

## The Role of Institutions in Shaping America's Future Demographics

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### Abstract:

Mexicans, Chinese, and Indians make up the three largest immigrant populations in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey, there are currently 11.6 million foreign-born Mexicans, 2.4 million foreign-born Chinese, and 2.4 million foreign-born Indians living in the U.S. Looking at these three immigrant populations, the author argues that U.S. immigration policies are at least as important as economic forces, like demand for certain types of labor, and networks, like established immigrant communities in the U.S., in determining when and from where people immigrate to the U.S. For instance, Indian and Chinese immigration picked up in the 1990s after the establishment of the H1-B visa, which provided a pathway for high-skilled workers, mainly in STEM fields, to immigrate to the U.S. legally. Mexican immigration slowed between 2000 and 2007, partially because the U.S. became more stringent in monitoring and enforcing immigration laws after 9/11. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that economic and network effects matter for Mexican immigration. Mexican immigration picked up during the Mexican peso crisis in 1994-95 and slowed during the Great Recession as demand for labor in industries like construction diminished. The experience of Mexican, Chinese, and Indian immigration suggests that U.S. immigration policies will play an important role in determining migration patterns over the coming decades and will therefore shape the composition of the American population in 2050.

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## Introduction

Fifty million migrants live in the United States—a significant number, but one that actually tells us little about the ways in which migration matters, how it came to be, or how it will change. Each of those 50 million migrants brings with him or her political, social, and economic views, skills, and experiences that meld with, abut, or tangle with the views of native-born Americans. In short, migration is less about numbers and more about politics. This paper examines immigration from India, Mexico, and China—the three largest countries of origin for new immigrants to the United States—in light of existing theories of migration. The paper assesses the explanatory power of those theories against past immigration from India, Mexico, and China and uses the theories to project scenarios for future immigration to 2050. While India was the largest country of origin of international migrants in 2017, with 17 million, and China took fourth place with 10 million, in comparison with their share of the world population, migrants from Asia have been underrepresented. Should we expect immigration from Asia, or populous Africa, to intensify in the coming decades, or will the status quo persist? Mexico has long been a top sender to the US and in 2017 held second place with 13 million. But migration from Mexico has been slowing and although the US hosts 98 percent of the 12.7 million Mexicans living abroad, is it fair to assume this migration will continue to 2050? In a three-part assessment, this paper attempts to project how future immigration, particularly from India, Mexico, and China, will develop and change over the next several decades. **US immigration policies play the primary role in determining the flow of immigrants to the US, particularly for India and China. While immigration from Mexico is in part determined by policy, there is evidence that economic and network factors matter as well.** Institutions are likely to determine how various views on immigration among US voters are translated into policy in the future. While the purpose of this paper is to generate scenarios for 2050, the review suggests that because existing theoretical frames do not adequately explain differential migration flows, building a

more robust political theory of migration grounded in domestic institutions would be a worthwhile scholarly endeavor.

The first part of this paper reviews broad patterns in immigration from India, Mexico, and China to the US over time. The second part of this paper draws on the extensive literature about migration drivers and assesses which factors best explain immigration to the US from its three biggest senders. It examines the role of macro (e.g., large scale institutional factors), micro (individual level drivers), and meso (e.g., migrant networks) structures, with particular emphasis on the macro and meso levels. None of these theories focuses on national level policy as the main determinant of immigrant flows. This review, then, adds to the literature by giving those national policies a more prominent role.

In Part II, we examine what the various theories tell us about how the immigrant flows from India, Mexico, and China have shifted over time and consider how conditions in the sending countries are likely to influence pressures or desires to emigrate over the next few decades. Taken together, the trends review in Part I and the theoretical exercise in Part II inform the scenario-building in Part III of the paper. Four scenarios emerge. The first, Supply-driven, looks purely at demographic, educational, political, and other domestic changes in countries that are major sources of immigrants to the US. It also explores the possibility that the current sources of immigrants to the US could shift and immigration from Africa and other regions could play a more prominent role in the future. This scenario leaves little role for US policy in determining immigrant flows to the US. The second and third scenarios privilege US immigration policy. The Demand-driven scenario explores how changes in the US economy, such as automation or demand for workers in STEM fields, shapes US recruitment of foreign workers. The Ideologically-driven scenario downplays the economic demands and instead explores how the US population's reaction to demographic changes (real or perceived) determines the relative openness of immigration policy. In both, demands of certain sectors in the US population, like business leaders or voting constituents, are filtered through US democratic institutions to end up as immigration policy. The

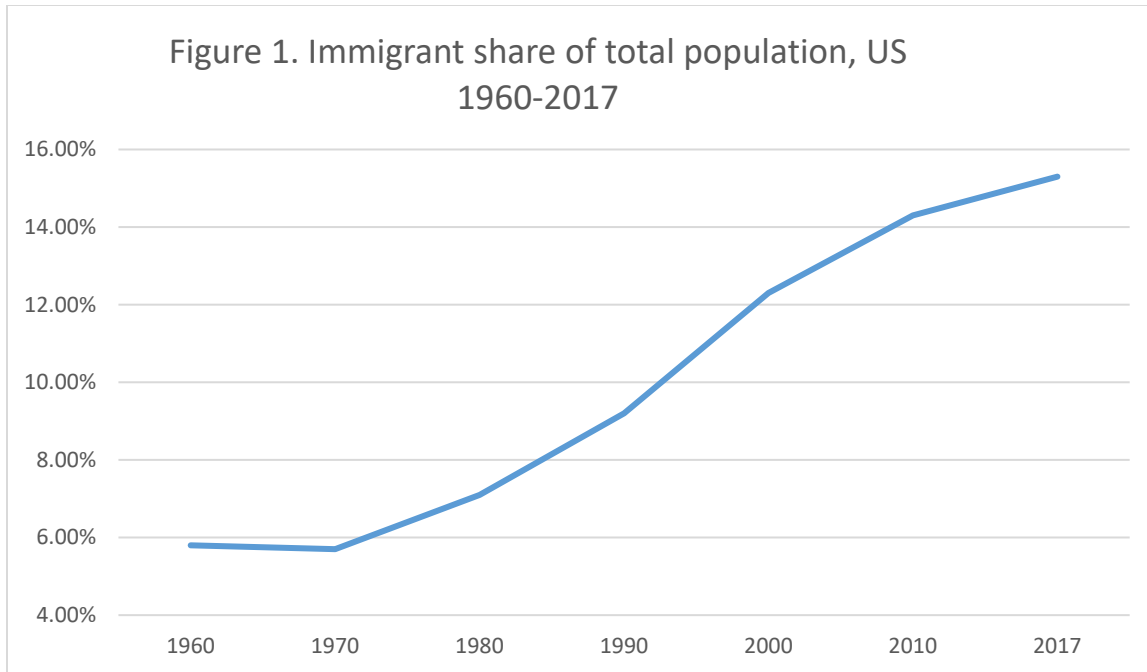
fourth and final scenario, the Externally-driven scenario, considers the possibility that the US will become a less attractive destination for immigrants in general, and explores the potential other countries and regions have for becoming major recipients of immigrants.

## Part I: Migration overview

The US has the absolute highest number of migrants worldwide, and has for decades. In 2017, US migrants numbered 49,777,000, while Saudi Arabia was a far second place with 12,185,000. However, immigrants are a far higher proportion of the population of Gulf States like Saudi Arabia, which attract migrants with abundant opportunities for low-skilled work. Still, the immigrant share of the US population has been steadily growing since 1970 to reach around 15 percent in 2017, as Figure 1 shows. This proportion is similar to the highs of 1870, 1890, and 1910, before restrictive policies in the 1920s caused the share of immigrants in the US population to plummet.<sup>1</sup>

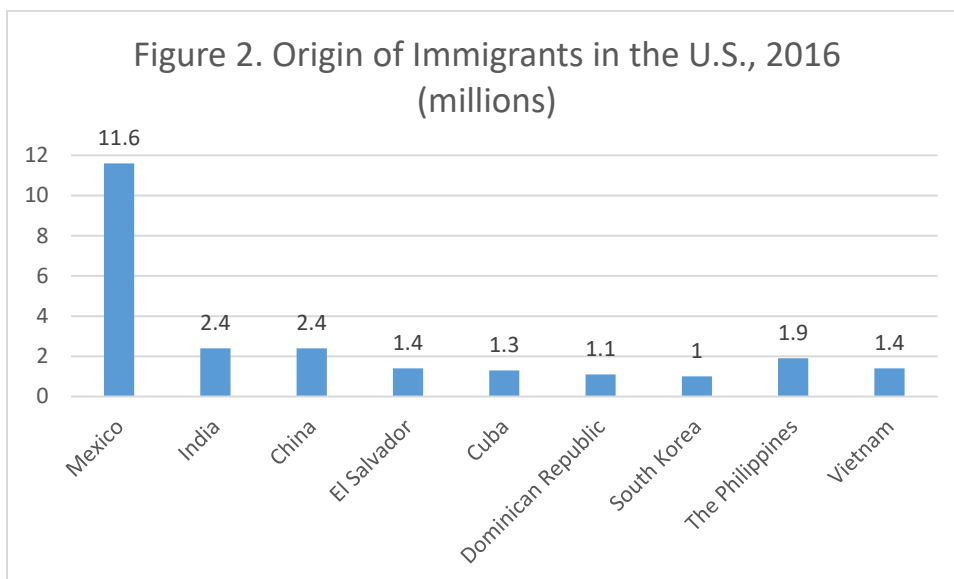
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<sup>1</sup> Depending on the data source, the current US immigrant population is 13-15 percent of the total population, hence the vague language. Migration Policy Institute, "U.S. Immigrant Population and Share over Time, 1850-Present," Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/immigrant-population-over-time>.



Source: Migration Policy Institute tabulation of data from the United Nations. 2017. Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin. Migration Policy Institute Data Hub.

Mexicans, Indians, and Chinese, respectively, are the largest immigrant groups in the US, which is why this study focuses on analyzing migration from these three source countries. China and India overtook Mexico as the top source of immigrants in 2013, a remarkable shift from prior decades and one that warrants examining as we consider how future immigration to the US is likely to evolve.



*Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey.*<sup>2</sup>

Mexicans have immigrated to the United States continuously since 1846 and have to date been the single largest source of immigrants to the US (see Figure 2). Close proximity and economic disparity between the two countries have facilitated the migration and the large border separating the two countries has proven difficult to police, permitting irregular migration to go undetected.<sup>3</sup> The size of the Mexican immigrant population rapidly increased over a period of roughly four decades, but started to stabilize within the last decade. Between 2000 and 2006, over 2.3 million Mexicans immigrated, but between 2006 and 2010 less than 200,000 did. In 2014, Mexican immigrants numbered over 11.7 million, 28 percent of the foreign-born population.<sup>4</sup> The decline over time is clear. Of those Mexican immigrants living in the US, 63 percent arrived before the year 2000, 31 percent between 2000 and 2009, and only 6 percent from 2010 to 2014.<sup>5</sup>

Indians first came to the US in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to work in the lumber mills of Washington and agricultural fields of California. Although they were victims of exclusionary immigration laws aimed at limiting Asian immigrants to the US, they got the right to naturalize as US citizens in 1946. Before the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act, Indians numbered less than 10,000; in the first decade after the act their ranks swelled to 175,000 and to 360,000 by 1980. At the latter, the US Census Bureau estimated Indian Americans as the most highly skilled, educated, and paid of all new US immigrants. Their ranks diversified during the 1980s, as more low-skilled Indians came to work as taxi drivers or shop owners.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Age-Sex Pyramids of Top Immigrant Origin Groups in U.S., 2016," Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/age-sex-pyramids-top-immigrant-origin-groups?width=1000&height=850&iframe=true>.

<sup>3</sup> Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Mexican Immigration to the United States," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, ed. Jon Butler (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, "Mexican Immigrants in the United States," (2016), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/mexican-immigrants-united-states>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Sadanand Dhurrie, "From Bangalore to Silicon Valley and Back: How the Indian Diaspora in the United States Is Changing India," in *India Briefing: Takeoff at Last?*, ed. Alyssa Ayres and Philip Oldenburg (Routledge, 2002).

Chinese immigrated to the US in two major waves. The first was when male manual laborers came to work in agriculture, mining, and railroad construction on the West Coast starting in the mid-1800s. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act effectively stopped the flow, as did further legal restrictions in the 1920s aimed at reducing non-European immigration. Although the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943, the 1920s laws still applied and it was not until the 1965 immigration reforms that Chinese had the legal pathway to enter the US. Supply-side is relevant in the Chinese case as well: China kept tight reigns on emigration until 1978 and migration between the US and China did not pick up until Chinese-US relations normalized in 1979 as part of both sides' Cold War foreign policy strategies.<sup>7</sup> From mainland China, the number of immigrants grew from just under 300,000 in 1980 to 536,000 in 1990, then to almost a million in 2000. Patterns were different for migrants from Hong Kong, which was under British control until 1997. Migrants from Hong Kong began to immigrate to the US in the late 1960s and by 2016 were about 9 percent of Chinese immigrants in the US. There are approximately 5 million Chinese in the US today, a small proportion of the 1.4 billion in the People's Republic. As of 2016, there were 2.3 million Chinese living in the US, 5 percent of the foreign-born.<sup>8</sup> Chinese immigrants are more likely to have arrived in the US recently compared with other immigrants. Forty-four percent arrived before 2000, 25 percent between 2000 and 2009, and 31 percent arrived in 2010 or later. More Chinese emigrants go to America than to any other single country. In 2015, the US hosted 22 percent of the 11 million Chinese living outside of China.<sup>9</sup>

Immigrants from India, Mexico, and China play widely different roles in the US economy and their socioeconomic status reflects that difference. Scholars at the Migration Policy Institute note that, "Compared to the total foreign-born population, Mexican immigrants were more likely to be Limited

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<sup>7</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, "Chinese Immigrants in the United States," *Migration Information Source* (2017), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

English Proficient (LEP), have less education and lower income, experience a higher poverty rate, and lack health insurance.”<sup>10</sup> In contrast, Asian immigrants are much higher educated and wealthier, a continuation of what scholars were noticing about Indian immigrants by 1980. Mexican immigrants in the US are typically older than native-born Americans, with a median age about five years higher, but younger than other foreign-born groups by about three years. The age structure of Mexican immigrants is, as we would expect, concentrated in the working ages, with 87 percent between 18 and 64 years in 2014. That is much higher, compared with 80 percent of all immigrants and 60 percent of US- born.<sup>11</sup> Chinese immigrants from the mainland had a median age of 44 years in 2016, while those from Hong Kong had a median age of 52 years. Indian, Mexican, and Chinese immigrants also differ in terms of legal status. In 2014, of the 11.3m unauthorized immigrants in the US, 49 percent (5.6m) were Mexican.<sup>12</sup>

There are, of course, many important nuances to immigration from these three source countries over time, but their importance to shaping US demographics is unassailable, and thus necessary for projecting how the future of US demographics to 2050 will evolve. As we examine existing theories of migration in the next section, we draw upon more detailed historical information for how immigration from India, Mexico, and China developed over time.

## Part II: Theoretical perspectives and illustrative case studies

Theories of migration generally fall into three camps, often categorized by the level at which they focus. Macro-level theories of migration consider factors like the influence of the neoliberal global economy, the distribution of power in the international system, and bi- or multi-lateral state relationships. Micro-level theories consider the influence of family ties, individual beliefs, or practices in shaping migration flows. And meso-level theories link the macro and micro levels and attribute migration patterns to the

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<sup>10</sup> "Mexican Immigrants in the United States".

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Gutiérrez.



migration “industry,” immigrant communities, and even businesses that cater to migrants.<sup>13</sup> This section briefly describes each of these baskets of theories and evaluates how they might be used to understand key developments in migration from India, Mexico, and China. This section does not provide a hard test of any of these theories, but does illustrate their explanatory and predictive powers, an exercise important for generating the four scenarios in Part III of this paper.

### Functionalist migration theories

Functionalist theories consider society to function like an organism, and like biological organisms, see a natural tendency towards equilibrium. For these theories, society is a system. The key takeaway, as described by Castles, et al., is that migration is not random, but is strongly patterned because “people’s individual choices are constrained by structural factors such as social stratification, market access, power inequalities, and cultural repertoires.”<sup>14</sup>

One such theory is the classic push-pull model of migration, which is probably the most well-known migration model.<sup>15</sup> With this theory, certain factors are thought to “push” people to migrate, including political repression or a lack of economic opportunity. Simultaneously, migrants are “pulled” to destinations that offer more opportunity or freedom. This theory provides a simple way to break down migration motivations, but it has significant limitations. Push-pull theories generally overpredict migration from poor settings by assuming that there are ample push factors, while failing to account for the role of individual capital in facilitating migration. These theories are also descriptive and focus on enumerating reasons for migration, rather than on comparing the weight of various factors or their

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas, and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 5th ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>15</sup> Everett S. Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” *Demography* 3, no. 1 (1966).

interactions. Push-pull theories are also often criticized for being deterministic, seeing factors that “cause” migration even though those same factors could just as well cause other outcomes.<sup>16</sup>

The push-pull model would have predicted significant immigration from India, Mexico, and China to the US, as happened over the last fifty years, since wages and standard of living are so much lower in those three countries than in the US. What’s perhaps more interesting is that this model would predict that as the populations of India, Mexico, and China begin to age and their working age populations to decline, competition for jobs within these countries will dissipate and one motivating “push” factor for migration to the US will weaken. If the next few decades also bring about continued economic growth and development in the three countries then an additional push factor will be weakened. Applying this model to Mexico-US migration, we see the fall in migrants in the wake of the 2008 recession as potential evidence that weaker pull and push factors did in fact discourage migration.

Similarly, neoclassical theories, rooted in economic modernization theory, look at the relative cost of capital and labor worldwide, and assume that capital and labor move in opposite directions. Like push-pull theories, neoclassical theories assume movement towards equilibrium, as supply and demand of capital and labor shift over the long-term.<sup>17</sup> Individual rational actors engage in cost-benefit analysis as they decide whether or not to migrate. A simplified illustration of this theory would consider that the US has a large supply of capital, so capital is relatively cheap compared to US labor. Mexico, on the other hand, has a low supply of capital, so capital is relatively expensive. This theory would predict that capital would move from the US to Mexico, as the spate of maquiladoras on the US-Mexico border shows. This movement will push down payment to capital in Mexico because it is now in greater supply, and will push up wages in Mexico because there is more capital to work with. Compared with Mexico, US labor is

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<sup>16</sup> Castles, de Haas, and Miller.

<sup>17</sup> John R. Harris and Michael P. Todaro, "Migration, Unemployment and Development: A Two-Sector Analysis," *The American Economic Review* 60, no. 1 (1970); Larry A. Sjaastad, "The Costs and Returns of Human Migration," *Journal of Political Economy* 70, no. 5 (1962).

relatively more expensive, so the model predicts that as labor moves from Mexico to the US in the form of immigration that will push wages down in the US and wages up in Mexico, as supply diminishes. The transfer of capital and labor will continue until capital and labor equal out between the two countries.

This theory has several limitations as well. First, it is really more of an economic model, designed to simplify an incredibly complex process; what it gains in simplification, it loses in detail, neglecting historical causes of migration, seeing capital and labor as perfectly mobile, or seeing migrants as merely utility-maximizing individuals. In reality, migrants do not have perfect information, nor do they necessarily decide whether or not to move internationally based on their expected return on investment of migrating. Additionally, this theory cannot explain why migration continues even when the markets reach equilibrium in the home and destination countries.<sup>18</sup>

Still, market access and power inequalities seem to have played a role in shaping immigration from India, Mexico, and China to the US. Low wages in Mexico pushed Mexicans to emigrate. Higher wages in the US than in any of the three countries under review pulled potential immigrants. But in the case of India and China, US policy curtailed or prompted the flows. Chinese immigrants were pulled by the California gold rush and other needs for labor in the Pacific Northwest, but were then restricted by both the sender (China) and receiver (US), the latter through the Chinese and Asian Exclusion Acts. The US 1990 Immigration Act opened a pathway to Indians at the same time that the technology boom in the US created a strong pull for high-skilled Indian workers. Because they downplay—or sometimes neglect—the role of policy, functionalist theories do a poor job of explaining historical Chinese and Indian immigration to the US.

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<sup>18</sup> Deniz Sert, "Explaining Why People Move: Intra and Interdisciplinary Debates About the Causes of International Migration " in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

In Mexico's case, functionalist theories seem to have more explanatory power. Immigration growth has plateaued since the 2008 economic recession. Illegal immigration from Mexico is down, while that from Central America, Asia, and Africa has increased. Together, the two flows offset each other.<sup>19</sup> In 2017, using data from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the Migration Policy Institute estimated that 53 percent of illegal immigrants in the US were from Mexico, followed by El Salvador, Guatemala, China (including Hong Kong), and Honduras.<sup>20</sup> The economic trends of Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries could validate functionalist explanations of why illegal immigration from Mexico is declining and that from Central America is increasing, but the gulf between Mexico's GDP per capita and the US's is wider than in recent decades, so this macroeconomic explanation is incomplete (see Table 1).

	2000	2010	2017
United States	\$45,055	\$48,375	\$53,128
Mexico	\$8,997	\$9,016	\$9,946
El Salvador	\$2,686	\$2,992	\$3,463
Guatemala	\$2,554	\$2,825	\$3,124
Honduras	\$1,620	\$1,932	\$2,210

Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

As researchers at the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, DC suggest, growth has flattened also because of increased enforcement of immigration policy at the Southwest border and throughout the US. Again, a more systematic analysis of policy is needed to understand immigration to the US.

<sup>19</sup> Julia Gelatt and Jie Zong, "Settling In: A Profile of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population in the United States," *Fact Sheet* (2018).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

### Illustrative case study: Indian software engineers in the US

If functionalist theories have strong explanatory power, then they should do well to explain immigrant labor trends in important, new economic sectors, such as technology. As an illustration, we can apply functionalist theories to the migration of Indian software engineers and other tech workers to the US.

In 1990, the US tripled the number of visas allocated to skilled workers, and in that decade the technological revolution spurred the growth of Silicon Valley—and its concomitant need for skilled workers. As Dhurrie describes, “with its vast network of engineering schools—including the six world-class Indian Institutes of Technology—churning out tens of thousands of English-speaking graduates, India was uniquely positioned to feed the United States' soon-to-explode hunger for technically skilled manpower.”<sup>21</sup> In the 1990s, the Indian American population grew by more than 100 percent to number 1.7 million by 2000. Today, the US has the world’s largest population of software developers.

It is instructive to look at the history of the H-1B temporary visa for high-skilled workers to the US. The visa pathway was created in 1990 and is capped by US Congress. To qualify, immigrants should have at least a bachelor’s degree or the equivalent and are typically in specialty occupations like the STEM fields. The visa is employer-sponsored, and to file employers must attest that the worker will not adversely affect the wages or working conditions of US workers in similar positions and they must notify existing workers that they intend to hire an H-1B immigrant. Employers can file for an H-1B worker on April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, and in recent years the cap has been reached within a few days of opening, reflecting the demand for such workers. Specifically, the cap was reached in only five days in the last six fiscal years, in which case the allocation becomes determined by a lottery. In the FY2007 and 2008 lotteries the US rejected 178,000 petitions from employers seeking someone in the computer field. As of 2019, the cap is 65,000 plus 20,000 people who have obtained graduate degrees from the US and have

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<sup>21</sup> Dhurrie.

offers of employment. The salary requirement for such positions is \$60,000 annually, but as of 2019 a higher minimum is on the table. Sponsoring the visa costs employers between \$1710 and \$6460.

The cap was 65,000 from 1991-1998, then was raised to 115,000 from 1999-2000 and to a high of 195,000 from 2001-2003. It was again lowered to 65,000 starting in 2004, and the additional allocation for 20,000 with US graduate degrees was added in 2006. From 2001 through 2015, over half of first-time H-1B visas were held by Indian nationals; Chinese nationals had the second highest, far lower at 9.7 percent.<sup>22</sup> The H-1B visa is an important pathway for drawing high-skilled workers to the United States. Despite a long backlog for processing family reunification, immigrants continue to find the H-1B pathway to the US an attractive one.

According to functionalist theories, because India has an excess supply of labor, with a large working-age population, and the US has a shortage in high-skilled areas (as evidenced by requests for H-1B visas exceeding the supply) and a tight labor market overall, India will continue as a major source of US immigrants as long as such legal pathways exist. Evans Data Corporation, which conducts worldwide research on the origin and nationality of tech workers, projects that India will overtake the US by 2023. Notably, in 2013 they predicted that India would overtake the US by 2017, which obviously did not happen. China is expected to see the highest growth rate in developers, between 6 and 8 percent to 2023.<sup>23</sup> China's working-age population has peaked and there is domestic demand in China for workers, so functionalist theory would predict China to retain more of its high-skilled workers. While there has been some growth in the number of undocumented Indians and Chinese at the southern US border, geography remains a constraint, one that is less present for Mexicans.

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<sup>22</sup> Neil G. Ruiz, "Key Facts About the U.S. H-1b Visa Program," *FactTank* (2017).

<sup>23</sup> Evans Data Corporation, "Global Developer Population and Demographic Study 2018," (Evans Data Corporation, 2018); Patrick Thibodeau, "India to Overtake U.S. On Number of Developers by 2017," *Computerworld.com* (2013), <https://www.computerworld.com/article/2483690/it-careers/india-to-overtake-u-s--on-number-of-developers-by-2017.html>.

### Historical-structural migration theories

The second basket of theories is historical-structural migration theories. As the name suggests, these theories privilege structure over agency, primarily focusing on the global capitalist structure, which they see as reinforcing the wealth of the few and the exploitation of the many. Rooted in neo-Marxist political economy, these theories explain how social, cultural, political, and economic structures constrain individual behavior. The global capitalist world is by definition structurally unequal and these theorists see migration as exacerbating that inequality. Migration is about the movement of cheap, easily exploitable labor, which profits the already wealthy and drains the talent of the sending countries.<sup>24</sup>

Globalization theories emerged in the 1990s alongside the revolution in trade, transport, and communication and in the context of the US dominance after the Cold War. These theories see migration as a reflection of unequal global relationships and a new form of imperialism where vulnerable migrants move from poor to rich countries.<sup>25</sup> Globalization is based on liberal economic models, which encourage privatization, market economies, and deregulation, all of which are seen to keep the poor downtrodden and make the rich richer. Globalization weakens the power of unions while it benefits and reinforces the owners of capital: elites and multinational corporations. According to this theory, we should expect higher volume of migrants flowing from the Global South to the Global North, rather than vice versa.

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<sup>24</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, no. 4 (1974); Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> Douglas S. Massey et al., "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal," *Population & Development Review* 19, no. 3 (1993).

From this historical-structural perspective we also get segmented, or dual, labor market theory.<sup>26</sup> This theory sees demand for high- and low-skilled labor as structurally embedded in modern capitalist economies—the US market could demand both high-skilled doctors and low-skilled hospital janitors at the same time. This demand is permanent, in the sense that it is part of capitalism itself, but as receiving countries experience changes in their economic structures, demand for certain skills will shift. This theory draws attention to the social, economic, and political structures migrants enter into and how they are often disadvantaged by lack of education, training, gender, race, minority status and irregular legal status. Countries control demand through their immigration laws and demand/pull factors are seen as the primary factor in determining migration, while demographic labor supply is a necessary, but not sufficient explanation.<sup>27</sup>

Historical-structural theories would predict that as long as India, China, and Mexico remain part of the global economic periphery and not the core, migration flows will continue for some jobs—those that require relocating. This theory would also predict a drop in demand for some service jobs that could be conducted by telework, or those jobs that are outsourced when US businesses build manufacturing plants abroad. As long as neoliberal economic policies predominate, trade will replace some labor demand. These theories help explain why, despite revolutions in transportation and communication, only two to four percent of the world's population has lived outside the country in which they were born since mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, it would predict that percentage to stay stable over the next several decades. Since the valve that controls the spigot is located in the US and turned by quotas set in law, another key piece is understanding the domestic factions and feuds that open and close migration.

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<sup>26</sup> Michael J. Piore, *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor in Industrial Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Thomas Straubhaar, "The Causes of International Labor Migrations - a Demand Determined Approach," *International Migration Review* 20, no. 4 (1986).

<sup>27</sup> Sert.



Historical-structural theories are criticized for privileging structure over agency (an obvious critique) and for seeing migrants as passive victims of capitalism instead of agents exploiting the capitalist system for their own benefit. The astronomical flow of remittances back to poor countries is evidence that migrants are utilizing the system for their own benefit and capital is draining from rich countries at the same time that talent is draining from poorer ones. In addition, as many of these theories focus on immigration law to control demand, they fail to account for migrants who flout immigration laws and enter a country illegally. It may be true that demand drives migration more than supply does, but some countries have actively tried to overcome demand limitations, or meet demand more effectively, by focusing on producing certain labor skills. India and the Philippines are two examples where the state has played an important role in encouraging certain skills for exporting labor.<sup>28</sup>

#### Illustrative case study: Mexican workers in the US

Dual labor market theory explains how even as the US has gotten richer, demand for dirty, dangerous, and demeaning jobs, which migrants regularly fill, has not only remained but has arguably grown. As America's standard of living increases, Americans' willingness to do such jobs diminishes. This theory seems particularly well-suited to explaining Mexican migration to the US. Compared to other immigrants and to native-born Americans, Mexican immigrants were 31 percent more likely to be employed in service occupations in 2014. They were 26 percent more likely to be employed in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations and 22 percent more likely to be employed in production, transportation, and material-moving occupations.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Kathleen Newland, "Migration as a Factor in Development and Poverty Reduction," (2003), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migration-factor-development-and-poverty-reduction>.

<sup>29</sup> Zong and Batalova, "Mexican Immigrants in the United States".

Chiquiar and Salcedo, analyzing flows of Mexican immigrants after 1994, find that three distinct periods emerged, related to supply- and demand-side factors. First, during the Mexican economic crisis of 1994-95 (the Mexican peso crisis), flows were strong. Analyzing by economic sector, Chiquiar and Salcedo found that there was an increase in demand for Mexican labor over other immigrants during the time. The second period was between 2000-2007, when flows stopped increasing in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the United States and subsequent attention to monitoring and enforcing US immigration laws. The third period is characterized by a decline in net migration after 2007 due to the global economic crisis, which particularly hurt sectors that use Mexican labor, such as construction. At the same time, Mexico experienced more stable economic growth and lower population growth rates (they do not look at the latter two in this study, nor do they look at return flows back to Mexico).

Using these historical observations and modeling demand for Mexican labor by sector, Chiquiar and Salcedo projected an increase in flows of Mexican immigrants to about 260,000 per year for the period 2011-2017, based on patterns observed from 1994 to 2011.<sup>30</sup> In actuality, while 369,000 Mexicans immigrated in 2005, only 125,000 did in both 2012 and 2013—135,000 below what Chiquiar and Salcedo's model predicted.<sup>31</sup> In fact, 2013 was the year China and India overtook Mexico as the top sender of migrants.

This economic model vastly overpredicted migration from Mexico, meaning that either the model was flawed, or economic models are insufficient to explain migration flows. Both are likely. The US economy has moved to more service than manufacturing, which has meant an increase in demand for high-skilled workers. Also, Chinese and Indians have been the primary recipients of both student and

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel Chiquiar and Alejandrina Salcedo, "Mexican Migration to the United States: Underlying Economic Factors and Possible Scenarios for Future Flows," (Washington, DC: Wilson Center & Migration Policy Institute, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Muzaffar Chishti and Faye Hipsman, "In Historic Shift, New Migration Flows from Mexico Fall Below Those from China and India," *Migration Information Source* (2015), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/historic-shift-new-migration-flows-mexico-fall-below-those-china-and-india>.

employer-sponsored visas, which have planted the seeds of new migration patterns, as many of those immigrants sponsor their families to immigrate as well.<sup>32</sup>

A series of policies have affected Mexican immigration to the US, in addition to economic issues. Although the 1921 Emergency Quota Act did not apply to countries in the Western Hemisphere, the 1924 Labor Appropriation Act established the US Border Patrol as a federal law enforcement agency and instructed it to curb illegal immigration and smuggling along America's borders. The Bracero program that helped the US recruit temporary agricultural workers from Mexico was in effect from 1942 until 1964. And the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act set quotas for Mexican immigration well below demand, while opening pathways for migrants from other areas of the world, like Asia.<sup>33</sup> The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) made it illegal for US employers to hire unauthorized workers and increased funding for the Border Patrol.<sup>34</sup> Many more policies shaped the flow of Mexican migration to the US, but what we see most generally is that efforts to restrict Mexican migration to the US mostly just increased the cost and risk of migrating, rather than diminishing the desire to migrate. Rather than cyclically migrating for work, Mexicans began to remain in the US permanently, unsure whether they would be able to return if they went home for any period.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the number of Mexicans living in the US increased not only because of economic factors, but also as an unintended consequence of restrictive policy.

### Agent-centered/identity migration theories

While the previous two theoretical perspectives focused more on structure, another set of theories privileges the role of agency and examines the motivations for individuals and groups to migrate. This

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Jane Hong, "The Law That Created Illegal Immigration," *The LA Times* (2015), <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-1002-hong-1965-immigration-act-20151002-story.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Douglas S. Massey, "Borders for Whom? The Role of Nafta in Mexico-U.S. Migration," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

perspective also includes theories about how the migration process itself shapes migrants' identities and how migrants create social networks through the act of moving, connecting their new and old homes.

One agent-centered theory is economic: new economics of labor migration, or NELM, sees migration as a way for families or households to share risk, diversifying income sources and protecting against the destruction of natural or economic disasters. This perspective emerged in the 1980s and tried to correct some of the idealism of neoclassical economic theories by looking at how migration actually works in an imperfect market environment. Through migration, migrants try to improve their lives and gain resources that they can invest in economic activities. This perspective sees migration as more of a response to relative deprivation, which provides an incentive to migrate and improve the family's lot, rather than a response to absolute poverty, as the poor lack the resources to move.<sup>36</sup>

There are several critiques of NELM. One is that it doesn't explain the migration of those who are relatively well-off. Another is that it does not take intra-household negotiations over risk-sharing—which family member will go? Which will stay? Finally, NELM discounts informal factors and illegal migration. While decisions to migrate are certainly made by individuals—even if they face structural constraints and incentives—this paper sets aside individual-level data in favor of examining broader flows.

### Network, transnationalism, and migration systems theories

Finally, network, transnationalism, and migration systems theories focus on the intermediate, meso level, and are neither purely macro/structural-, nor micro/agent-based. These theories draw attention to the ties, networks, and identities created by migration and the information, money, and goods that are traded between sending and receiving countries. The actual process of migration creates new social, economic, and cultural structures that reinforce migration. While most migration theories look at the

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<sup>36</sup> Castles, de Haas, and Miller.

initiation of migration, this family of theories recognizes that migration is a perpetual and dynamic phenomenon that evolves over time.

Migration network theory paints migration as a path-dependent process, carved out by the social ties between migrants abroad and family back home. This theory draws attention to social capital as a key resource that determines an individual's capability and aspiration to migrate. When family or friends move, they become a source of information about the migration and settlement process, which can facilitate additional migration. This information is an asset, helping migrants connect to employment or housing resources, in effect strengthening migration of kin and close networks.<sup>37</sup> Bijak shows how once this network is in place it has inertia that not only makes it difficult to control at the national level through restrictive policies, but also makes the migration independent from the factors that initiated the migration.<sup>38</sup> While Bijak's argument can help explain the high levels of unauthorized Mexican migration to the US, a network perspective is less useful for explaining why that migration would slow or stop, as is developing with Mexican immigration.

Transnational and diaspora theories point out how globalization has facilitated ties between migrants and their homes. Diaspora theories emphasize the strong sense of collective ethnic identity and the need to protect and help the in-group. Institutional theories look at the formal and informal institutions that arise after migration begins, from illegal activities like human smuggling networks, to employment networks that help migrants find jobs. Certainly, all of these dynamics are present in the case of Indian, Mexican, and Chinese migration to the US.

Finally, migration systems theory and cumulative causation theory embed migration in the context of development. According to migration systems theory, migration is just one type of flow, like

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<sup>37</sup> Sert; J. Edward Taylor, "Differential Migration, Networks, Information and Risk," in *Research in Human Capital and Development*, ed. O. Stark (Greenwich, CN: JAI Press, 1986).

<sup>38</sup> Jakub Bijak, "Forecasting International Migration: Selected Theories, Models, and Methods," in *CEFMR Working Paper* (Warsaw, Poland: Central European Forum for Migration Research, 2006).

flows of goods, ideas, and money. This theory looks at macro-structural factors like connections between core receiving and sending countries through trade, flows of capital, security alliances, and information, all of which may have existed before migration between the two started, such as colonial ties. Linkages between migration flows and the other flows change the initial conditions in both sending and receiving countries under which migration takes place. This theory is partly spatial—geography is a useful way of thinking about how migrants, families, and communities connect over long distances.

Cumulative causation theory helps explain how as an economy becomes more developed, emigration does not stop and may actually increase. While some policy makers have surmised that the flow of immigrants from China will dry up as China's standard of living increases, according to this perspective it could actually increase as more Chinese have the means and knowledge to emigrate. According to cumulative causation theory, with every migration, subsequent migrations are more likely because the social context changes with every migration. Massey's illustration is that when one family migrates and improves their income and welfare, other families back home will feel relatively deprived; when some migrate it will exacerbate income inequality and relative deprivation among those who stay behind, in a repeating pattern.<sup>39</sup>

This meso-level perspective draws attention to historical, cultural, political, or economic links between sending and receiving countries. For example, Vietnamese migrants to the US first came as refugees during the Cold War, but as they formed strong immigrant networks in the US and built businesses, they used ties back in Vietnam to facilitate the immigration of family and friends. This perspective would help explain why the US-Mexico migration corridor is the world's largest—distance matters—and why migration from Mexico to the US will continue, even at a reduced level, as the Mexican economy develops and its population ages. The Mexican diaspora community in the US

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<sup>39</sup> Massey et al; D. Tsegai, "Migration as a Household Decision: What Are the Roles of Income Differences? Insights from the Volta Basin of Ghana," *The European Journal of Development Research* 19, no. 2 (2007).

numbers over 35 million.<sup>40</sup> According to data collected by the Mexican Migration Project, "By the end of the twentieth century, two-thirds of all Mexicans knew someone who had been to the United States and almost 60 percent were socially connected to someone living on American soil." (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002).<sup>41</sup> Distance is less of a factor in explaining immigration from India or China, but network theories account for such flows by explaining how ties between immigrants and their home communities can remain strong even when the two are separated by distance.

Migration systems theories are strongly critiqued. If networks are important, how can we explain those who take the initiative as "pioneer migrants" without the benefit of such networks? Some networks weaken over time, and some initial migration fails to form a strong network at all—these theories have difficulty accounting for those dynamics.<sup>42</sup> A diaspora model recognizes emigrants as citizens living abroad, still subject to rights and obligations of the home country. Newland explains that "Increasingly, the governments of countries of origin are seeking to cultivate ties with the diaspora, seeing them as a source of investment, overseas market openings, foreign exchange, expertise, and political support (in domestic campaigns as well as vis-à-vis the governments of their new countries of residence)."<sup>43</sup> The causality chains approach tries to remedy some of these shortcomings by bringing neoclassical economic theory, dual labor market theory, NELM, relative deprivation theory, world systems theory, network theory, and institutional theory together—as is obvious, the more complex the theory, the harder it is to operationalize and test.<sup>44</sup> Although likely a more accurate account of the causes of migration, these complex theories are difficult to apply.

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<sup>40</sup> Zong and Batalova, "Mexican Immigrants in the United States".

<sup>41</sup> Fernández-Kelly and Massey, 107. Citing Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> Castles, de Haas, and Miller.

<sup>43</sup> Newland.

<sup>44</sup> R. Jennissen, "Causality Chains in the International Migration Systems Approach," *Population Research and Policy Review* 26, no. 4 (2007).

### Illustrative case study: Chinese diaspora in the US

Given their large diaspora population, the case of Chinese immigrants should provide an appropriate example of the explanatory power of these meso-level theories. Chinese immigrants are mostly high-skilled; behind Indians, they receive the second-largest number of employer-sponsored H-1B visas, which require the holder to have a university degree. Chinese students often come to the US for education. According to the Migration Policy Institute, “Chinese immigrants are enrolled in college and graduate school at a rate more than twice that of immigrants overall (15 percent, compared to 7 percent).”<sup>45</sup> Half of Chinese adults 25 and older had at least a bachelors' degree in 2016 and were twice as likely as other immigrants and US-born to have graduate degrees. That year, over 40 percent of the Chinese students in the US were studying science, technology, engineering, or math.

Chinese immigrants often have more assets and are employed in white-collar jobs. They accounted for an astounding 90 percent of EB-5 investor visas in fiscal year 2015. Chinese are also more likely to hold management positions than any other single group. In that year, just over half of Chinese immigrants worked in management, business, science, and arts, while only 3% were in natural resources, construction, or maintenance.<sup>46</sup> India’s diaspora is the world’s largest, followed by Mexico, the Russian Federation, and China. Notably, among India, Mexico, and China, the size of the diasporas have changed at different rates since 2000. Between 2000 and 2017, India’s diaspora has increased by 8.6 million, Mexico by 3.4 million, and China by 4.2 million. The size of these diasporas indicates that to the extent that networks drive continued migration, migration from these three countries should continue—at what level is unclear.

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<sup>45</sup> Zong and Batalova, "Chinese Immigrants in the United States".

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



## Part III: Scenarios

The previous sections provide a foundation for developing several scenarios for future immigration from India, China, and Mexico to the US. In addition to the drivers identified for migration from those three countries, each scenario considers status quo and potential changes in US immigration law: e.g., family reunification, citizenship pathways, schemes to attract specific skills (H1-B, etc.). If immigration policy and changes in the global economy are the two major forces driving migration to the US, then where will immigration into the US be in 2050?

### Scenario 1 – Supply-driven

Between 2019 and 2050, India, Mexico, and China undergo tremendous domestic changes that shift their roles as major sources of immigration to the US. China's workforce peaked in 2015 and its population has been rapidly aging. Its median age has increased about 10 years, from 38 to 48 and fertility remains low. China remains a country of net emigration as standards of living rise and Chinese with the means to do so seek opportunities outside the mainland. Between 2000 and 2010, the migration "corridor" from China to the US was the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest in the world, due partly to the large number of Chinese students at US universities. This migration continued to 2050, but in smaller numbers, as Chinese universities increased in prestige and there were increasingly fewer student-aged Chinese to potentially study abroad.

By 2050, Mexico's median age has rapidly increased from 28 to almost 41 years. The youngest working-age cohort of ages 15-19 (entering working ages), peaked in 2015.<sup>47</sup> The Mexican economy continued to improve and despite ties to the United States, many Mexicans decided to remain in Mexico rather than risk the journey. Some, however, were driven out by violence and corruption in their

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<sup>47</sup> Population Division United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision," (United Nations, 2017).

hometowns and pulled to the US by the promise of relatively higher wages. Thus, the flow between Mexico and the US continued, but never again to be at the high levels seen prior to the 2008 financial crisis. Citizens of the Northern Triangle countries and other countries in Central America to some degree replaced Mexicans as a source of low-skilled labor for the United States. By the mid-2030s, however, most countries in Central America were politically stable and developing and there was less incentive to emigrate. With a lack of low-skilled immigrant labor, wages for such jobs were driven upwards by 2050 and there was some sign that native-born Americans were willing to take such jobs as they had formerly shunned. As a result of NAFTA, from 1986 to 2003, "The number of Mexicans entering the United States on business visas more than tripled, from 128,000 to 438,000 annually, while the number of intracompany transferred personnel rose even more rapidly, from 4,300 to 16,000."<sup>48</sup> At the same time that NAFTA encouraged the relocation of manufacturing jobs from Canada and the US to Mexico, it devastated Mexican farmers and small business owners, incentivizing them to emigrate to the US. The so-called NAFTA 2.0 signed by the three North American heads of state, modestly raised wages in Mexico and further discouraged Mexican migration to the US.

While Mexico and India had similar median ages in 2019, India's population momentum was much greater and so India's median age only increased to 37.5 years by mid-century, nearly 4 years younger than Mexico's. Indian emigration continued to 2050, particularly as the Indian states that were relatively underdeveloped (such as those in Northern India) began to see economic growth. That growth empowered a new set of Indians to gain the skills necessary for emigrating to the US and other countries with demand for STEM workers. Fewer Indians moved to the Gulf States for low-skilled jobs, however.

Because population growth was concentrated among less developed countries, some became new sources for migration to the US by 2050. The population of Africa doubled by mid-century. Several

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<sup>48</sup> Fernández-Kelly and Massey, 107.

conditions positioned Africa as a new source of US immigrants. First, the standard of living for some Africans increased. Some economies saw remarkable growth, including Rwanda, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Ghana. Since the most impoverished people do not move, particularly long distances, those countries that saw little gain in development also saw little emigration. Less than 3 percent of poor Niger's population lived outside its borders in 2019, and a scant percentage higher did in 2050. Second, as it had done for Indian and Chinese immigration, the US created a legal pathway to initiate immigration from Africa. Third, the US remained an attractive destination for migrants, particularly in comparison to states that theoretically "competed" for the talent and labor of such migrants.

#### Decision points

1. Policies continuing to allow Chinese students to study at US universities in large number determine the continued attractiveness of the US as a destination.
2. Continuing, expanding, or evolving the Diversity visa lottery. Once the pathway is carved, subsequent migration keeps the flow going, but policy is the catalyst. To draw from countries outside of Asia and Latin America, this visa lottery system is key.

#### Scenario 2 – Demand-driven (automation, macro econ changes)

Between 2019 and 2050, increasing automation displaced many US retail and assembly workers, but demand for immigrants to fill low-skilled dirty, dangerous, and demeaning (DDD) jobs, including janitorial work, continued, as Americans avoided transitioning to that type of work. As America's large Baby Boomer population entered the oldest ages and neared the end of their lives, demand for their personal care was especially high and immigrant workers filled many of these jobs. Demand for high-skilled STEM workers continued, as well, and immigrants remained an affordable source. Because of the difficulty in policing employment of unauthorized workers, they continued to be employed at higher

rates than US-born workers and demand for them in agriculture and service work, such as food service and hotels, continued.<sup>49</sup>

As it had in the past, greater attempts to police the southern border of the US only served to increase the criminality of it, empowering human smugglers and further solidifying ties to drug cartels and continuing to fuel the opioid crisis in the US. With demand high, immigrants were undiscouraged.

Decision points:

1. Allotment of H-1B and other visas schemes for high skilled workers in specialty fields.
2. Legalization of unauthorized workers in US or schemes to allow low-skilled workers to immigrate would decriminalize immigration across the southern border and weaken ties with drug cartels.
3. For American-born workers to fill DDD jobs, including agriculture and home health care, wages would have to be much higher or a cultural shift would have to take place that would put greater value on those jobs.

### Scenario 3 – Ideologically-driven

Between 2019 and 2050, identity politics in the United States continued to be heated, as younger, more diverse generations became the primary political and economic actors. While a greater proportion of the electorate had a migration background (either themselves or via their parents and grandparents), because US institutions favored more rural, white-dominated political units, the power of more diverse groups was diluted. Thus, comprehensive immigration reform remained elusive and as power alternated among Republicans and Democrats piecemeal reforms resulted, just like they had in the decades prior to 2019. Within the Republican Party, fractures along demographic lines continued to

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<sup>49</sup> Gelatt and Zong.

move policy preferences to the Left in some regions of the US, particularly in the states and counties dominated by Hispanic Americans.

Decision points:

1. Maintenance of birthright citizenship: One of the current US proposals is to restrict birthright citizenship. Many of the 11.3 million estimated illegal immigrants in the US are married to a US citizen or green card holder and many had children who were US citizens: 4.1m US-born children had at least one unauthorized parent. If the proposal restricts those with no authorized parents (both unauthorized), that would have affected 1.3m + 909,000 of that 4.1m total (the others live with a citizen or authorized immigrant).<sup>50</sup>

#### Scenario 4 – Externally-driven

While the US has been one of the most attractive destinations for immigrants in the modern era, particularly for those looking to permanently settle, between 2019 and 2050, other economies became more successful at attracting those looking for new national homes. China, in particular, began to attract high-skilled workers to its vibrant cities and to retain more of its own talent. Ties between China and Africa through China's numerous development projects there, and ties between China and Central Asia through its One Belt, One Road initiative, carved pathways for those looking to emigrate and made China a viable destination. Although in 2019 European countries were still grappling with their new status as countries of immigration, not emigration, by the 2040s, Europe's more diverse younger generations had taken political control and immigration became more acceptable. Demand for both high- and low-skilled immigrant workers blossomed in Europe because of intensive population aging. As certain countries within Africa saw major development, they became continental destinations for

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 4.

Africans looking to emigrate from relatively poorer African countries. Population aging among traditional senders to the United States reduced the pool of potential immigrants.

Decision points:

1. Policies that make immigration to the US more attractive, such as potential for family reunification and speedy processing of permanent resident applications (which currently have a long backlog). However, it is important to note that immigrants are not currently dissuaded by long backlogs today.

## Implications

This paper has proposed that considering supply of and demand for immigrants when projecting future immigration yields incomplete analysis. What happens to immigration from 2019-2050 is primarily determined by laws, although network and macroeconomic factors certainly play a role, as we saw with Mexican migration to the US from 2008-14.

This paper has narrowly defined institutions as legal regimes; we could take a different institutional approach and look at how the rules of the game structure those legislative outcomes. The roles of Congress, the Presidency, state and local lawmaking, and even interest groups, such as employers and advocacy organizations, structure how the various pressures for and against immigration turn into policy itself. We know that the ethnic composition of the US population will change dramatically between now and 2050 because younger generations are so diverse, but that diversity does not by itself determine legislative or policy outcomes. For example, the concentration of these migrants in certain geographical areas or certain economic sectors can amplify or dilute their political power in the US. In 2014, just four counties held 23 percent of all Mexican immigrants.<sup>51</sup> One-fifth of births

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<sup>51</sup> Zong and Batalova, "Mexican Immigrants in the United States".

projected from 2014-2060 are expected to be to foreign-born women.<sup>52</sup> Institutions also determine how loud various voices are in the political arena; in the US, lobbying groups have agenda-setting power and close relationships with elected officials. A lobbying group called the Information Technology Industry Council, which includes companies like Apple, Google, and Facebook, has spoken out against proposed H-1B changes in 2019. The tug-of-war between voters, industries, and other stakeholders will pervade politics to 2050, but the US institutions—including voter districts and even the electoral college—determine which voices win out.

The US has failed to pass comprehensive immigration legislation since the 1990 Immigration Act, although every US president and Congressional cohort since then has tried. Barack Obama's immigration plan in 2013 at the beginning of his second term was similar to a plan floated in the Senate. The four-point plan promised to strengthen borders, crack down on companies hiring undocumented workers, compel undocumented immigrants to pay taxes, learn English, pass background checks, and move to the back of the line for US citizenship. The fourth prong proposed to streamline the legal system to make immigration clearer. Obama doubled the number of Border Patrol agents from 2004 and also tried to reunify families more quickly, which he hoped would allow US companies to attract foreign talent. He deported convicted criminals and improved immigration courts, including increasing the number of judges and staff to adjudicate cases quicker. He also instituted a policy of earned citizenship for those (DREAMers) brought to the country illegally by their parents while they were children. Obama also raised the existing annual country caps from 7 to 15 percent for family-sponsored immigration system. Those who earned Masters and Ph.D. degrees in desirable STEM fields had green cards "stapled" to their diplomas. Obama also strengthened visas for those who wanted to start new businesses or invest in the

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<sup>52</sup> Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, "Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060," in *Population Estimates and Projections: Current Population Reports* (United States Census Bureau, 2015), 3.

US. Obama's proposals show a mix of positions that cross the left-right ideological divide—some pro-business, pro-security; some pro-family with an emphasis on human rights.

In contrast, in his first two years of the presidency, Donald Trump cut legal immigration to levels not seen since the restrictive 1924 Immigration Act. He has proposed cutting family-sponsored visas by up to 40 percent and broad changes to border security and interior enforcement as part of the deal cut in exchange for legalizing less than one-sixth of the unauthorized population in the US, mainly DREAMers eligible for deportation-relief program that Trump dismissed. Trump has also proposed eliminating the diversity visa lottery. His rhetoric is “merit-based” immigration but his proposals have not yet included changes to the high-skilled visa schemes. Part of the Securing America's Future Act is to “buy American and hire American,” including a proposal for an annual cap on new visas to 85,000. By 2019, there had been an increase in denials of visa applications by 37 percent. Trump also wants to ban the spouses of H-1B visa holders from working, change the types of jobs eligible for those visas, and require that companies offer jobs (not just notify workers) to Americans before looking for foreign-born workers. Trump has also proposed cutting legal immigration over the next 50 years by 22 million. Disputes with Congress over \$5 billion for building a border wall led to a government shutdown starting in December 2018 and ongoing as of this writing. Trump's proposals have divided the political Right. For example, the Cato Institute estimates that Trump's proposal to halve legal immigration could reduce the US economy by \$19 trillion in 2060 relative to the status quo because it would reduce US population growth by 26 million. Those more ideologically aligned with Trump have favored his proposals. In all, the synopsis of immigration policies and proposals under Presidents Obama and Trump illustrates the piecemeal approach to immigration reform, and the elusiveness of comprehensive changes.

As a group, the migration theories outlined in Part II can help explain why some immigration policies are set, but they don't take the actual policies themselves as key determinants of migration flows. Policies deserve more serious treatment in the scholarly literature as a factor that shapes



migration flows. As James Hampshire says, economic, demographic, and environmental factors matter, but states do too, “including the decision to migrate in the first place, where to migrate, how to migrate, what routes to follow and, later, the trajectories of integration.”<sup>53</sup> If it is true that policies themselves play a role in shaping migration flows, then the United States has some agency and control over the immigration process and thus policies themselves will go far in determining what the US population looks like in 2050.

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<sup>53</sup> James Hampshire, *The Politics of Immigration* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 2.

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