fiscal-year-budget-statistics-border-patrol-program-budget-fy-1990-thro-> (accessed May 1, 2020).

or to take on new financial burdens.” From the start, Clinton approached immigration policy as a tool of enforcement, pledging what was termed as “a fair enforcement of our country’s immigration laws” and framed as a national security battle, aiming to combat the “problem of organized crime syndicates trafficking in alien smuggling.” Clinton framed this proposed tightening of immigration enforcement as “[responding] to a major crime problem which has existed for almost [two] years,” justified as a moral battle against the “shameful practice of unspeakable degradation and unspeakable exploitation [of ‘alien smuggling’].” To address this perceived attack on borders, Clinton planned to “strengthen law enforcement efforts...by expanding investigative efforts and broadening prosecution strategies,” and “[expediting] procedures for processing entry claims and for returning economic migrants smuggled into the United States.”⁵⁸

The backing of border militarization was consistent among the ranks of the Clinton administration. This was justified as a means to regain control of the perceived loss of the Mexico-US border. Attorney General Janet Reno called for a stricter immigration approach consistent with to “gain border control and better enforce our immigration laws.” In a personal anecdote, Reno claimed to have personally witnessed “masses of immigrants gathered along the fence, coming across the border at night.” Critiques of past administrations was also a card used by the Clinton administration in pushing for stricter immigration laws, often referring to those approaches as “failed immigration policies and practices of the past.” By renewing its attention to the Mexico-US border and pushing for the enforcement of stricter immigration laws, the administration believed migration could be controlled since it believed the borders were not

⁵⁸ William J. Clinton, Remarks on the Nomination of Doris Meissner To Be Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner and an Exchange With Reporters Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220499> (accessed August 8, 2019).

being secured. Under this assumption, the administration was able to justify the increase of resources to “where they are needed most -- at the border.” Doris Meissner echoed this justification as a “crackdown at the Southwest border,” a crackdown where Congress should allocate more on “border patrol agents and more equipment.”⁵⁹ It was argued that this increase in resources assured would advance the goals of the administration by substantially improving “legal commerce and traffic” while also able “to detect and apprehend illegal entries” from tighter borders.⁶⁰

It was also this perceived threat to national security that the Clinton administration was able to implement military-style operations along the southern border, such as Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego California, Operation Hold the Line in El Paso Texas, Operation Rio Grande in McAllen Texas, and Operation Safeguard in Tucson, Arizona. These operations were an attempt to deter entry through traditional ports of entry. The consequence was the closure of traditional points of entry for migrants, resulting in a much more dangerous trek for migrants, now having to pass through more dangerous routes. Contrary to the goals of the administration, the militarizing of traditional ports of entry led to an increase in migrant smuggling.⁶¹ The militarization of the border essentially ended the cyclical movement that characterized migration.⁶²

Criminalization of Migration

⁵⁹ William J. Clinton, Remarks on Illegal Immigration by Attorney General Reno, I.N.S. Commissioner Meissner, Secretary of Labor Reich, El Paso Chief Border Patrol Agent Reyes, and I.N.S. Western Region Director Gus De La Vina Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/270233> (accessed August 10, 2019).

⁶⁰ Clinton, Remarks on Illegal Immigration by Attorney General Reno, I.N.S. Commissioner Meissner, Secretary of Labor Reich, El Paso Chief Border Patrol Agent Reyes, and I.N.S. Western Region Director Gus De La Vina.

⁶¹ Might want to include some literature here about the rise of coyotes and the rise of illegal smuggling.

⁶² Massey and Pren, “Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy,” 2.

Coupled with the militarization of the Mexico-US border, the Clinton administration attempted to deter irregular migration by criminalizing migration through detention and deportation initiatives. This approach was highlighted by INS Commissioner Doris Meissner where she committed “significant new resources to the detention and deportation of criminal aliens in order to triple the number of criminal aliens and others subject to deportations since the administration began.”⁶³ These policy changes were justified as a way to protect “our borders, our workplaces, our communities.”

This language went beyond criminal records, instead a blanket criminalization of undocumented migrants. In a message to Congress regarding proposed immigration legislation, Clinton pushed for this by stating:

“...the growing abuse of our legal immigration and political asylum systems by illegal aliens holding fraudulent documents and by alien smugglers... The proposal is part of a larger Administration initiative that I announced on June 18, 1993, to combat the illegal entry and smuggling of aliens into the United States...The use of fraudulent documents by aliens seeking to enter the United States has increased dramatically. This proposal would expedite the exclusion and return of certain undocumented and fraudulently documented aliens who clearly are ineligible for admission to the United States, while ensuring that persons who have legitimate asylum claims receive full and fair hearings. In addition, the bill would increase the ability of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to prosecute alien smugglers and enhance the penalties for alien smuggling.”⁶⁴

Much of what was proposed in this statement made it onto the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. By pushing for the measures that criminalized undocumented migrants, simply not having documentation rendered migrants deportable. This was extended to legal permanent residents as well, and some misdemeanor

⁶³ Clinton, Remarks on Illegal Immigration by Attorney General Reno, I.N.S. Commissioner Meissner, Secretary of Labor Reich, El Paso Chief Border Patrol Agent Reyes, and I.N.S. Western Region Director Gus De La Vina.

⁶⁴ William J. Clinton, Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation on Illegal Immigration Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220244> (accessed August 14, 2019).

charged were considered deportable offences.⁶⁵ There was an immediate effect on deportation upon the implementation of this law, which saw the number of removal cases rise to 114,432 from 69,680 the year prior. In the two terms in office, the Clinton administration oversaw the rise in deportations quadruple, from 43,671 the year he took office to 189,026 upon leaving.⁶⁶

Economics and Immigration Policy

The justification for the militarization of the border and criminalization of migration relied on the assumption of an imminent threat to national security, which in turn relied on economics as the solution. The theme of the Clinton administration's discourse of immigration policy was a reliance on economics as the solution to irregular migration. Riding on the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Clinton repeatedly suggested that free trade would provide “good jobs,” arguing that “having the right kind of trade agreement with Mexico [would] raise incomes in Mexico and create more jobs there.”⁶⁷ By implementing similar trade agreements with neighboring countries, Clinton noted that in these countries “not only buy more of our products, but the incentive to leave home to make a decent living for one's family will go down dramatically.”⁶⁸

The economic discourse was often discussed alongside the immigration discourse. In her 1993 nomination for INS Commissioner, Doris Meissner acknowledged the vast economic

⁶⁵ Dawn Marie Johnson, 2001, “AEDPA and the IIRIRA: Treating Misdemeanors as Felonies for Immigration Purposes, The Legislative Reform,” *Journal of Legislation* 27 (2: 10), <http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/jleg/vol27/iss2/10> (accessed December 19, 2019).

⁶⁶ Department of Homeland Security, “Table 39. Aliens Removed or Returned: Fiscal Years 1892 to 2017,” April 9, 2019, <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2017/table39> (accessed April 3, 2020).

⁶⁷ William J. Clinton, Remarks on the Nomination of Doris Meissner To Be Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner and an Exchange With Reporters Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220499> (accessed August 30, 2019).

⁶⁸ Clinton, Remarks on the Nomination of Doris Meissner To Be Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner.

discrepancies between Mexico and the United States. The solution proposed in her nomination statement was a two-pronged strategy; the need for strong border control and the need to “be thinking about development to our south.”⁶⁹ Labor Secretary Robert Reich echoed this message in a joint press conference a few months later, linking a “strong and stable Mexican economy” to a reduction in undocumented migration. By focusing on policies related to strengthening the Mexican economy, Reich argued that “good jobs down there [meant] less incentive to come north.” The goal of immigration policy, Reich continued, should be “making it more difficult for undocumented illegal immigrants to cross the border,” with a big part of that depending on strong economies.⁷⁰ The message was clear: the unproven effects of NAFTA and its effects on hemispheric economics was seen as the solution to mitigate irregular migration.

Clinton took this message on the road, engaging with the media to promote his message of economics as the solution to irregular migration. In mid-1993, speaking to Michael Jackson of KABC Radio in Los Angeles, Clinton stated:

“...if we want to generate more jobs, we're going to have to increase the volume of trade. I understand what the concern is with Mexico, but I would say to everyone in California today two things: Number one, something you know perhaps better than other Americans, anyone who wants to shut a plant down and go to Mexico today for low wages can do it. And they'll be able to do it just as well today or tomorrow as they could after NAFTA is ratified. Number two, as you have seen in California, as long as incomes are very depressed in Mexico, you're going to have a bigger and bigger problem with immigration that goes beyond the legal limits of the law. And what I see happening with NAFTA is a Mexico that can buy more American products, where more Mexicans will want to stay home and be near their families because they'll be able to make a living. And Mexico will be the leader of a whole new wave of trading partners for the United States, going down past Mexico into Central America, into Chile, into Venezuela, into Argentina, into other countries. I believe it will create jobs for America. I wouldn't do it if I didn't

⁶⁹ Clinton, Remarks on the Nomination of Doris Meissner To Be Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner.

⁷⁰ Clinton, Remarks on Illegal Immigration by Attorney General Reno, I.N.S. Commissioner Meissner, Secretary of Labor Reich, El Paso Chief Border Patrol Agent Reyes, and I.N.S. Western Region Director Gus De La Vina.

think so.”⁷¹

The same day, in an interview with Larry King, Clinton continued this line of reasoning by asserting that “if you have more growth on both sides, then you'll have less illegal immigration from Mexico, more people will be able to get jobs at home and stay with their families, their incomes will rise, and they'll buy more American products.”⁷² This “wave-lifting-all-boats” rationale was one that was repeated throughout the immigration discourse.

Clinton expanded this message of a neoliberal economic approach as an avenue for mitigating irregular migration beyond the national paradigm. Speaking to a corps of foreign journalists, Clinton warned against going back on NAFTA, concluding the rescinding of the agreement would lead to “economic problems for Mexico, more trade barriers, fewer jobs in America, [and] more illegal immigration.” Clinton warned that “[a] lot of problems could develop for the United States” if NAFTA were rescinded.⁷³

After NAFTA went into effect in January of 1994, Clinton continued in his defense of an economic consensus as a tool for mitigating irregular migration. This was especially evident on the campaign trail for reelection. In a September 1995 televised interview with Larry King, when asked if NAFTA was in danger of being rescinded, Clinton responded that by tapping into Mexican markets, the wages in Mexico would rise and be more on par with the US. This would then lead to a more stable trade relationship with Mexico, made possible through the stipulations of NAFTA. Clinton argued that despite the first year of NAFTA not generating the desired

⁷¹ William J. Clinton, Interview With Michael Jackson of KABC Radio, Los Angeles, California Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220573> (accessed June 12, 2019).

⁷² William J. Clinton, Interview With Larry King Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220582>

⁷³ William J. Clinton, Interview With Foreign Journalists Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219491>

results for Mexico due to “expanding too quickly,” in the long run, the “stability” brought on thanks to NAFTA would mean “less illegal immigration.” NAFTA, then, was prematurely credited with bringing stability to Mexico, and then throughout Latin America for the long run.”⁷⁴

A year before the actual signing of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, Clinton spelled out the following policy statement:

“This administration will continue to emphasize international cooperative efforts to address illegal immigration. Pursuant to a Presidential Review Directive (PRD), the Department of State is now coordinating a study on United States policy toward international refugee and migration affairs. I hereby direct that, as part of that PRD process, this report to the National Security Council include the relationship of economic development and migration in the Western Hemisphere and, in particular, provide recommendations for further foreign economic policy measures to address causes of illegal immigration.”⁷⁵

This decree essentially tied immigration policy to a hemispheric economic policy. The call for international cooperative efforts was one that relied on an economic consensus directed by Washington policymakers, one in line with favorable trade agreements for the United States. From here on out, immigration policy was at the behest of economic doctrines.

Although not directly a part of the conversation, NAFTA influenced Central American migration. NAFTA was considered a primer for other trade agreements, including the one with Central America in 2004. And a general free trade of the Americas was later proposed in the Summit of the Americas explored later in this chapter.

⁷⁴ William J. Clinton, Interview With Larry King in Culver City, California Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/222003>

⁷⁵ William J. Clinton, Memorandum on Illegal Immigration Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221431>

Legacy of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act was a major shift in immigration policy legislation. The signing of IIRIRA cemented the end of cyclical migration that was characteristic of migration up to that point. IIRIRA expanded the definition of felony and made misdemeanors a deportable offense, with many of these stipulations implemented retroactively. The expansion of a felony led to an increase in migrant detention, and the shipping of migrants to remote locations. This, in turn, led to an increase in deportation. This was expanded to legal permanent residents that had been committed of crimes, some deemed misdemeanors. This essentially created a double standard in dealing with crimes committed by migrants.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act was justified under the auspices of a threat to national security. The approach to immigration policy was a retroactive one, concerned with the results of migration instead of attempting to address the causes of migration. The law was implemented in a unilateral manner, with little regard to the input of its hemispheric neighbors. Instead, the Clinton administration relied solely on economics as the mechanism to address forced migration.

Economics and a Post-Cold War Western Hemisphere

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with capitalism being credited the winner in the ideological war against communism, US policymakers entered the 1990s in an aura of optimism. Speaking to the Economic Club of Detroit in 1992, George H.W. Bush hailed the

“triumph of democratic capitalism over imperial communism.”⁷⁶ Already a staple of domestic economic policy, the supply-side approach to economics championed by the Reagan administration in the 1980s took center stage in the foreign policy of the United States, first with the groundwork for a North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada initiated by the George H.W. Bush administration, and fully incorporated into foreign policy by the first term of the Clinton administration. Through a series of summit meetings that brought together leaders of western hemisphere countries (except for Cuba), an attempt was made to institutionalize this Washington-led post-Cold War new normal into hemispheric politics. Termed the Summit of the Americas after the inaugural meeting in 1994, these meetings attempted to institutionalize the neoliberal approach already in place in US domestic politics. The summit meetings repeatedly called for hemispheric cooperation in implementing this approach in a broader economic context.

The first summit meeting in 1994 set the discursive tone for the meetings that followed. From this first meeting, economics was the most discussed topic, and major assumptions about the effects economics would have on hemispheric prosperity were carried over to the meetings that followed. The language of optimism and calls for hemispheric cooperation in the summit documents are a stark contrast to the discourse of immigration policy. While the language of the summit documents was framed in terms of collaboration and overall optimism, the immigration policy discourse revealed a shortsighted lack of cooperation, thus a failure to address the root causes of forced migration. Immigration was framed as a matter of national security instead of a hemispheric issue to be addressed in cooperation with hemispheric leaders. Immigration policy,

⁷⁶ George Bush, Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the Economic Club of Detroit in Michigan Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/267535>

especially under the Clinton administration, was became dependent on the discourse of hemispheric economic integration.

Summit I: Miami, US - “Promoting Prosperity through Economic Integration”

The inaugural summit, the brainchild of the Clinton administration, was held in Miami in late 1994. This initial meeting, with the goal of addressing common hemispheric issues, revealed an array of themes deemed important for the hemisphere. Three major themes emerged from this meeting, all under a broad umbrella of promoting democracy and prosperity through economic integration. The overarching theme of the Miami summit is this idea of “prosperity through open markets, hemispheric integration, and sustainable development.”⁷⁷ There is a suggestion for a welcoming of outside capital at “competitive rates” to finance the private sector, an attempt to divert from nationalized industries. There are call for regions to push for the “liberalizing and [integration of] financial markets.”⁷⁸ There is also an explicit recognition that the debt carried by countries in the hemisphere was a major constraint for development. However, there is no direct plan of action other than a push for the strengthening of the private sector.

The Miami Summit introduced a proposal for a hemispheric Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). NAFTA had been in effect for almost a year by the time the Miami summit took place, and this proposal to eliminate tariffs between the countries of the western hemisphere was discussed with plans to draft a policy with all agreeing parties by 2005. Although 2005 came and went without a FTAA, 2004 did see the US and Central America sign the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). Although beyond the scope of this

⁷⁷ Declaration of Principles, First Summit of the Americas, Miami, Florida, December 9-11, 1994. http://www.summit-americas.org/i_summit/i_summit_dec_en.pdf (accessed August 13, 2019).

⁷⁸ Summit of the Americas Plan of Action, First Summit of the Americas, Miami, Florida, December 9-11, 1994. http://www.summit-americas.org/i_summit/i_summit_poa_en.pdf (accessed August 18, 2019).

study, it is worth noting that the trade agreement was not free of controversy. Voting in the House was open for almost a full hour, in violation of the normal 15-minute time limit, and the approval of the trade pact was passed with a 217 to 215 vote.⁷⁹

Summit II: Santiago, Chile - “Economic Integration and Free Trade”

The second summit took place in Santiago Chile, spanning two days in mid-April of 1998. Despite the increase in forced migration by the time of this meeting, the topic of migration was only briefly discussed. The case for protecting migrant workers was as close as the documents got to addressing migration, calling for legislation to protect the labor rights of migrant workers “consistent with each country’s internal legal framework.”⁸⁰ Different from the calls for cooperation towards economic integration and modernization, this call for migrant worker protections seems to leave the enforcement to the individual state, lacking accountability. This included policies such as “granting of permission to migrants to enter, stay, or exercise economic activity, in full conformity with applicable international instruments relating to human rights and in a spirit of cooperation.”⁸¹

The Santiago Plan of Action called on governments to address issues to reach economic integration: the facilitation of trade, a tightening of banking regulations, and investment in the private sector. Through calls for governments to adopt policies to “that facilitate the trade of products,” the Santiago Plan of Action relies on the assumption that neoliberal policies are an avenue for prosperity. The proposal is to improve banking supervision and strengthen securities

⁷⁹ Edmund L. Andrews, How Cafta Passed House by 2 Votes,” *New York Times*, July 29, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/29/politics/how-cafta-passed-house-by-2-votes.html> (accessed April 30, 2020).

⁸⁰ Summit of the Americas Plan of Action, Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago, Chile, April 1994, 7. http://www.summit-americas.org/ii_summit/ii_summit_poa_en.pdf (accessed August 24, 2019).

⁸¹ Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago Plan of Action, 7.

market “in order to facilitate the transparency, efficiency and security of internal and cross-border transactions.”⁸² Cooperation in this section is invoked repeatedly, with various calls encouraging leaders to promote these tighter economic systems “in order to stimulate local and foreign private investment.”⁸³ Again, the call here is to allow for the influx of foreign investment, presumably to untapped Global South markets.

The large portion of the Santiago Plan of Action was devoted to the continued planning of the Free Trade Area of the Americas that began in Miami four years earlier. Although no clear update on the status of the proposed trade agreement is in the Santiago Plan of Action, there is urgency on this topic, with a call for the Trade Negotiations Committee to convene “no later than June 30, 1998, and the Negotiating Groups no later than September 30, 1998,” and implementation within the year 2000.⁸⁴ In an apparent gesture towards economic inequities, the Santiago Plan of Action urges the signatories to “[take] into account the differences in the levels of development and size of the economies in the Americas, in order to create opportunities for the full participation of all countries, including smaller economies,” although with not much direction on implementation.⁸⁵

The Santiago Plan of Action called out the crisis of corruption across the hemisphere. There is a call to implement “effective and specific measures to combat all forms of corruption, bribery, and related unlawful practices in commercial transactions, among others.”⁸⁶ By this point, corruption was well known as a major contributor to the instability of Central America, and specifically the stagnation after the peace accords. Most famously, Arnaldo Alemán, then-

⁸² Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago Plan of Action, 16.

⁸³ Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago Plan of Action, 17.

⁸⁴ Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago Plan of Action, 15.

⁸⁵ Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago Plan of Action, 15.

⁸⁶ Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago Plan of Action, 8.

President of Nicaragua and signatory to the Santiago Plan of Action, was later convicted on corruption charges, including money laundering and embezzlement.⁸⁷

Summit III: Quebec City, Canada: “Strengthening Cooperation Among States”

The third summit took place late April of 2001 in Quebec City, Canada. This was the first of the summit meetings with a new US president, and the last summit meeting before the paradigm shift of the September 11 terrorist attacks. This summit meeting is also unique in that the lead up to the gathering was met with anti-globalist protest in Canada.⁸⁸ Despite the protests, the summit between hemispheric leaders went on as scheduled. Building on the commitments of the Santiago Summit concerning the rights of migrants, the Quebec Plan of Action urged leaders to “strengthen cooperation among states to address, with comprehensive, objective and long-term focus, the manifestations, origins and effects of migration in the region.” The same section encouraged the “recognition of the value of close cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination in order to ensure protection of the human rights of migrants.”⁸⁹ Although much closer at addressing migration, the Quebec Plan of Action falls short in addressing the root causes, instead focusing on the result of migration similar to the approach of immigration policy in the previous section. The section devoted to migration in the Quebec Plan of Action is limited to less than a page.

Instead, the Quebec Plan of Action continues where the past summits left off, centering around economic and financial stability. This is in line with the themes of the previous summit

⁸⁷ J. Mark Ruhl, “Political Corruption in Central America: Assessment and Explanation,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 53, no. 1 (Spring, 2011): 33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41342299> (accessed March 30, 2020).

⁸⁸ Lucia Newman and John King, “Quebec Braced for Protest March,” CNN, April 21, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/americas/04/21/summit.americas.01/index.html> (accessed December 20, 2019).

⁸⁹ Summit of the Americas Plan of Action, Third Summit of the Americas, Quebec City, Canada, April 2001, 6. http://www.summit-americas.org/iii_summit/iii_summit_poa_en.pdf (accessed August 27, 2019).

meetings. The Quebec Plan of Action is replete with the major assumption of sustainable growth by “[promoting] financial and economic stability as well as strong and sustainable growth,” and suggests these preconditions lead to “accelerated development and poverty reductions,” ensuring that “the benefits of globalization are broadly and equitably distributed to all our people.”⁹⁰

The Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, now in its third summit meeting and 7 years after its first official proposal in 1994, was also a major point of discussion in the documents of the meeting. The same timetable was proposed as before, one of “no later than Jan 2005 and seek its entry into force as soon as possible thereafter...no later than Dec 2005,”⁹¹ despite no real progress since the first proposals in the 1994 summit. The Quebec Plan of Action urged “full participation of all countries to contribute to the FTAA process, taking into consideration the differences in the levels of development and size of the economies of the Hemisphere, in order to create opportunities for the full participation of the smaller economies and to increase their level of development.”⁹² This call for hemispheric collaboration, in contrast with the discourse of immigration policy debates, is noteworthy. The Quebec Plan of Action made note of the “efforts undertaken to advance Hemispheric integration, including improved access to goods, services, capital and technology, to achieve the full range of social and other objectives,” but urged leaders to do more in achieving hemispheric economic stability. In closing, the Quebec Plan of Action did call on larger states “to address the challenges associated with globalization, to protect the most vulnerable and prevent crises, and affirm the importance of having the benefits of globalization widely distributed to all regions and social sectors of our countries, recognizing,

⁹⁰ Third Summit of the Americas, Quebec City Plan of Action, 15.

⁹¹ Third Summit of the Americas, Quebec City Plan of Action, 14.

⁹² Third Summit of the Americas, Quebec City Plan of Action, 15.

at the same time, the unique challenges faced by small states.”⁹³ It seems this was an effort to call for action, yet the plan did little in formulating concrete steps in closing this noted challenge.

The overarching theme of this summit is an assumption of economic growth as the only avenue for prosperity and growth. It builds on the previous summits in pushing for economic growth, believing it to be a fundamental prerequisite in overcoming “economic disparities and strengthening democracy in the Hemisphere.”⁹⁴ The assumption that to achieve sustained hemispheric economic growth and political and social stability, it was necessary to address the economic disparities that continued well into the 21st century. This, however, did not materialize into any concrete actions, and the terrorist attacks later that year proved a paradigm shifting event in nearly all aspects of US foreign policy.

Legacy of the Summit of the Americas

The themes of the summit documents revealed the priorities of the organizers. Their calls for privatization of industry, foreign investment, and free trade were in line with the neoliberal agenda directed by Washington. Their plans of actions repeatedly called for hemispheric cooperation, and a general feel of optimism was evident in the discourse of economic integration of the hemisphere. Although there were calls for attention to migration issues, namely the protection of migrants in transit, those calls took a back seat to economic discourse, especially the proposal for a hemispheric free trade agreement with the goal of hemispheric economic integration.

Despite the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas not materializing by the proposed timeline, there was rise in the passage of regional free trade agreements after the Quebec City

⁹³ Third Summit of the Americas, Quebec City Plan of Action, 17.

⁹⁴ Third Summit of the Americas, Quebec City Plan of Action, 26.

summit. The Central American Free Trade Agreement was passed and signed into law in 2005, institutionalizing the relationship, albeit unequal, between the United States and the Central American-Caribbean region.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

The era of focus of this research continues Washington's long lasting traditions of bringing the western hemisphere into its sphere of influence. By shifting the approach from a physical presence to the primary use of economics as a tool to further these interests, the United States succeeded in maintaining influence in the region this era of study. With the threat of a communist influence in the west no longer looming, the United States was able to dictate the future of the hemisphere. That future manifested itself through a neoliberal economic consensus, one where free trade and hemispheric economic integration was touted as a solution to modernize the hemisphere and mitigate irregular migration. By examining the approach of economic policy in the Summit of the Americas hemispheric meetings and comparing it to the immigration policy discourse of the decade, it is revealed that the immigration policy directives went contrary to the language of the neoliberal agenda. Immigration policy became dependent on the economic directives.

The 1990s were a crucial turning point in both immigration and economic policy. The Clinton administration quickly worked to implement its neoliberal economic model in a hemispheric context. As the administration that truly implemented NAFTA, and its continual push for a hemispheric free trade agreement in the Summit of the Americas documents, the priorities of the Clinton administration were clear: an economic consensus was the goal, with little regard to the economic status or forced movement of other regions. Immigration policy

came at the behest of economic directives, and the forced movement of people was met with increasingly restrictive policies.

The Clinton administration, by approaching immigration policy through a neoliberal lens, failed to address the root causes of migration. Instead, the policy directives of militarizing the US-Mexico border, criminalizing migration, and touting economic standardization as a solution to irregular migration reveal the shortsightedness of the policies. The legislation passed worked only to address the results of migration instead of the root causes of this movement and approach the issues in a singular context instead of a hemispheric issue to jointly address.

Further Research

The focus of this study is the response by the United States during the 1990s, namely the response to an increase in forced migration, and how policymakers reacted through an examination of discourse. This era is important to the immigration narrative and attempt to illustrate the legacy of that shift on other presidential administrations that followed. To truly piece together the forced migration narrative, however, research must be done that explores the role of the leadership of sending countries. Questions naturally arise, such as what policies were implemented by Central American leaders after each of the three summit meetings, or how did leadership in those countries react to the shift in US immigration policy. There were some allusions in this study to it, such as the role of corruption in Central American leadership in contributing to initiations of forced migration from the region.

Another avenue for further research in the role of the War on Drugs as both the initiation of migration and as a justification for tightening immigration policy. The War on Drugs was only briefly mentioned by the George H.W. Bush throughout this research, invoked in the context of

stricter enforcement of immigration policy. And the Clinton administration was more concerned with the smuggling of migrants over the smuggling of drugs. The War on Drugs was more an issue under the George W. Bush administration and is mostly studied in the context of Mexico-US relations. An examination of the effects of the War on Drugs in Central American forced migration, coupled with the dynamics explored in this study, would provide a more complete story of forced migration from Central America.

Another factor is the role of outside capital in the case of natural disasters. Famously, the 1972 earthquake in Nicaragua eventually led to the overthrow of the Somoza dynasty, and Hurricane Mitch during the Clinton administration prompted relief in the form of loans. Natural disasters work to both displace people and call for outside funds to provide relief. A complete and extensive research study would incorporate these different research lenses, and a broader picture of accountability would emerge, shedding light on the need to address the reasons for forced migration. Such a complex subject calls for an interdisciplinary approach to better understand and address the phenomenon of forced migration.

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