

## Diplomacy and Migration in Relations between Mexico and the Andean Community of Nations (2014-2024)

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### Abstract

*Migration in the Andean region has significantly increased over the past two decades, with diversified flows and new routes. This phenomenon has politicized national and international agendas. Migration studies are divided between the relationship with public policies and the discourses between migrants and States. The United States remains a key destination, influencing diplomatic relations with Mexico and the Southern Cone. Diplomacy plays a crucial role in migration management, highlighting four approaches: national security, human rights, development in countries of origin, and ties with migrants. Migration has been shaped by economic, political, and social factors, requiring inclusive policies and international cooperation to ensure migrants' human rights.*

**Keywords:** Migration; Diplomacy; Mexico; Andean Community

### *Diplomacia y Migración en las relaciones entre México y la Comunidad Andina (2014-2024)*

### Resumen

*La migración en la región andina ha aumentado significativamente en las últimas dos décadas, con flujos diversificados y nuevas rutas. Este fenómeno ha politizado las agendas nacionales e internacionales. Los estudios sobre migración se dividen entre la relación con las políticas públicas y los discursos entre migrantes y Estados. Estados Unidos sigue siendo un destino clave, influyendo en las relaciones diplomáticas con México y el Cono Sur. La diplomacia juega un papel crucial en la gestión migratoria, destacándose cuatro enfoques: seguridad nacional, derechos humanos, desarrollo en los países de origen y vínculos con los migrantes. La migración ha sido moldeada por factores económicos, políticos y sociales, requiriendo políticas inclusivas y cooperación internacional para garantizar los derechos humanos de los migrantes.*

**Palabras clave:** Migración; Diplomacia; México; Comunidad Andina

### Introduction

International migration in the Andean region<sup>2</sup> has been a phenomenon rooted in its history, but in the last two decades it has experienced a notable increase in its migratory flows, a greater

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<sup>2</sup> Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. "It is worth remembering that the countries that founded the Andean Community through the Cartagena Agreement, signed on May 26, 1969, were Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru. Venezuela joined this conglomerate of nations on February 13, 1973. Later, on October 30, 1976, Chile decided to leave the Community. The Andean conformation was maintained for almost two decades and it was until July 7, 2005, through decision 613, when the

diversification of the profiles of people who migrate, as well as new routes of departure and destination. This migratory dynamic also reflects complex social processes with multiple implications, one of them being its politicization. Today, the phenomenon of migration generates polarization among governments, in national and international agendas and even in organizations for the human rights of migrants.

Existing studies on the phenomenon of migration can be categorized into two levels of reflection. First, the relationship between migration and public policies is examined, focusing on normative, legal-institutional aspects and the current state of migration policies (Lozano, 2017 and Sørense *et al.*, 2006). Secondly, the imaginaries and discourses implicit in the relations between migrants and the State are analyzed, as well as the effects of the state models in force in the countries of origin, transit and destination and the level of diplomatic relations that exist between them because it has an impact on their migration policy (Canales, 2015; Cano Christiny & Martínez Pizarro, 2023 and Lacomba-Vázquez Cloquell-Lozano, 2017).

The United States continues as a destination country in this new Andean migratory push and in this process the passage through Mexico is obligatory. Therefore, the level of diplomatic relations between that government and its counterparts in the Southern Cone has had an impact on the treatment given to migration from Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador.

Diplomacy is an instrument that helps interaction between countries and the international community, guided by the intention of promoting unity between peoples and facilitating understanding between governments, with the aim of resolving conflicts and promoting common interests. The attitude of the participants must be constructive, aligned with the principles that underpin this diplomatic practice (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2019 and Tsourapas, 2017).

In this framework, this paper analyzes the four different modes of management of migratory flows in recent years. First, a national security perspective has prevailed. Secondly, there has been a discourse that prioritizes the defense and promotion of the human rights of migrants, especially irregular migrants. Thirdly, migration is linked to the development possibilities of the countries of origin. And finally, there is a tendency to build and maintain links between governments and their migrants through economic, political and cultural mechanisms.

To explain the development of the research, three sections have been developed. First, the theoretical background on migration is presented. Then, the diplomatic and economic relations between the governments involved are analyzed, and finally the migratory flows between Mexico and the Andean countries are studied. The study is strengthened by an analysis of the implications of the level of bilateral relations between these countries and the human rights of migrants.

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members of the Southern Common Market (Mercosur: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) were granted the category of associated countries. Although Venezuela announced its withdrawal from the AC in April 2006, the regional group agreed to reinstate Chile as an associate member on 20 September 2006 (decision 645). In addition, for several years Mexico and Panama have been observer countries in some of their participation mechanisms. Thus, the CA is currently made up of four member countries, five associates and two observers." (Gutiérrez, 2007).



It should be noted that migration policies can be a determining factor in the quality of bilateral diplomatic relations, especially if there are tensions or disagreements around migration. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how Andean countries' migration policies affect migration and diplomatic relations with Mexico, and how these reactions can influence Andean countries' migration policies.

## Background

International migration has been studied through various theories that explain the factors that drive people to move from one country to another. One of the most relevant theories is the neoclassical one, which suggests that migration is mainly driven by differences in wages and job opportunities between countries of origin and destination. According to this theory, individuals make the decision to migrate with the aim of maximizing their income and improving their quality of life (Roldán Dávila, 2012 and Canales, 2017). Migration, in this context, is seen as an investment in human capital.

On the other hand, the theory of migratory networks explains how social ties influence migration. This theory proposes that personal and community networks play a crucial role in facilitating the movement of people by providing information and support to new migrants (Márquez & Correa, 2015; Izcara-Palacios, 2011 and Molero, 2008). Migration networks reduce the costs and risks associated with migration, making the process more accessible and less uncertain.

Another important perspective is world-system theory, which argues that migration is a consequence of the expansion of global capitalism. This theory holds that migratory flows are the result of global economic integration, where more developed economies attract labor from less developed countries (León, 2005 and Massey et al., 2000). This integration creates inequalities that drive people to seek better life opportunities abroad.

However, the relationship between diplomacy and migration can be understood through various theories of international relations. Realist theory suggests that states act primarily in their national interests and that migration can be used as a foreign policy tool. According to this perspective, States can tighten or make their migration policies more flexible in response to diplomatic dynamics (Herrera, 2008; Massey et al., 2009 and Courtis et al., 2011).

In contrast, liberal theory emphasizes cooperation and interdependence between states. From this perspective, migration is seen as a phenomenon that can be managed more effectively through international cooperation and bilateral or multilateral agreements (Correa-Cabrera, 2014; Maisonave, 2010 and Lotero-Echeverri and Pérez Rodríguez, 2019). Diplomatic conflicts can, therefore, be mitigated through institutional mechanisms that promote collaboration.

Constructivist theory, on the other hand, provides a different view, arguing that norms, identities, and perceptions play a central role in international politics. According to this theory, migration policies and diplomatic relations are influenced by how states perceive and

construct the identity of migrants and their countries of origin (Arenas & Urzúa, 2016; Bretones & González-González, 2011 & Bermúdez, 2014).

In empirical terms, Ayala Godoy (2014) finds that the good political relationship between Paraguay and Brazil has facilitated migration between these countries, giving rise to the phenomenon known as "Brasiguayos". This term refers to Brazilians who have settled in Paraguay and who have integrated into its society. The study justifies that a decrease in diplomatic disputes between countries significantly improves one-way migration, favoring the migratory flow from Brazil to Paraguay. However, it is also mentioned that this migration has generated some diplomatic and social difficulties.

Fernández and Orozco (2018) examine the positive relations that Colombia and Venezuela have historically maintained and highlight that they have facilitated the migration of Venezuelans to Colombia, especially in times of crisis. The multiple factors that have complicated the economic and political situation in Venezuela have led many Venezuelans to seek better opportunities in Colombia. Continuously in the 80s and 90s there was an increase in the number of Colombian migrants to Venezuela as a response to the social crisis that the country was experiencing because of drug trafficking, organized crime and good relations between these countries.

Relations between the United States and its southern neighbors are not easy, especially China. Political tensions and huge cultural differences between countries have complicated intercontinental relations. Despite tensions and cultural differences, many Chinese have decided to migrate to the United States in search of a better future, although this migration has occurred in a smaller proportion. Former President Trump's influence also makes it clear that diplomatic disputes can significantly affect migration, creating additional barriers for those seeking economic opportunities and a more prosperous life (Grabendorff, 2018).

## Methodology

This study, which seeks to determine the effect of diplomatic relations and their impact on migration between Mexico and the Andean countries, will be of a mixed nature. This approach will combine quantitative and qualitative methods to offer a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon studied. Quantitative analysis will allow identifying patterns and trends in migration flows, while qualitative analysis will provide a deeper understanding of diplomatic dynamics and their impacts.

The data used in the study were collected from various state sources, ensuring the accuracy and relevance of the information for the analysis of diplomatic relations and migratory flows between Mexico and the Andean countries. Among the main sources is Mexico's National Institute of Migration (INM), which provides detailed records of migrant entries and exits, visa applications, residence permits, and data on deportations. These data make it possible to analyze migration patterns and trends to and from Mexico, as well as to evaluate the impact of the migration policies implemented during the study period. In addition, data from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Andean countries were included, which offer information on bilateral and multilateral agreements, treaties, official communiqués and diplomatic events. This information is crucial to understand the diplomatic context and foreign policies of the



Andean countries in relation to Mexico, facilitating the analysis of how diplomatic tensions and collaborations influence migratory dynamics.

### **Diplomatic and commercial relations between Mexico and the Andean region**

The political and economic ties between Mexico and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) are very old and could well be traced back to the stage of the independence of our nations. Specifically, we can point out the different initiatives that in principle combined a common interest in forming a great alliance or full unity and integration under the initiative of Simón Bolívar and the Amphictyonic Congress of 1826. However, and despite how complicated it was to form a large community, the bonds of understanding have been maintained. In concrete terms, since the eighties of the twentieth century, Mexico began its participation in the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), "an organization to which resources have been provided for nearly fifteen years to finance infrastructure projects, and economic, political and cooperation ties in different areas, which is developed bilaterally with each of the Andean countries" (Gutiérrez, 2007; p. 120)

Since the 1990s, Mexico has been a shareholder of the "C" series, which allowed it to benefit from the financial products and services offered by CAF, for example, to carry out some projects of the Puebla Panama Plan (PPP) that Mexico promoted with Central America in 2001, as well as to articulate the PPP with the Initiative for the Integration of South American Regional Infrastructure (IIRSA) led by Brazil. In addition, in November 2006, Mexico and the Andean Community signed a mechanism for political dialogue and cooperation on matters of mutual interest within the framework of the XVI Ibero-American Summit. Other links between Mexico and the CAN have been promoted through the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Group of Three (Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela), both established in 1994, although in 2006 the government of Venezuela decided to leave the G-3, which led to its rethinking. Currently, it has been the Pacific Alliance, signed in 2011, that has concentrated integration efforts between Mexico, Colombia and Peru, a country with which Mexico has cooled its political-diplomatic relations because of the coup d'état in 2023.

Specifically, trade relations between the member countries of the Andean Community and Mexico are governed by the 1980 Treaty of Montevideo, within the framework of the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA). The ALADI intends to promote the integration process initiated by the extinct Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), to promote the economic and social development of the region in a balanced and harmonious manner<sup>3</sup>. In addition, it seeks to establish a Latin American common market in the long term and

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/international/consensus/aladi>

gradually, as well as to regulate reciprocal trade, economic complementarity and promote economic cooperation to expand markets.

**Cuadro N° 1. Acuerdos de Alcance Regional suscritos en el marco de la ALADI vigentes entre Ecuador - México y Perú - México<sup>2</sup>**

| Países Coparticipes  | Acuerdo N°  | Tipo de Acuerdo                                    | Fecha de suscripción | Vigencia   |
|----------------------|-------------|--|----------------------|------------|
| Miembros de la ALADI | AR.AM N° 2  | Acuerdo de Apertura de Mercados a favor de Ecuador | 30/04/83             | Indefinida |
| Miembros de la ALADI | AR.PAR N° 4 | Preferencia Arancelaria Regional (PAR)             | 27/04/84             | Indefinida |

**Cuadro N° 2. Acuerdos de Alcance Parcial suscritos por México con los Países Miembros de la Comunidad Andina**

| País Coparticipes                 | Acuerdo N°   | Tipo de Acuerdo                                   | Fecha de suscripción | Vigencia                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|---|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Ecuador                           | AAP.R N° 29  | Acuerdo de Renegociación del Patrimonio Histórico | 01/05/83             | Indefinida <sup>3</sup> |
| Perú                              | AAP.CE N° 8  | Acuerdo de Complementación Económica              | 25/03/87             | 31/12/05 <sup>4</sup>   |
| Bolivia                           | AAP.CE N° 31 | Acuerdo de Complementación Económica              | 10/09/94             | 01/01/95                |
| Venezuela y Colombia <sup>5</sup> | AAP.CE N° 33 | Acuerdo de Complementación Económica              | 13/06/94             | 01/01/95                |

Source: Treaty of Montevideo 1980

Diplomatic relations between Mexico and Colombia have historically been solid, characterized by comprehensive cooperation in various areas. These ties date back to the nineteenth century, when both countries established formal diplomatic relations. However, it was in the twentieth century that these relationships were significantly strengthened and consolidated. Both countries have maintained a posture of cooperation and mutual understanding in regional and international affairs. During the Cold War, they adopted a position of neutrality and sought to promote stability in Latin America, which contributed to the strengthening of their bilateral ties. This political cooperation has been maintained over time, with both countries working together in international forums and supporting each other on key issues on the regional agenda (Polo Alvis *et al.*, 2019).

In economic terms, Mexico and Colombia have fostered trade integration through the signing of bilateral treaties and their participation in regional organizations such as the Pacific Alliance (Grajales and Ramírez, 2021). These agreements have facilitated the exchange of goods and services, promoting economic growth and job creation, Figure 3 and 4. The Pacific Alliance has been a fundamental pillar in the economic relationship, promoting common policies that favor trade and investment among members.

An important milestone in relations between Mexico and Colombia was the elimination of the visa requirement for Colombian citizens by Mexico in 2012. This measure not only facilitated the mobility of people between the two countries, but also promoted greater social and cultural integration (Vargas Hernández, 2016). The increase in the flow of people has strengthened ties between civil societies in both countries, enriching cultural exchange and fostering mutual understanding.



In addition, security cooperation has been a crucial component of the bilateral relationship. Mexico and Colombia have worked together in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime, sharing information and resources to confront these transnational threats. This joint effort has included training security forces, technology sharing, and developing common strategies to dismantle criminal networks operating in the region (Sanahuja and Verdes-Montenegro, 2014)

Jointly, diplomatic relations between Mexico and Ecuador have historically been close and collaborative in multiple areas, highlighting politics, economics, and migration management. Both countries share a common vision on various regional and international issues, such as the promotion of peace, democracy, and respect for human rights in Latin America. This convergence has strengthened their bilateral relationship over time through constant political dialogue and joint efforts to address shared challenges in the region. However, due to the change in political positions of their governments, differences were generated that remain. On April 5, 2024, the government of Mexico made the decision to break diplomatic relations with Ecuador in response to the violent irruption of its Embassy in that country. Ecuador questions the right to asylum that Mexico offered to former Vice President Jorge Glas. The two are in an expected long-running dispute at the U.N.'s International Court of Justice in Geneva, Switzerland, as all ties have been frozen. The government of Mexico changed as of October 1, 2024. President Claudia Sheinbaum, however, has reiterated the Mexican government's position. The government of Ecuador must apologize for the violation of Mexican sovereignty before reestablishing diplomatic, consular and cooperation relations. In 2025 there will be presidential elections in Ecuador, and it is expected that the possible change of president will generate an environment conducive to overcoming the current *impasse*.

It is important to note that even though there are no direct reprisals between governments to affect bilateral relations beyond the governmental sphere, the rupture of diplomatic relations necessarily led to the closure of all government offices between the countries. Thus, both closed their consulates. Both Mexicans and Ecuadorians carry out their migratory procedures in third countries. The same happens with trade, although there are no official mandates to hinder exchange, the truth is that this circumstance damages economic, commercial and financial relations always brings with it consequences in all areas of bilateral ties.

On the other hand, diplomatic relations between Mexico and Peru have been cordial and marked by constructive cooperation in various areas. Both countries have maintained a fluid political dialogue and have worked together to promote regional integration and address common challenges in the Andean region, sharing values such as peace, democracy and respect for human rights. In the economic sphere, Mexico and Peru have strengthened their trade ties through bilateral agreements and with the Andean Community (CAN), increasing trade and investment, Figure 3 and 4. They have also collaborated in security and the fight against organized crime, sharing information and resources to combat transnational threats such as drug trafficking. It was in 1987 when both countries sought to expand the Economic Complementarity Agreement (ECA) within the framework of the LAIA, they also agreed to promote a joint trade agreement between the Latin American countries members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. As is known, Peru, Mexico and Chile are the links of the CAN with the Asian forum.

Political differences, however, have existed between the two governments since December 7, 2022, when President Pedro Carrillo was impeached and then imprisoned, an act that for the

president of Mexico was a clear coup d'état, and he publicly denounced it. He decided not to recognize the government of Vice President Dina Boluarte and to offer political asylum to the President and his family. The respective ambassadors were recalled for consultations in December 2022. In response to new criticism from the Mexican president and his reluctance to hand over the presidency of the Pacific Alliance to him, he decided to definitively withdraw his ambassador.

On May 6, 2024, the government of Mexico decided to reimpose the visa on Peruvian citizens; an initiative motivated by the increase in irregular entries and non-tourist activities of Peruvians in Mexico and that seeks to guarantee safe and regular migratory flows. Peru responded in kind. It is expected that after new electoral processes, they will resume dialogue.

Finally, diplomatic relations between Mexico and Bolivia have experienced ups and downs throughout their history, with episodes of cooperation and moments of tension. The two countries have maintained a variable political dialogue, influenced by changes in governments and political approaches. In the political sphere, Mexico and Bolivia have sometimes shared similar visions on regional and international issues, such as the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights. However, ideological and political discrepancies, especially during the governments of Evo Morales in Bolivia, and the neoliberal governments in Mexico, generated friction in the bilateral relationship, which changed with the current Mexican government that took office in 2018 (Ceppi, 2014). Even in the face of the coup d'état suffered by President Evo Morales on November 13, 2019, the government of Mexico cooled its contacts with the coup government and offered political asylum to the ousted president. Relations resumed their normal course when the current president, Luis Arce, won the elections in October 2020.

In economic terms, Mexico and Bolivia have sought to strengthen trade ties, although the level of trade between the two countries has historically been limited compared to other Latin American nations. Bolivia's participation in the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) has provided a framework for regional economic cooperation, but factors such as geographical distance and short-term political differences have hindered further development of the bilateral trade relationship.

In terms of security and the fight against organized crime, Mexico and Bolivia have cooperated in some respects, especially in the fight against drug trafficking due to Bolivia's relevance in the production of cocaine. However, differences in approaches and strategies have limited the effectiveness of this collaboration at times. Currently, relations between Mexico and Bolivia are at a time of positive expectations after Luis Arce came to power. Although it is expected that there will be continuity in some aspects of the bilateral relationship, such as cooperation on regional security issues, changes could arise in other areas, such as foreign and economic policy, depending on the priorities of the new Bolivian government (Sánchez Espinoza and Juárez Jaimes, 2019).

In general, it should be noted that relations between the governments of Mexico and the Andean countries are influenced by a series of internal and external factors, including the internal politics of each country, regional dynamics in Latin America, and the relations of both countries with extra-regional actors. In this context, the future of the bilateral relationship will depend mostly on the ability of governments to overcome differences and find areas of mutually beneficial cooperation.





*Migration from Andean Countries to Mexico*

The migration of citizens from the Andean countries to Mexico has increased significantly in the last decade, driven by economic, political, and social factors. Unemployment, poverty and lack of access to basic services, along with political instability and violence, have led many to seek better living conditions and job opportunities abroad. This increase in migrants responds to specific situations in each country and to the search for a more stable and secure life. Mexico is seen both as a destination and as a transit point to other countries such as the United States and Canada, reflecting the aspirations of migrants and the complex realities of their countries of origin (Aragonés Castañer, 2014).

Figure 1 presents the behavior of migratory flows from the Andean countries to Mexico. In general, it is evident that, for most countries, there is an increase in migration over the years from 2014 to 2019, where a drop in migratory flows is observed for all countries because of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. More specifically, it is observed that for all the years of analysis, both Colombia and Peru are the ones that top the list of the highest migratory influx in Mexico, with Colombia having the highest figures compared to the other countries. On the other hand, the Bolivian case, although it shows an increasing trend during the first years, is the country with the lowest number of migrants to Mexico.

Now, this migratory flow has been conditioned by the migratory policies implemented by the Mexican government. Mexican migration policies have facilitated this movement through a visa and residence permit regime that benefits skilled migrants and international students. Programs such as the Migratory Regularization Act (PRM) and the 2011 Migration Law have been crucial for Colombians seeking stability and legal security in Mexico. However, they face challenges such as discrimination, bureaucracy and insecurity in some regions<sup>4</sup>.

In the case of Colombia, migration has been motivated by the search for better economic and educational opportunities, as well as by violence and insecurity derived from the armed conflict. The signing of the peace agreement in 2016 between the Colombian government and the FARC did not eliminate violence, and many Colombians continue to seek a safer and more stable environment (Avellán and Barbesí, 2023).

Currently, the country has grappled with the implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC, facing challenges in the reintegration of ex-combatants and violence in rural areas. Politically, the government of President Gustavo Petro, a former guerrilla, is pushing for social and economic reforms, but faces significant opposition from the country's right and growing social polarization. Despite this, an economic growth rate of 1.5% is projected for 2024, although there is still a high level of labor informality (56% of the EAP), and a poverty rate of 39%. Inflation stands at around 10%, impacting the cost of living and generating social discontent<sup>5</sup>.

Ecuador has faced significant economic challenges, such as unemployment and lack of opportunities, which has led many Ecuadorians to seek a better life in Mexico. Mexican migration policy has presented certain instabilities that have been reflected in regular and irregular migratory entries to the Aztec country. Specifically, it is observed that for the year

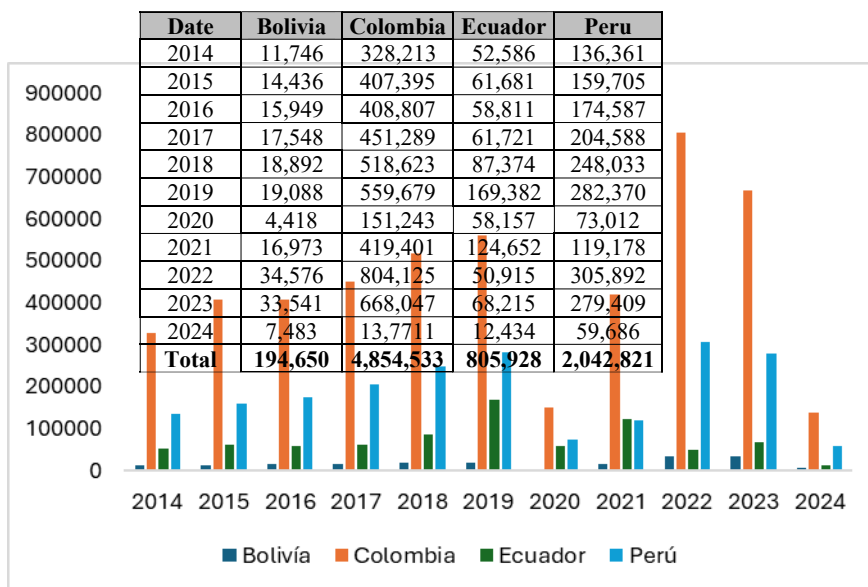
<sup>4</sup> Dig deeper into: García Zamora, R., Gaspar Olvera, S., & García Macías, P. (2020). Migration policies in Mexico in the face of the change of government (2018-2024). *If We Are Americans*, 20(2), 186-208.

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from: <https://petro.presidencia.gov.co/prensa/Paginas/En-1-5-se-proyecta-crecimiento-de-la-economia-en-2024-anuncia-MinHacienda-240202.aspx>

2019 there is a significant increase in regular migrants, which is explained by visa-free entry for short stays, facilitating the mobility of Ecuadorians<sup>6</sup>. However, by the end of 2021, Mexico once again imposed the need for a visa for entry, an aspect that drove the irregular migration of Ecuadorians with an increase of about 50,000 people, Table 1.

In the same way, regularization programs, such as the PRM, and the 2011 Migration Law have been essential for Ecuadorians seeking stability and access to basic services<sup>7</sup>. However, despite favorable policies, Ecuadorian migrants face similar challenges to Colombians, including discrimination and bureaucracy. Diplomatic relations between Mexico and Ecuador have been significant, although recent tensions have complicated the situation, as both countries have closed not only their embassies but also their consulates. Now Ecuador nationals in Mexico must manage their affairs at Guatemala's consulates.

**Figure 1. Migration from Andean Countries to Mexico 2014-2024<sup>8</sup>**



Source: Own elaboration with data from the INM<sup>9</sup>

More specifically, Ecuador faces significant challenges on several fronts. Economically, the country shows a moderate growth of 2.6% projected for 2024, with annual inflation of 3.3%. Poverty affects 27% of the population and unemployment stands at 4.8%. Socially, Ecuador is marked by an increase in violence, with a homicide rate of 14 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2023<sup>10</sup>. In the political sphere, Ecuador had to bring forward its elections as a way out of the pressures suffered by the government of Guillermo Lasso, with a fragmented National Assembly and the popular rejection of a consultation to implement laws on security matters.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/ecuatorianos-necesitan-visa-a-m%C3%A9xico-desde-m%C3%B1ana-tras-aluvi%C3%B3n-de-migrantes/46920310>

<sup>7</sup> Idem 5

<sup>8</sup> Air entries by non-resident foreigners.

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from: [https://portales.segob.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/Boletin\\_MyH](https://portales.segob.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/Boletin_MyH)

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/estadisticas/>



Due to the October 15, 2023, elections, Daniel Noboa took office in December of that year until February 9, 2025. With growth of 1% of GDP, growing blackouts and not entirely positive results. The presidential race has begun unofficially and the possible participation of the current president in the elections predicts the continuity of the economic and political crisis that the country is currently experiencing.

For their part, diplomatic relations between Mexico and Peru have been cordial, with constructive cooperation in various areas. In 2012, Mexico eliminated the visa for Peruvian citizens to facilitate tourism and trade, allowing a significant flow of Peruvians into Mexico. However, the recent decision to reimpose the visa (May 2024) is based on concerns about the increase in migrants entering the country irregularly for non-tourism-related activities. This measure has generated diplomatic tensions and a reciprocal response from Peru, which now also requires a visa from Mexican citizens. Despite these tensions, cooperation in the fight against organized crime and regional integration has been an important pillar in relations between the two countries. It should also be noted that this political-diplomatic environment is framed by the fact that the Mexican government has not recognized that of President Dina Boluarte, who, according to the Mexican president, acted together with the Peruvian right against that country's democracy and against the will of its people by removing and imprisoning the legitimate President Pedro Castillo in December 2022.

The Inca country faces a complex panorama in several aspects. Economically, growth of 2.4% is projected for 2024, with annual inflation at around 5%. Poverty affects 25.9% of the population, while urban unemployment stands at 8.7%.<sup>11</sup> In the social sphere, the country dealt with high levels of inequality and conflict, especially in rural areas. Politically, Dina Boluarte's administration faces instability marked by a fragmented Congress and continuous social protests. Distrust in institutions and corruption are persistent problems that affect governance and social cohesion in the country.

As for Bolivia, migration to Mexico has been less prominent compared to other Andean countries, but it is still significant. Bolivia has faced economic and political challenges that have prompted many citizens to seek better opportunities abroad. Mexican migration policies, such as the PRM and the 2011 Migration Law, have offered pathways for the regularization and integration of Bolivian migrants<sup>12</sup>. However, like their counterparts in other Andean countries, Bolivian migrants face barriers such as discrimination and bureaucracy.

Bolivia presents an economic outlook with a projected growth of 3.1% for 2024 and an estimated annual inflation of 2.8%. In terms of poverty, approximately 30.9% of the population is affected, while the unemployment rate is around 5.5%.<sup>13</sup> Socially, the country faces significant challenges related to inequality and persistent conflicts in indigenous and rural areas. In the political sphere, the government led by Luis Arce is immersed in a context of polarization, with critical opposition and tensions in the management of the economy and human rights. In addition, corruption and lack of trust in institutions continue to be major obstacles to the country's stability. In this scenario, on June 26, 2024, President Arce suffered an attempted coup d'état that was finally put down.

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<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/inei/noticias>

<sup>12</sup> Idem 5

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.ine.gob.bo/index.php/comunicacion/notas-de-prensa/>

In general terms, it can be pointed out that diplomatic tensions between Mexico and the Andean countries, such as with Ecuador and Peru, could complicate the migratory flow and it could be thought that the treatment of nationals of those countries when they arrive in Mexico to reside there or when they use it as a transit route to the United States. In addition, the economic, political, and social situation in the Andean countries could contribute to the increase in undocumented migrants who use Mexico as a transit country or destination on their way to the United States (See Table 1). The lack of cooperation and bilateral agreements between these nations could hinder regular migration processes, forcing migrants to seek alternative routes and resort to illegal means of crossing borders. This could result in an increase in people entering Mexico clandestinely with the intention of continuing their journey north, creating additional challenges for both Mexico and the United States in terms of border security and migration management.

**Table 1. Number of Irregular Foreigners Presented to Immigration Authorities in Mexico**

| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Bolivia</b> | <b>Colombia</b> | <b>Ecuador</b> | <b>Peru</b>   |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 2016         | 9              | 542             | 797            | 79            |
| 2017         | 1              | 630             | 233            | 88            |
| 2018         | 1              | 642             | 250            | 43            |
| 2019         | 50             | 682             | 260            | 53            |
| 2020         | 1              | 503             | 390            | 54            |
| 2021         | 29             | 1,262           | 1,384          | 237           |
| 2022         | 197            | 28,096          | 22,098         | 8,139         |
| 2023         | 288            | 26,581          | 70,790         | 6,531         |
| 2024         | 2,282          | 21,534          | 36,956         | 7,831         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2,858</b>   | <b>80,472</b>   | <b>133,158</b> | <b>23,055</b> |

Source: Own elaboration with data from the INM<sup>14</sup>

The migration of Colombian, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, and Bolivian citizens to Mexico has been shaped by a combination of internal factors in their countries of origin and Mexican migration policies. Regularization programs and legal frameworks in Mexico have so far facilitated the inclusion and stability of these migrants, although significant challenges remain. Diplomatic relations between Mexico and these countries have been fundamental in shaping these migratory flows, promoting regional integration and respect for human rights, although not without facing occasional tensions and conflicts.

#### *Migration of Mexicans to Andean Countries*

<sup>14</sup> Retrieved from: <http://politicamigratoria.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/CuadrosBOLETIN?Anual=2024&Secc=3>



The arrival of Mexican migrants in the Andean countries has had a significant impact on the region. Economically, migrants can contribute to growth by participating in labor sectors that need labor, although they can also generate social tensions related to competition for jobs and resources (Herrera Porras, 2013). From a social and cultural point of view, migrants bring a diversity that can enrich the cultural life of the Andean countries, although their integration can be hampered by discrimination and xenophobia.

In terms of migration policies, Andean countries have implemented various measures to manage these migratory flows, including regularization programs and bilateral agreements with Mexico. However, as in Mexico, effectively managing migration remains a challenge that requires inclusive and collaborative policies that consider both the needs of migrants and the concerns of the local population.

In general, there is a variability in migratory flows over the years. During the first years of the period analyzed, migration from Mexico to the Andean countries appeared to be relatively stable, with figures fluctuating within a similar range. However, as of 2018, significant changes in migration patterns begin to be noticed.

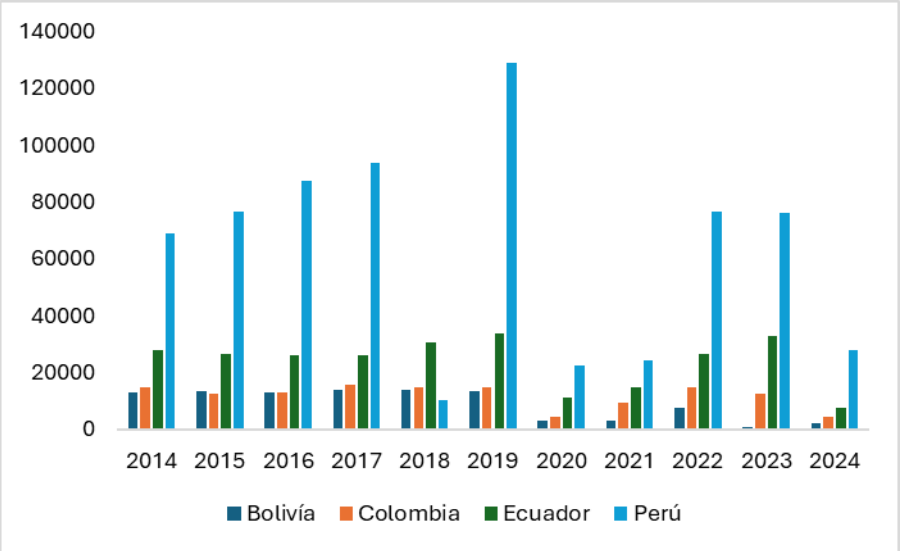
In the case of Bolivia, a decrease in the migration of Mexicans is observed from 2020, reaching its lowest point in 2023 before experiencing a slight rebound so far in 2024. In 2019, there was a political crisis following the presidential election that led to mass protests and the resignation of then-President Evo Morales. The situation worsened with the arrest and accusations against former interim president Jeanine Áñez, which increased the uncertainty and risk perceived by potential migrants such as Mexico. In addition, reports by organizations such as Human Rights Watch, and the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) have documented human rights abuses during and after the 2019 protests. These include extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, torture and sexual violence, which have contributed to a hostile environment for migrants<sup>15</sup>.

### **Figure 2. Migration of Mexicans to Andean Countries 2014-2024<sup>16</sup>**

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<sup>15</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/bolivia>

<sup>16</sup> Idem 1



| Date  | Bolivia | Colombia | Ecuador | Peru    |
|-------|---------|----------|---------|---------|
| 2014  | 12,985  | 14,969   | 27,778  | 68,732  |
| 2015  | 13,466  | 12,565   | 26,707  | 76,368  |
| 2016  | 13,043  | 12,818   | 26,222  | 87,443  |
| 2017  | 13,965  | 15,726   | 25,889  | 93,763  |
| 2018  | 13,938  | 14,944   | 30,683  | 10,362  |
| 2019  | 13,541  | 14,834   | 33,513  | 128,829 |
| 2020  | 2,873   | 4,401    | 11,166  | 22,592  |
| 2021  | 3,188   | 9,395    | 14,715  | 24,290  |
| 2022  | 7,671   | 14,758   | 26,720  | 76,434  |
| 2023  | 943     | 12,720   | 32,752  | 76,300  |
| 2024  | 1,933   | 4,475    | 7,620   | 28,080  |
| Total | 97,546  | 131,605  | 263,765 | 693,193 |

Source: Own elaboration<sup>17</sup>

Colombia shows a similar trend, with a decrease in the migration of Mexicans from 2019, followed by a rebound in 2022 and 2023. This fact is related to similar factors, such as changes in economic and political conditions in Colombia, as well as in Mexico. In addition, health restrictions because of the pandemic.

On the other hand, Ecuador and Peru show a steady increase in the migration of Mexicans over the years, with some fluctuations. This increase could be related to a perception of job or educational opportunities in these countries, as well as to more flexible migration policies and bilateral agreements between Mexico and these countries. Considering the recent

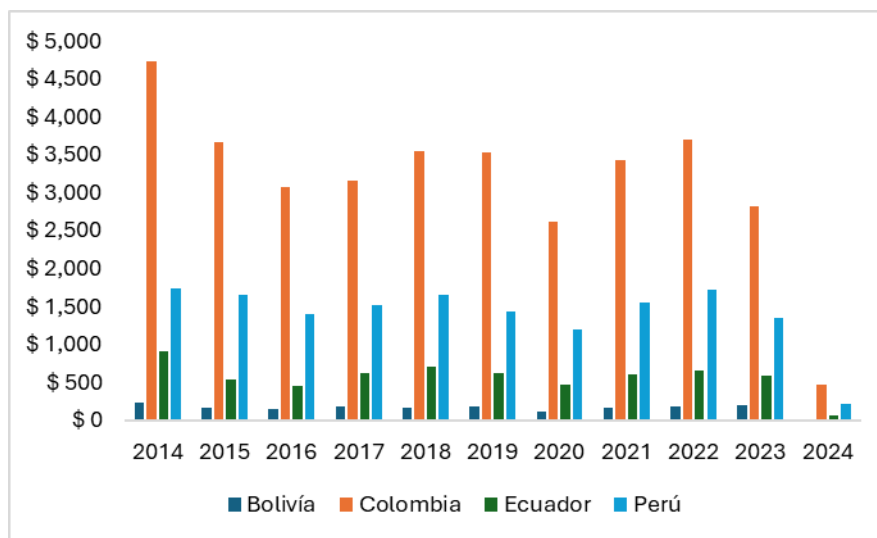
<sup>17</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.ine.gob.bo/index.php/estadisticas-economicas/turismo/estadisticas-de-flujo-de-visitantes-cuadros-estadisticos/> ; <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/mincetur/colecciones/575-reporte-mensual-de-turismo> ; <https://servicios.turismo.gob.ec/turismo-en-cifras/entradas-y-salidas-internacionales/> and <https://www.datos.gov.co/Estadisticas-Nacionales/Entradas-de-extranjeros-a-Colombia>

diplomatic disputes between Ecuador and Peru over the Aztec country, both the number of legal migrants and trade between these two countries are expected to decline. More specifically, there is evidence of a significant drop in 2018 of Mexican migrants in Peru to later recover the figures in 2019. This fact is explained by the fact that in 2018, Peru faced a significant political crisis that included the resignation of President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, due to accusations of corruption related to the Odebrecht case. This generated political instability and may have discouraged migration to Peru during that period.

#### *Bilateral Trade between Mexico and the Andean Countries*

Figure 3 describes Mexico's exports to Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru between 2014 and 2024 in millions of dollars. The data show a general downward trend, although with significant annual fluctuations. In 2014, exports were relatively high, but in the following years a decrease is observed. For example, exports to Bolivia fell from \$226 million in 2014 to \$195 million in 2023. For Colombia, exports decreased from \$4,734 million (about \$15 per person in the US) in 2014 to \$2,811 million (about \$9 per person in the US) in 2023. Exports to Ecuador also decreased, from \$905 million in 2014 to \$596 million in 2023, and to Peru, from \$1,730 million (about \$5 per person in the US) in 2014 to \$1,346 million (about \$4 per person in the US) in 2023.

**Figure 3. Export from Mexico to Andean Countries (million dollars)**



| Date         | Bolivia         | Colombia         | Ecuador         | Peru             |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 2014         | \$ 226          | \$ 4,734         | \$ 905          | \$ 1,730         |
| 2015         | \$ 172          | \$ 3,668         | \$ 543          | \$ 1,651         |
| 2016         | \$ 156          | \$ 3,067         | \$ 451          | \$ 1,404         |
| 2017         | \$ 187          | \$ 3,164         | \$ 622          | \$ 1,511         |
| 2018         | \$ 168          | \$ 3,544         | \$ 715          | \$ 1,651         |
| 2019         | \$ 188          | \$ 3,534         | \$ 625          | \$ 1,434         |
| 2020         | \$ 112          | \$ 2,613         | \$ 469          | \$ 1,195         |
| 2021         | \$ 169          | \$ 3,434         | \$ 600          | \$ 1,558         |
| 2022         | \$ 179          | \$ 3,691         | \$ 658          | \$ 1,727         |
| 2023         | \$ 195          | \$ 2,811         | \$ 596          | \$ 1,346         |
| 2024         | \$ 20           | \$ 465           | \$ 72           | \$ 213           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>\$ 1,773</b> | <b>\$ 34,725</b> | <b>\$ 6,255</b> | <b>\$ 15,419</b> |

Source: Own elaboration with data from Banxico<sup>18</sup>

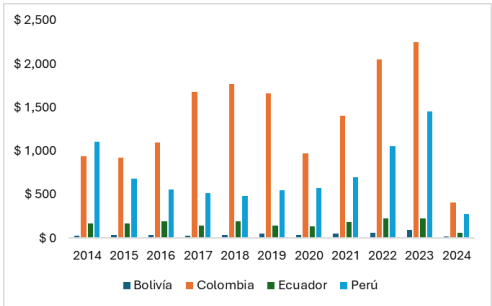
This reduction in exports may be due to several factors. In political terms, relations between Mexico and some of these Andean countries have experienced tensions that could have affected trade, as mentioned in the previous section. Protectionist policies and changes of government in these countries may have limited imports. In addition, Mexico has redirected part of its trade to other markets, especially with the entry into force of the USMCA in 2020, strengthening its trade with the United States and Canada.

The COVID-19 pandemic also had a significant impact, affecting the global economy and, consequently, exports. Mobility restrictions and lockdown measures reduced production and altered supply chains, negatively impacting international trade.

For the year 2024, the available figures only correspond to the months of January and February, with exports to Bolivia of \$20 million dollars, to Colombia of \$465 million, to Ecuador of \$72 million and to Peru of \$213 million. Although these figures are not directly comparable with previous years due to the limited period, they indicate a worrying trend of continued decline. This start to the year could reflect the continuation of the economic and political problems that have affected exports in recent years.

Analysis of Mexico's imports from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru between 2014 and 2024 shows several notable trends with significant fluctuations. In 2014, imports from Bolivia were \$26 million, from Colombia \$934 million, from Ecuador \$164 million and from Peru \$1,106 million (about \$3 per person in the US), figure 4.

**Figure 4. Imports of Andean countries into Mexico (millions of dollars)**



<sup>18</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.banxico.org.mx/SieInternet/>





| Date         | Bolivia       | Colombia         | Ecuador         | Peru            |
|--------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2014         | \$ 26         | \$ 934           | \$ 164          | \$ 1,106        |
| 2015         | \$ 30         | \$ 922           | \$ 164          | \$ 681          |
| 2016         | \$ 30         | \$ 1,097         | \$ 187          | \$ 556          |
| 2017         | \$ 25         | \$ 1,674         | \$ 138          | \$ 513          |
| 2018         | \$ 32         | \$ 1,771         | \$ 191          | \$ 479          |
| 2019         | \$ 53         | \$ 1,663         | \$ 140          | \$ 546          |
| 2020         | \$ 30         | \$ 967           | \$ 130          | \$ 572          |
| 2021         | \$ 51         | \$ 1,401         | \$ 182          | \$ 701          |
| 2022         | \$ 59         | \$ 2,048         | \$ 223          | \$ 1,050        |
| 2023         | \$ 88         | \$ 2,252         | \$ 228          | \$ 1,454        |
| 2024         | \$ 13         | \$ 409           | \$ 56           | \$ 270          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>\$ 437</b> | <b>\$ 15,138</b> | <b>\$ 1,803</b> | <b>\$ 7,928</b> |

Source: Own elaboration with data from Banxico<sup>19</sup>

Over the next few years, Bolivia's imports remained relatively low and stable, with a small increase in 2019 to \$53 million and a notable decline to \$13 million in the first months of 2024. In the case of Colombia, imports experienced a notable increase, especially since 2016, when they rose to \$1,097 million (about \$3 per person in the US), and continued to grow to reach \$2,252 million (about \$7 per person in the US) in 2023, reflecting a positive and growing trend in bilateral trade, possibly due to greater economic integration and trade agreements between the two countries and the political affinity between their governments. In 2024, imports up to January and February were \$409 million.

For Ecuador, imports remained stable, with a slight increase from \$164 million in 2014 to \$228 million in 2023. The general trend is one of stability, with small annual variations, reflecting a constant commercial relationship. In the first two months of 2024, imports fell to \$56 million. However, because of the current diplomatic disputes, it is expected that for the coming months bilateral trade between these countries will be affected downwards, which would have a significant impact on the Ecuadorian economy.

Imports from Peru showed a more significant fluctuation. After an initial high of \$1.106 billion (about \$3 per person in the US) in 2014, they fell to \$681 million in 2015 and continued to decline to \$479 million in 2018. Then, imports began to recover, reaching \$1.454 billion (about \$4 per person in the US) in 2023, possibly driven by an increase in demand for Peruvian products and better economic conditions. In the first months of 2024, imports totaled \$270 million. Trade between these two countries is expected to decline in the coming months because of the current political tensions. This fact is largely explained by the limitation of the transit of Peruvians to the Aztec country, which is expected to negatively impact both economies.

Several causes can explain these fluctuations in imports. Political and economic relations between Mexico and the Andean countries have influenced these numbers. Trade agreements, such as the Pacific Alliance, have facilitated trade between Mexico, Colombia, and Peru, which may have contributed to increases seen in certain years. The COVID-19 pandemic also had a significant impact on supply chains and demand, which is reflected in the falls and recoveries in numbers.

<sup>19</sup> Idem 17

In addition, the global and regional economy, protectionist policies, fluctuations in domestic demand in Mexico, and tariff policies have all played important roles. In the case of Colombia, stability and economic growth could have encouraged greater exports to Mexico. For Peru, the post-pandemic economic recovery seems to have boosted the figures in 2022 and 2023.

### *Implications for the Human Rights of Migrants*

A key aspect to consider in analysing the impact of diplomatic relations on migration is the impact on the human rights of migrants. Cooperation between Mexico and the Andean countries in migration matters has been essential to guarantee the protection of migrants' rights and prevent the violation of their fundamental rights.

For example, Mexico's elimination of the visa requirement for Colombian citizens not only facilitated mobility between the two countries, but also helped ensure migrants' right to freedom of movement and family reunification. However, it is important to recognize that the internal political context in each country can influence the management and approach to migration, which in turn can have implications for the human rights of migrants. Changes in migration policies and diplomatic relations can lead to changes in the perception and treatment of migrants, which can affect their mobility and well-being in the region.

For example, electoral processes and fluctuations in domestic politics can create uncertainty for migrants, increasing the risk of discrimination, violence or exploitation. It is critical that countries work together to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of migrants, regardless of their origin or migration status and beyond the political circumstances in each country.

Bilateral cooperation between Mexico and the Andean countries, in this regard, plays a crucial role in promoting fair and humane migration practices, as well as in protecting the human rights of migrants in the region. By strengthening political ties and working together to address common migration challenges, countries can contribute to ensuring a safe and dignified environment for all migrants in Latin America.

## **Conclusions**

Migration between the Andean countries and Mexico has been influenced by multiple economic, social, and political factors, which has generated a complex and dynamic panorama in the region. Migration policies, diplomatic relations and socio-economic conditions in countries of origin and destination are key determinants in these migratory flows.

First, the migration policies of the Andean countries and Mexico have played a crucial role in shaping migration flows. Mexico has implemented various policies and programs, such as the Migratory Regularization Program (PRM) and the 2011 Migration Law, which have facilitated the inclusion and stability of migrants in its territory. These legal frameworks have allowed skilled migrants and international students to access visas and residence permits, although challenges related to discrimination, bureaucracy, and insecurity persist in some regions.



On the other hand, diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Andean countries have been fundamental for the configuration of migratory flows and the promotion of regional integration. These relations have facilitated bilateral agreements and cooperation programs that seek to guarantee the protection of the human rights of migrants. However, internal political tensions and changes in migration policies negatively affect migrants, thus driving irregular migration, which leads to an increased risk of discrimination, violence and exploitation.

The migration of citizens from the Andean countries to Mexico has been driven by factors such as unemployment, poverty, political instability, and violence in their countries of origin. Mexico presents itself both as a destination and as a transit point to other countries such as the United States and Canada. This phenomenon reflects the aspirations of migrants and the complex socio-economic and political realities of their countries of origin.

In terms of economic contribution, migrants can support growth by participating in labour-intensive labour sectors, although they can also generate social tensions related to competition for jobs and resources. The social and cultural integration of migrants in the Andean countries and in Mexico can be enriched by the diversity brought by migrants, although they face obstacles such as discrimination and xenophobia.

Finally, inclusive and collaborative policies are essential to effectively manage migration and address both the needs of migrants and the concerns of local people. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region is key to promoting fair and humane migration practices and ensuring a safe and dignified environment for all migrants in Latin America.

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