

Concluding Thoughts

D. Rick van Schoik*



Joshua Loty/REUTERS

The Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix.

Passion and complexity create hysteria about migration issues but also mis- and dis-information. So it was especially refreshing to initiate a dispassionate but complex dialogue on the topic with our partner center, the National Autonomous University of Mexico's Center for Research on North America (CISAN). However, even though there was clear articulation of the issues, the double-edged nature of the topic arose over and over again.

The North American Center for Transborder Studies (NACTS) cannot work in the real world without Arizona's Senate Bill 1070 confounding our ability to be heard on the border, security, prosperity, and competitiveness problems we work on. Foundations that support us in Mexico have already asked us not to broadcast the fact that we are from Arizona, as it taints them as well.

So, rather than focusing on the rippling and ricocheting effects of 1070, we are instead using it as a stepping stone

to a broader discussion of the bilateral relationship, of labor and skill mobility to and within North America.

One double-edged finding of the workshop was that migration has different costs, benefits, and returns on investments in different parts of both the sending nation and the receiving nation. "Homogenizing" the discussion—as so often happens—can be counter-productive.

Another disparity is among the legislative and enforcement actions at the state, local, tribal, and municipal levels creating a patchwork of policies in anticipation of action at the federal level and the juxtaposition of those two realities against the almost absolute void of binational or international diplomacy between sending and receiving nations.

Another conundrum was migration tending to position the advocates of human rights, dignity, respect, and protection against law enforcement, which tends to result in the unintentional criminalization of the issue.

The risks of irregular migration range from the real danger of dying in the ovens of the deserts and hazards in the remote wilds of the borderlands to the actual threats migrants

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face during the crossing ordeal, and then their presence as economic migrants. The benefits of migration to the individual and to nations also cover a wide gamut.

The U.S. has an alphabet soup of border and migration agencies —DHS CBP, ICE, and CIS—¹ and Canada has reciprocated by establishing the Canadian Border Security Agency and rededicating the efforts of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to border issues. Mexico has yet to develop counterparts to each of these agencies, complicating diplomacy on migration issues.

The bottom line is that federal inactivity is misguided and even dangerous. Even on such innocuous challenges as a national ID card, the U.S. federal government is still stalled, and the ideal of a tamper-proof remotely-read ID and biometric-validated E-verify employment system will be delayed years due to cost. In the meantime, progress on the most

tragic component of international migration, human trafficking, is hanging back.

NACTS hopes that the two young cosmopolitan presidents rediscover the imperative of progress on development, diplomacy, and defense concurrently. Furthermore, NACTS advocates using the model of Canadian-Mexican migration policy and getting the issue onto the agenda at the North American Leaders Summit.

Since labor and skill mobility enhance our common security, our shared prosperity, and North America's competitiveness, they are too important to delay acting upon. **MM**

NOTES


¹ DHS: Department of Homeland Security; CBP: U.S. Customs and Border Protection; ICE: U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; CIS: Citizenship and Immigration Services.

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