

Border Militarization and the Reproduction of Mexican Migrant Labor

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Abstract:

Brownell described how border enforcement structures of unauthorized migration from Mexican borders, which benefits U.S. capital interests in ways authorized migration does not. This paper identifies a global trend towards hardened, militarized borders through the use of military equipment technologies, hardware and personnel to detect and apprehend illegal aliens. In contrast to claims of waning state sovereignty, he (Brownell) argue that the nexus of military-security contractor, dramatically increased U.S. expenditure in protecting migration.

Dr. Brownell holds a Ph.D. in Sociology and M.A. in Demography, both from UC Berkeley. Prior to joining CPI, Dr. Brownell was an Associate Social Scientist at the RAND Corporation, where he also maintains an adjunct affiliation while continuing his role as Principal Investigator on projects relating to the occupational health of immigrant farm workers and to estimating immigration flows. Dr. Brownell has also been a visiting research fellow at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies and a guest scholar at the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, both at UC-San Diego. His former researches were focused primarily on immigrants and immigration, with a particular focus on migration between Mexico and the United States. His projects have addressed the factors related to Mexican immigrants' wages in the United States and the role of U.S. policy in structuring immigrants' labor market outcomes and decisions regarding migration and settlement. His research findings also addressed health topics such as youth smoking and the measurement of childhood obesity.

The author started discussion with the changes in U.S. policy and practice at the Mexican border under the rubric of militarization starting in September 1993. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has dubbed this shift in policy its "Comprehensive Southwest Border Enforcement Strategy," Gatekeepers and subsequent programs choked off established and relatively reduced urban crossing routes, like those around San Diego and El Paso, forcing migrants to try their luck on more treacherous ground, across either the mesquite flatlands of South Texas or the gulches and plateaus of the Arizona desert, where private border patrollers make the crossing even more dangerous. In a piece on the dynamics of El Paso, Ciudad Juárez' border sister (Ortiz), he examines the contextual dimensions that foster and sustain border rights violations. He provides ethnographic research and probes the work of U.S.-Mexico border scholars. This article argues that recognizing the contextual dynamics in El Paso helps us to understand pervasive incongruent practices and representations related to the border region. Such recognition of the ambiguous and unstable condition of the border region may generate more comprehensive and effective responses to disruptive INS militarization practices. Improvements in documenting abuses and policies should enhance their effectiveness and appeal with local populations once their displaced situation is addressed. In El Paso and along most of border region, this social cost of abuses fosters a pervasive sense of alienation. The social fabric is corroded and the basis for a sustainable response to INS atrocities erodes. Information on the abuses or on the INS is not enough.

Brownell argues that the shift in border policy seeks to address economic concerns of the U.S. electorate. This new policy actually exacerbates the issues underlying these concerns. The construction of barriers, deployment of more personnel and the investment in a wide range of military and security technologies from drones to smart border technologies that attempt to monitor, identify and prevent unauthorized movements are emblematic of this shift. He link this increasing militarization to



dehumanization of migrant others and to the increasing mortality in border spaces.

Changes in the composition of migrant flows may have effects that are independent of changes in the size of those flows. These effects are similar in many respects to proposals by agribusiness for a new guest worker program. Organized labor has staunchly opposed a new agricultural guest worker program. Despite this similarity, the public largely perceives the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border as protecting U.S. workers from the economic effects of undocumented immigration.

He emphasizes the military is responsible for the most severe human rights abuse related to border enforcement to date, the killing of a Mexican American teenager in Redford, Texas. In this instance of repression, military conduct was replete with gross misunderstanding by soldiers and their unwarranted escalation of the use of force. Even the less severe forms of military collaboration in border policing have negative implications for the status of rights. By documenting this trend and identifying a range of different practices that are included under the rubric of militarization, this paper is both a call for nuanced interpretation and more sustained investigation of the expansion of the military into the policing of borders. Lastly, the author pointed that the researchers generally agree that the INS has not managed to stop

or significantly reduce undocumented migration in short term; no such consensus exists around the possible selective effects of INS efforts with regard to settlement.

This article contributes a lot to the knowledge of the researcher in research field. In addition to this, the argument of the authors much of his research have focused on the border migration between Mexico and U.S and also show us the result of policies and strategies of U.S border control. From economic view, he justified the difference between temporary and permanent labor migrants.

The weakness of the article is witnessed in repetition of ideas and arguments. For instance, the consensus among scholars is that this INS strategy has not effectively reduced undocumented migration from Mexico to the U.S. on page 72-73. In addition, the authors more focus on the agricultural sectors than other sectors.

Finally, the article is rich in sources, holds persuasive arguments, and provides perception through using of charts (figure) to explain the issues briefly. I strongly recommended not only historian scholars but also the other field scholars, researchers and writers to read the article because the migration issue has been one of a serious problem in this contemporary world.