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# An overview of migration in the northern countries of Central America

Syracuse University

## Introduction

While migration is a positive and empowering experience for many, it is quite clear that forced migrants from Central America tend to be disproportionately vulnerable. Often their human rights and fundamental freedoms are at risk, not just in the countries they leave but in the dangerous route and places they settle. This poster promotes an understanding of migration from a critical though that challenge normative and dominant ideas provide a wider understanding of the complexity of the problem in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, territory called northern triangle of Central America.

## Overview of the northern triangle



Figure 1. (Castillo, 2019)

	GUATEMALA	HONDURAS	EL SALVADOR
Population	16,924,190 habitantes	9,182,766	6,445,405
Area (km)	108,889 km <sup>2</sup>	112,090 sq km	21,041 sq km
Density (P/Km <sup>2</sup> )	155 habitantes/km <sup>2</sup>	86 per Km <sup>2</sup>	305 habitantes por Km <sup>2</sup>
Birth rate	24.6 births/1,000 population	22 births/1,000 population	16.1 births/1,000 population
Dead rate	5.8 deaths/1,000 population	5.3 deaths/1,000 population	5.8 deaths/1,000 population
Migration rate	-0.65 deaths/1,000 population	-0.69 migrant(s)/1,000 population	-7.8 migrant(s)/1,000 population
Internal displacement	No accessible	No accessible	No accessible
Homicide rate	27.3 cases per 100,000 population	56.52 rate per 100,000	82.8 cases per 100,000 population
Life expectancy	female: 73.9 years male: 69.8 years	female: 73 years male: 69.6 years	female: 78.6 years male: 71.8 years

Table 1. Source: Population, area, density, birth, dead and migration rate taken from CIA web page (Agency, n.d.) and Banco de Guatemala (Guatemala, 2018). Migration & homicide rate taken from the world data atlas (Atlas, 2015)

## Historical timeline

**XVI-XVII century** The Central America nations share a history of colonization and independence from Spain that left behind highly concentrated economic and political system. (Ralf & Haering, 2012)

**XIX-XX century** The cycles of intervention of dominant nations that manipulate natural resources, labor force and internal national policies of Central American countries

- 1898-1933: Repeated interventions in Nicaragua and Honduras from (Mark & Solis, 2007)
- 1947 to 1989: Massive military support to El Salvador to fight against FMLN; (Bourgeois, 2001); The United States finances the CONTRAST in Nicaragua; U.S. invasion of Panama. (Mark & Solis, 2007)

**XX- XXI century** the unequal development capitalist plus neoliberalism system, regulates and direct the migratory flows (Marquez Covarrubias, 2010). Unstable political issue as a result of the unequal dynamics of accumulation, growth and development (Marquez Covarrubias, 2010).

## Perceptible causes of migration in Central America

**Perceptible causes: Violence, family reunification, poverty, job opportunities, among others.** Violence as main example of perceptible causes of forced migration when do not take into account structural and historical causes. Example of don Anibal, el Zaito, Zaragoza, La Ilbertad, El Salvador



Figure 3 Source: (Soto Mayedo, 2015)

## Imperceptible causes of migration Structural causality

The structural causes of migration need to be analyzed out of the dominant frame of mobility concepts. The following chart presents a comparison of basic terms of migration provided by Covarrubias (2010) that provides alternative definitions that spearhead the possibility of creating new theory of migration in structural forced conditions.

Dominant ideas	Critical ideas
<b>Migration has self-reproductive capacity that responds to an individual decision.</b>	<b>Migration</b> is rooted in a structural economic system in which migrants represent a workforce that has been previously precarious and represents a source of cheap work for employers in the places of transit and destination.
<b>Allows access to paid employment and to the improvement in the quality of life.</b>	<b>Social Status</b> Labor class sector reducing their condition as human merchandise and second-class citizens, disorganized, criminalized and overexploited.
<b>Migrant as individual who makes the free decision to emigrate to maximize their personal benefits and relatives.</b>	<b>Migrants</b> Recognition of historical and structural causes transnational capital and unequal development
<b>Remittances correct national accounts; private resources that improve the quality of life of families; instrument for local development with government.</b>	<b>Remittance</b> is the salary resources that come from a pseudo salary in conditions of labor super exploitation oriented to cover the subsistence of economic dependents and to form a new migrant labor force.
<b>Human Rights under neoliberalism are violated for the benefit of capital rights. Social and environmental costs are not spared.</b>	<b>Human rights</b> retribute the social responsibility of capital and State and search for social transformation based on equality, solidarity, generalized human rights and common good.

Based on Covarrubias 2010

## Conclusions

The political and economic systems in El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua are increasing the opportunities of few people (elites) while reducing the living quality for the majority of population. It is expected that 539,500 people suffer forced migration by the end of 2019 in Central America (Outhwaite, 2018). In conclusion, the causes that track the migration patterns of these countries are no isolated but part of a Neoliberal Social and economic system that perpetuates the problem of forced migration.



Figure 2. U.S. Rice, 2018.

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