

THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA
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Editorial: Cross-border cluelessness

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The meeting Wednesday of President Barack Obama and President Felipe Calderon of Mexico was like a firecracker fizzling out on Cinco de Mayo: all surface, little substance. The main attention focused on the leaders' opposition on Arizona's recent immigration law. We also find problems with the law. But we certainly understand the reasons why Arizona politicians, backed by about 70 percent of residents, according to some polls, took the action they did.

The U.S. economy's dismal shape leads many Americans to see themselves competing against illegal immigrants for jobs. It's so bad that many Mexicans are returning home from the United States, Ian Vasquez told us; he's director of the libertarian Cato Institute's Institute for Global Liberty and Prosperity. They're going home even though Mexico's economy also is in tough shape. "Mexico is one of those countries that should be a star, economically, in Central America," he said. "But, instead, it is mediocre," because of high taxes and regulations. "So it's been disappointing."

Another problem, Mr. Vasquez said, is the drug trade, dominated by Mexican gangs. Although Arizona's overall crime rate is no higher because of immigration, the drug problem has led to a spate of high-profile murders and kidnappings that drive fear into people's hearts. The obvious solutions – lower taxes, smaller government, drug decriminalization – tragically, again were avoided in the Obama-Calderon meetings.

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