**The Evolution of Mexico-United States Relations Through the Lens of Migration**

**Introduction**

The United States and Mexico have had a complicated relationship throughout history. There have been times when they worked together, times when they didn't, and times when they relied on each other. Migration has been a big part of shaping the social, economic, and political landscapes of both countries, and it is one of the most important parts of this relationship. The work that Ana Raquel Minian did for the book "Undocumented Lives: The Untold Story of Mexican Migration" gives us a deep understanding of what migrants go through and how difficult the process is. The question this paper tries to answer is whether the relationship between Mexico and the US has changed a lot since the 1820s or whether it has mostly stayed the same this whole time. We will answer this question by looking at Minian's research along with bigger historical trends.

**Historical Context and Early Tensions**

When the U.S. and Mexico built a border in the 1800s, it set the stage for a relationship full of territorial disputes and tensions. The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 and the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) set the border, but they also caused fights over who belonged and what their identity was. Minian's research sheds light on the difficulties early migrants faced, showing how hard it is to find your way in a borderland where rules are always changing and some people are not allowed to enter. The struggles of indigenous migrants who tried to hide their heritage show how unfair migration systems are by their very nature.

The border between Mexico and the United States was officially set by the Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty in 1848, which ended the Mexican-American War. However, the border has changed a lot over the years. From the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, it's 3,145 kilometers long and separates four U.S. states from six Mexican states. It's also one of the most frequently crossed borders in the world, which makes immigration and international relations very complicated. By looking at these changes, we can see how history, changing policies, and the changing nature of immigration have affected the way Mexico and the US interact with each other. This article will use studies like those by Ana Raquel Minian to look at the early tensions, big changes in the 20th century, current problems at the border between Mexico and the United States, and the patterns that have been seen over time. It will do this by giving a full picture of how it has affected both countries.

**Shifts in the 20th Century**

The 20th century witnessed substantial changes in migration patterns and policies between Mexico and the United States. Legislative reforms such as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 reshaped immigration laws, altering the composition of migrant flows. Minian's research underscores the impact of these legal changes on undocumented immigrants, revealing the complexities of circular migration patterns driven by familial and economic ties. The rise of circular migration highlights the interplay between legal frameworks and broader social and economic factors influencing migration dynamics.

**Economic and Security Measures:**

**NAFTA (1994):** Get rid of tariffs, build a big trading bloc, and change how businesses interact at the border.

**Border Industrialization Program (BIP):** Mexico's fiscal dependence on U.S. capital grew, showing how the maquiladora program has made economies more dependent on each other.

**Operation Intercept and the Boundary Treaty of 1970:** Set the modern border lines and started a trend toward stricter border control and surveillance.

**Social and Demographic Impacts:**

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that children who were in the country illegally could go to public schools. This was a sign of a shift in society toward acceptance. By 2016, there were about 11.6 million Mexican immigrants living in the United States. About half of them were here illegally, which shows how these changes in the law and the economy have had a big effect on the population. Changes at the border between Mexico and the US, from new laws to economic agreements, have had a big impact on immigration, security, and the way the US and Mexico depend on each other economically and for immigration. The fact that policies were made to both make it harder and easier to cross the border shows how complicated the relationship between the two countries is. Security concerns are always being weighed against economic and family ties.

**Contemporary Dynamics and Challenges:**

The current situation at the border between Mexico and the United States is marked by ongoing difficulties in managing migration flows and the border. Concerns about security, shown by laws like the Secure Fence Act of 2006, have made the border more secure, which makes human rights violations and the vulnerability of migrants worse. Minian's study of recent migration trends and migrants' experiences shows how unfair border dynamics are. For example, smuggling networks are common, and weak migrants are often taken advantage of. These problems make it clear that border management and migration governance need to be more humane and thorough right away.

**Opportunities and Economic Dynamics:**

Both countries have used the border area to their economic advantage. The U.S. has used the Colorado River for farming, which has greatly increased its agricultural output. On the other hand, Mexico has used maquiladoras, which are factories run by foreign companies, to pay off its debt, showing how the two economies can work together. Even though there are jobs available, the number of Mexicans coming to the United States has changed along the border. The number of Mexican immigrants dropped by 300,000 in 2016. More people went back to Mexico than came to the U.S. This trend of people moving backwards across the border shows how the economies and job opportunities on both sides of the border are changing.

**Security and Immigration Challenges:**

In the past, the border has been a place of both conflict and cooperation, with problems like Apache raids and modern trade agreements. The free flow of capital, which helps multinational companies, has been a notable constant. On the other hand, militarization is growing to stop people from moving around. These past few years have seen a record number of encounters with migrants. In December 2023 alone, there were nearly 250,000 encounters. The rise in encounters since 2020, partly because of the coronavirus pandemic, has made it clear how hard it is to control such a fast flow of people. These encounters have changed over time, with a lot of people from countries other than Mexico and the Northern Triangle now taking part. This shows that migration is becoming a bigger problem.

**Policy Responses and Public Perception:**

Changes in domestic politics and international relations have caused the U.S. Army's role in border security to change over time. To deal with the many problems that come up with immigration and border security, the Army's job has grown from helping with civil law enforcement to fighting drugs. Eight in ten U.S. adults are unhappy with how the government handles migrant flows, which shows that most people in the U.S. don't like how the border is managed. This dissatisfaction can be seen in politics, where immigration debates have heated up, leading to ideas like articles of impeachment against DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and bills from both parties that aim to make the border safer.

New technologies are being suggested to make border checks easier. The Biden administration wants to be able to check a lot of trailer trucks and personal vehicles without getting in the way. This method shows a shift toward using technology to balance worries about safety with the flow of money. At the moment, the border between Mexico and the United States acts as both a barrier and a conduit. This is because security needs and economic interdependence are still being worked out. This changing border brings both problems and chances. This shows how important it is for policies to be nuanced and multifaceted in order to deal with the complicated realities of migration, security, and working together across borders.

**Consistencies Over Time**

Even though things have changed over the years, some things about the relationship between the US and Mexico have stayed the same. Politics, how people see the border, and how it has changed physically and technologically over time have all had long-lasting effects on relations between the two countries. Since the Mexican-American War, political goals have affected border policies and territorial disputes. Politicians and policymakers are still influenced by how the public sees issues like immigration and border security. The border has changed over time from natural barriers to complex surveillance systems. This shows that efforts to regulate and control cross-border movements have not stopped. These similarities show how some problems and rules have stayed the same over the years that have shaped the relationship between the US and Mexico.

**Physical and Technological Evolution of the Border:**

The border itself is almost 2,000 miles long, and the Rio Grande forms a natural barrier along a lot of it. However, because there aren't any natural barriers west of El Paso, Texas, man-made ones have been built. About 700 miles of different kinds of fencing have been put up, which shows that the border is getting stronger. Using technology like thousands of cameras, underground sensors, and aerial surveillance tools like drones and planes shows a move toward more advanced ways to keep an eye on the borders.

**Historical Continuities and Changes:**

When historians look at the border, they often think about how to balance change and continuity. The hardening of the border since the 1990s is both a big change in policy and a continuation of the effort to keep an eye on and control cross-border movements. One thing that keeps coming up is how long some problems last, like controlling immigration and making it easier for economies to depend on each other. The change in border security measures from physical barriers to high-tech surveillance shows how they have changed to meet new challenges and how they have continued to work to control the border for a long time.

**Conclusion**

"Undocumented Lives" by Ana Raquel Minian gives a complex look at the history of Mexican immigration to the US and how it has affected relations between the two countries. Minian's careful research and analysis give us useful information about how complicated migration is and the long-lasting problems that migrants face crossing the border between Mexico and the United States. This paper tried to answer the question of whether the relationship between Mexico and the US has changed a lot since the 1820s by looking at Minian's work along with bigger historical trends. Migration patterns and policies have changed a lot over the years, but some things have stayed the same. For example, structural inequalities still exist, which shows how complicated relations between Mexico and the US are. As we continue to wrestle with the complicated issues of migration and border crossing, Minian's work reminds us of the need for a nuanced understanding of the effects of the past on the present. By looking into the complicated processes of migration, we can help make societies on both sides of the border fair and more open to everyone.