Notes on border security along the U.S.-Mexico border faced with human mobility and from the human security paradigm

Apuntes sobre la seguridad fronteriza en la frontera México-Estados Unidos ante la movilidad humana y desde el paradigma de la seguridad humana

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ABSTRACT:

This study provides an initial approach to the human security paradigm, border security, and migration issues along the U.S.-Mexico border. It is based on the *Geography of peace*, a perspective that unifies critical geography (geopolitics based on political economy and historical-geographical materialism), human rights, and studies on peace and conflict transformation. We propose a paradigm shift in border security, moving from a State-centered approach to national security to one focused on people and their rights, guided by the principle of shared responsibility. This study seeks to promote a paradigm shift providing strategies and specific courses of action that contribute to achieving the human security approach at the Mexican borders.

Keywords: 1. Border security, 2. human mobility, 3. human security, 4. migration, 5. U.S.-Mexico border.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es hacer una aproximación inicial tanto al paradigma de la seguridad humana como a las cuestiones sobre seguridad fronteriza y migración en la frontera norte de México. La aproximación es conceptual y se plantea desde la *Geografía para la paz*, que es una perspectiva que articula los planteamientos de la geografía crítica (geografía política desde la economía política y el materialismo histórico geográfico), los derechos humanos y los estudios de paz y de transformación de conflictos. Las conclusiones se centran en proponer un cambio de paradigma en la seguridad fronteriza, pasando de un enfoque de seguridad nacional centrado en el Estado a uno enfocado en las personas y sus derechos, y guiado por el principio de responsabilidad compartida. A pesar de ser una aproximación inicial, este artículo busca promover un cambio de paradigma para aportar estrategias y líneas de acción concretas que contribuyan a materializar el enfoque de seguridad humana en las fronteras de México.

Palabras claves: 1. Seguridad fronteriza, 2. movilidad humana, 3. seguridad humana, 4. migración, 5. frontera México-Estados Unidos.

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INTRODUCTION

> In memory of Jakelin Ameí Rosmary Caal Maquin (7 years old) and Felipe Gómez-Alonzo (9 years old), Guatemalan minors who died in December 2018 while in the custody of the United States Border Patrol.

Security and border security from different paradigms in Latin America

In the United States (U.S.)-Mexico relationship, security and border security are vitally important, strategic, and fundamental issues because they affect the binational (Curzio, 2006) and regional agenda, including Central American countries. In this regard, this study is the first approach to the human security paradigm and the region's security and migration issues. The reflection on human mobility flows is based on analyzing the caravan's context at the end of 2018 and U.S. immigration policies during 2017 and 2018. The study does not include U.S. and Mexico immigration policies during 2019, which are the subject matter of other studies by this author soon to be published.

Border security is the knowledge and long-standing practice undertaken in the center and the periphery of city-states, empires, and civilizations of the past as well as in modern nation-states to regulate the commercial and cultural flow of goods, ideas, and people. However, as a systematized and practiced concept and as a theoretical, technical, and political matter, it is still being questioned and shaped.

There is extensive literature on the subject of security in general, but very little on border security. The hegemonic approach to security is based on the traditional state security paradigm; however, a new approach, the human security paradigm, is developing and consolidating itself with much momentum. This approach is very different from the hegemonic perspective. It is committed to becoming a real and relevant alternative given the significant challenges facing the world's borders.

The traditional approach to security based on a military vision of punitive nature, and its orientation toward weapons acquired came to be after the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, when the state became the center of modernity. The bases of the modern state and national sovereignty emanated therefrom and were shaped by the "Peace of Westphalia" and the hegemonic security paradigm of modern days: the state security paradigm.

After that treaty, the state became the center of public life in international and domestic affairs. The state and its sovereign, at that time, the king, was what Hobbes (2001) termed the Leviathan—following the biblical metaphor—, a monster with extraordinary powers, free, sovereign, and independent, which no one could question, much less challenge internally or externally. Every public matter had to be carried out with the sovereign's vigilance and consent. The king was responsible for guaranteeing his subjects' security, watching over territorial integrity, taking care of the borders, and protecting the state and its institutions (at the time of enlightened despotism, the king was the state). Elements that formed what was initially called state security and was later named national security.

Over time, it became clear that the king was not the state nor did sovereignty reside in him. Nowadays, the state is much more than its leaders, and sovereignty is more distributed. Liberal and social-democratic theories assert that the state and its institutions have checks and balances that, in principle, guarantee a less authoritarian and a more pluralistic and democratic exercise of power. However, the realist concept of sovereignty built by Hobbes (2001) and reaffirmed by Carl Schmitt (2001) remains on top. It is currently clear that the king is not the state and that the state is more than its leaders. The state is a set of institutions; the staff who manage and work in these institutions; laws, rules, and regulations; a particular condensation of the network of relationships of power, dominion, and strength that goes through society (Osorio, 2004). Nowadays, it is evident that the nation is not the same as the state, its institutions, and its leaders. A fundamental distinction when reflecting on security-related issues.

In Latin America, the distinctions between sovereignty, nation, state, and government are fundamental because, during the Cold War, the state security paradigm was used as a national security discourse, especially via the National Security Doctrine (NSD) (Cavalla Rojas, 1979).

The national security discourse argues that the security of the population, the security of an entire nation and its territory are the same as the security and protection of the governments in power, who exercise power from State institutions. Countless injustices were committed in Latin America under that argument.

The national security discourse justified its actions by arguing that citizens' protection, territorial integrity, and the entire nation's interests were the same. However, as evidenced by the NSD (under which all the troops, cadets, and army officers of Latin America were academically and militarily trained during the Cold War), it safeguarded interests alien to that of the nations where this narrative and practice was exercised.

In Latin America, it began in 1964, when the Brazilian military overthrew the elected president, Joao Goulart, and a new type of military dictatorship was established (Cavalla Rojas, 1979). These are not transitional governments but regimes that intend to implement a political project—a new society and a new State—designated the National Security State (Cavalla Rojas, 1979). The Brazilian experience and its political model, implemented by the U.S. government, through the Inter-American Defense System and the School of the Americas, presented itself as an alternative in different countries of the continent (Cavalla Rojas, 1979), given the rise of mass politics in several countries.

The National Security State model had its ideological and geopolitical basis in the NSD. This doctrine was promoted by courses and texts, such as General Augusto Pinochet's, on the constituent elements of the state, which spread through the curricula of institutes, academies, and military and war schools throughout the continent.

National security was defined as follows by the officers that preconized it: national security is the capacity of the state to guarantee its survival, maintaining its sovereignty and

material and spiritual independence, preserving its way of life, and enabling the achievement of its fundamental objectives (Medina Lois, 1979). This definition provides evidence that supports the vision of linking the national with the state, institutional, and governmental spheres. From our perspective, the NSD aimed to counteract the Cuban Revolution's influence (December 1959) on the rest of Latin America.

Authoritarian governments that used the NSD to justify their actions and human rights violations include Nicaragua with Somoza; Paraguay with Stroessner; Mexico with Díaz Ordaz, Echeverría, and other presidents; Cuba with Batista, before the revolution, and Chile with Pinochet, after the military coup against Allende's government, among many other dictators and authoritarian governments in Latin America.

From this perspective, security is focused on the state, its institutions, and its governments, not on people. Recognizing the political, economic, and military use given by the previously mentioned governments to the concept of national security reveals how the state security paradigm (on which the NSD was based) was focused on protecting the state, its institutions, and authoritarian governments, not its citizens.

The criticism against the NSD and the state security paradigm focused on the abuses committed by calling *national security* to something that had nothing to do with the nation, its citizens, its territory and economies, its needs and interests, its dreams, and its legitimate aspirations. Human security, not to be confused with national security, emphasizes people and their rights, not the state, its institutions, and its leaders.

The new security concept of human security emerges from a critique of the old military-inspired punitive state-based security model that encouraged the arms race. Our proposal for human security coincides with the—quite tardy—liberal-idealist response to the conservative-realist proposal of state security that has prevailed in international relations since the Treaty of Westphalia. Vicenç Fisas (1998), founder of the *Escuela de Paz* [School of Peace] in Barcelona, states that:

> [...] the concept of security has been dominated (or abducted) by its military expression, and more specifically by its armament component, so that for decades, in many countries, a fiction was created that with a higher accumulation of weapons and military force, a country or an alliance of countries could obtain more security (Fisas, 1998, p. 247).
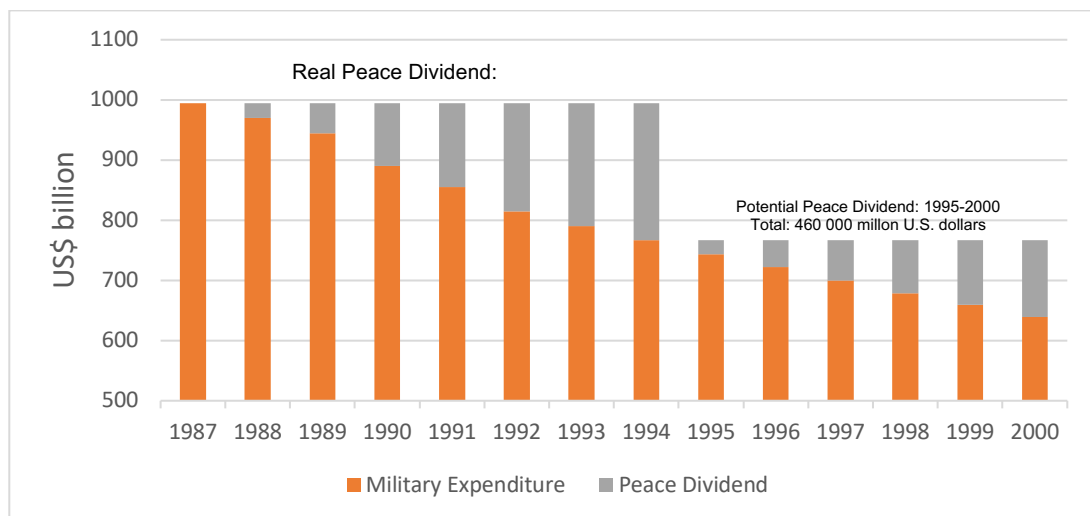
The first criticisms of this model of militarist and armament-based security were expressed by different social movements in favor of human rights worldwide, but in an energetic and specific way, among the social movements opposed to the war in Vietnam and the international movement for peace in Central America. Criticism was also observed in the heart of the United Nations (U.N.). However, it was not until the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP; PNUD in Spanish) in 1994 where we can see a more elaborate discourse and better-documented criticism replicated in subsequent U.N. documents.

Since the U.N.'s creation in 1945, human rights and peace issues have been marginalized from the U.N.'s organizational and programmatic structure. Despite the efforts of its creators, these issues were not addressed beyond the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (De Alba & Genina, 2016). The phrases of freedom from fear and freedom from poverty, incorporated in the Declaration, were used for the first time by U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his speech before Congress on January 6, 1941, in which he enumerated the four freedoms that would guide the United States approach to the world: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from poverty, and freedom from fear (IIDH-PNUD, 2017). Freedom from poverty and freedom from fear were mentioned in the *Atlantic Charter*, signed on August 14, 1941, by Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt (IIDH-PNUD, 2017).

The effort to nurture the human rights topic within the U.N. stems from the organization's origins: the U.N. Charter. However, topics on security and the fight against international terrorism after September 11, 2001, have predominated both in the organization's structure and the content of its programs. After the end of the Cold War, the leading promoter of U.N. reforms was Boutros-Ghali (1992-1996). Nevertheless, Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba points out that it was not until the Kofi Annan period (1997-2006) when they were able to place human rights on the same level as security. For de Alba, Annan's outstanding achievement was linking human rights and security (De Alba & Genina, 2016).

As previously stated, where the human security paradigm is given shape and content—by incorporating a comprehensive vision of security and linking it with topics of peace construction, human development, and human rights—was in the UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report (Figure 1). In it, the UNDP exhibits the excesses of arms expenditures during the Cold War and introduces what it called peace dividend (PNUD, 1994).

Figure 1. UNDP's Peace Dividend
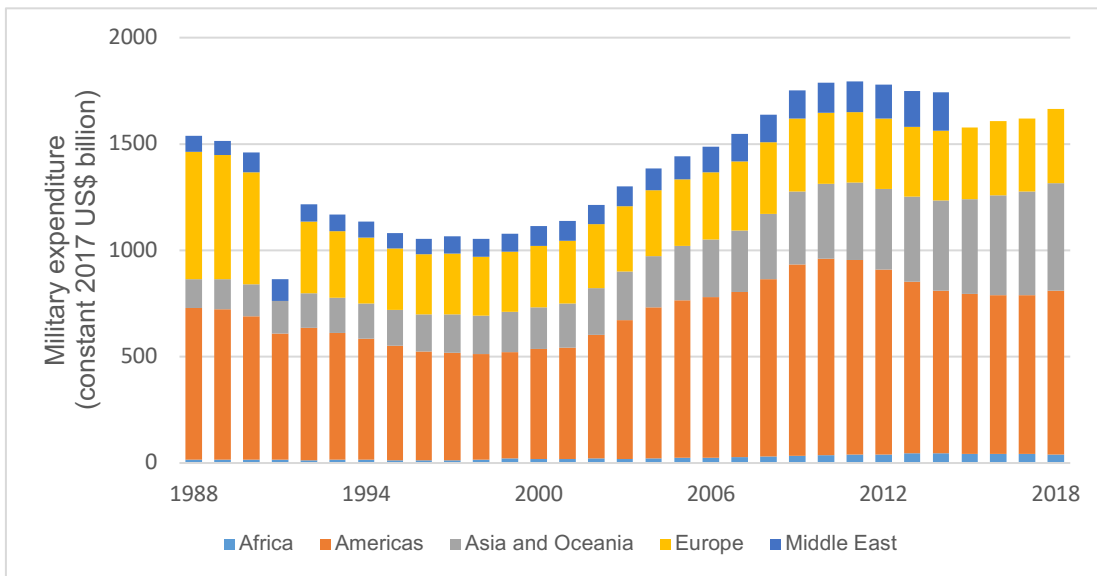

Source: PNUD (1994)

The figure shows the peace dividend from UNDP's 1994 report. It became a world-famous image because it showed the historical excesses in global military spending (its highest point being in 1987, during the cold war) and having a potential *peace dividend* to invest in the construction of peace, as indicated by the legend that accompanied the image:

> The figure above shows a decrease in military spending worldwide from 1978 to 2000, resulting in a peace dividend of 935 billion dollars. Regrettably, the peace dividend has not been used to finance worldwide social programs.
>
> Another 460 billion dollars could be obtained as a peace dividend if military spending worldwide decreased by 3% per year during the 1995-2000 period. The World Summit for Social Development, to be held in 1995, provides an opportunity to reach an agreement to gain the peace dividend and to better apply it to human development (PNUD, 1994, Spanish version cover page).

However, hope was short-lived, military expenses continued, and there was no investment for peace initiatives. Although global military expenditure decreased during the 1990s, expenditures were increasing by the end of that decade. This increase, intensified by the events on September 11, 2001, financed the war against international terrorism, as reported by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2018).

Figure 2. World military spending by region (1988-2018)

Note: The 1991 total for Europe was not calculated since no data is available for the Soviet Union that year.
Source: SIPRI (2018).

The concept of human security continued to evolve, and its concepts, principles, and strategies were distinctly defined. The 2005 World Summit and the report *In larger freedom: towards development, security, and human rights for all* (De Alba & Genina, 2016), from Secretary-General Kofi Annan, introduced in March of the same year, presented a new U.N. program based on the human security paradigm.

According to the Human Security in Latin America project by the IIHR-UNDP, the concept of human security consists in protecting the vital essence of all human lives from critical (serious) and pervasive (generalized) threats to enhance human freedom and for the full realization of the human being (IIDH-PNUD, 2017). This concept integrates the two freedoms mentioned in the 1941 Atlantic Charter, signed by Roosevelt and Churchill—the freedom from fear and the freedom from poverty (or need)—and the freedom to live with dignity. According to the IIDH-PNUD (2017), they are defined as follows:

Freedom from fear: involves protecting people from direct threats to their safety and physical integrity; it includes the different forms of violence that can arise from external States, from the action of the state against its citizens, from the actions of some groups against others and the actions of people against other people.

Freedom from need or poverty: refers to protecting people so they can meet their basic needs, their livelihoods, and the economic, social, and environmental aspects of their lives.
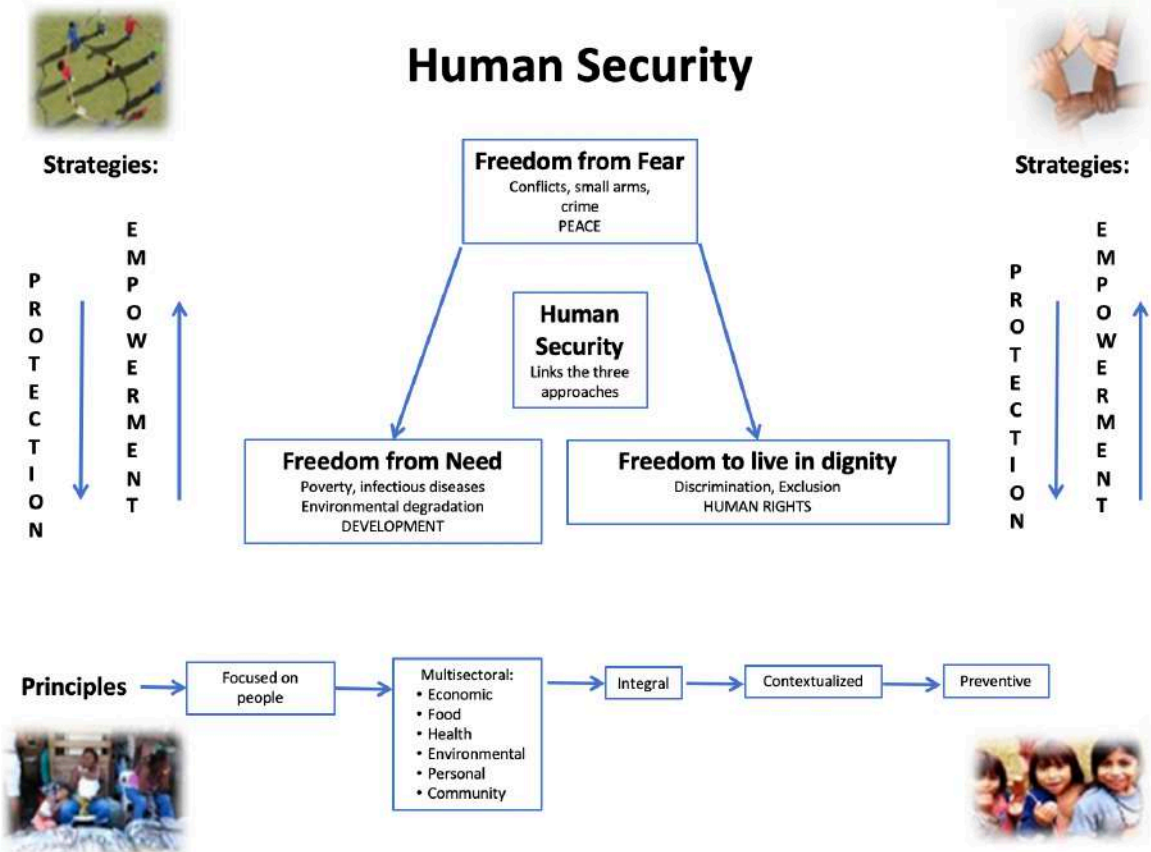
Freedom to live with dignity: refers to the protection and empowerment of people to be free from violence, discrimination, and exclusion. In this context, human security goes beyond the absence of violence. It recognizes the existence of other threats to human beings, which can affect their survival (physical abuse, violence, persecution, or death), their livelihoods (unemployment, food insecurity, health threats), or their dignity (human rights violations, inequality, exclusion, discrimination).

From our perspective, the human security paradigm represents an excellent contribution for two reasons: firstly, because it integrates and links the three freedoms (from fear, from need, and to live with dignity); and secondly, because it articulates and links the three freedoms with the U.N.'s three pillars and purposes: the promotion of peace and international security by promoting human development and respect for human rights.

This paradigm is centered on people, not on geopolitical interests or groups, as was the NSD. It partakes from an integral vision of each context, which allows for the interaction of multiple actors guided by the driving force of joint or shared responsibility, which fosters cooperation, multilateral negotiation, and governance by empowering different actors.

The following diagram, created by the IIDH-PNUD (2017) Human Security in Latin America project, clearly summarizes the freedoms, strategies, and principles of the human security paradigm.

Figure 3. Human security paradigm strategies

Source: IIDH-PNUD (2017)

Fisas (1998) presents a comparative table that synthesizes the differences between the guiding principles of the two security paradigms:

Table 1. Principles comparison

Old security model	New security model
Continuous accumulation of armaments	Disarmament
Aggressive nature of doctrines and armaments	Non-aggressive defense
Deterrence	Appeasement
Interventionism	Peacekeeping forces
	Conflict prevention
Militarization of science	Demilitarization
Arms industry development	Industry conversion
Uncontrolled arms trade	Trade control and transparency
Nuclear weapons proliferation	Nuclear disarmament
Enemy image creation	Tolerance, cooperation, understanding
Secrecy and lack of democratic control of security	Transparency and participation

Perception of threats	Confidence measures
Military-centered	Multidimensional
National security	Shared security, in common
Exclusive	Inclusive
Domination of the nation over the multinational	Domination of the multinational
	Empowerment of regional bodies
Culture of violence and force	Culture of peace
Statism	Multiplicity of actors
Military Blocks	Security organizations

Source: Fisas (1998, p.249)

These concepts, strategies, and principles were well applied in the *Central America Peace Accords* and its conceptual and diplomatic predecessors: the *Contadora Act*[2] and *Esquipulas Peace Agreements*. Hernández García (2018) states the following:

> [...] the bases for the solution of the Central American armed conflict were stipulated at the Esquipulas II summit, held on August 7, 1987, *when the leaders of those five Central American nations (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) signed the Procedure for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America*, known as the Esquipulas II Accords, which was proposed by President Óscar Arias of Costa Rica and was inspired by the *Contadora Act* (Hernández García, 2018, p. 44).

Peace agreements that, from our perspective, were sabotaged by U.S. immigration and drug policies[3].

Immigration and drug policies influence the States' security agenda-setting and orienting the border security strategies that they adopt. These are fundamental issues when viewed from the perspective of the current context and debate on border security, both in Mexico with the *Programa Frontera Sur* [Southern Border Program] and the U.S. with its *zero-tolerance and Close the border* policies, as we will see later.

Border security

Besides their realist focus and scarcity, studies on border security are extensively empirical—they predominantly analyze the case of the U.S.-Mexico border— but their theoretical development is limited. For the realist focus and being empirical, we highlight the studies by

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[2] There are two *Contadora Act* documents: the *Document of Objectives* from 1983 and the *Contadora Act on Peace and Co-operation in Central America* from 1984 (Hernández García, 2018).

[3] From our perspective, peace agreements in Central America (CA) were sabotaged by two external factors: U.S. punitive policies to combat drugs in general and Plan Colombia in particular; and by U.S. immigration policies. When the sea-air route was closed with Plan Colombia, the land route was opened through CA and Mexico.

Ramos (2004, 2002) and Noricumbo Robles (2017), and for limited theoretical development, the study by Solar Mulas (2014).

As in most security strategies, the hegemonic approach to border security, the realist one, is of militarist-punitive character based on the NSD and the state security paradigm. Therefore, our theoretical and methodological proposal to analyze security, violence, and human rights at the borders is based on the human security paradigm described previously, the perspective of the International Political Economy (IPE), and the Illicit International Political Economy (IIPE), used by Fuentes Flores (2017).

To study border security, Fuentes Flores (2017) investigated illicit markets and related crimes linked with the flows, routes, and international criminal networks originating and spreading in the border regions. These crimes can range from goods trafficking—due to the different prices in neighboring states— to extortion, rape, kidnapping, drug trafficking, weapons trafficking, and human trafficking.

The latter perspective is highly relevant because the border area experiences a concentrated version of all the different types of violence in Mexico. There are reports of extortion, sexual assaults, kidnappings, police abuse, and crimes perpetrated by gangs that operate along the migrant route (Alianza Américas, 2016).

Given the above, what can be done locally, nationally, and regionally if it is an international phenomenon? The phenomenon cannot be fully addressed locally and nationally and needs international collaboration.

Given the international characteristics of the phenomenon, from the perspective of Geography of Peace, the public security (a local, civil, military expression of the state security paradigm) approach is limited, and a new perspective is necessary. A comprehensive perspective based on a regional and territorial vision; but above all, based on the human security paradigm, guided by the *principle of shared responsibility*, and considering the IPE and the IIPE.

For Fisas (1998), the principle of shared responsibility is the essence of the new security paradigm. This idea differentiates it from the state security and national security paradigm. For this author, the Palme Commission of the late seventies laid the foundations:

> On which all security policies must be built in order to successfully focus on the turn of the century and the millennium: conflict prevention, transparency, confidence-building measures, the non-aggressive nature of forces and doctrine, demobilization, disarmament, and ecological security. These proposals have been developed based on the conviction that they are political, economic, demographic, and environmental factors. Apart from the militaristic excesses that are causing insecurity at the regional and global scales, these problems can not be solved by classic military security instruments (Fisas, 1998, p. 248).

The principle of shared security is a proposal opposite to what is observed at the U.S.-Mexico border, where punitive, militaristic, and NSD based policies were established along the U.S.-Mexico border since 2001, after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. The new security office created after these attacks (the Department of Homeland Security or DHS) has not changed its security policies approach to date. On the contrary, it has moved to another level with the *close the border policy* of the U.S. administration. A policy that, unfortunately, the Mexican government under Enrique Peña Nieto's administration reproduced through the Southern Border Program.

SECURITY, MIGRATION, AND MEMORY. NOTES ON THE CLOSE THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER POLICY OF THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND MEXICO´S RESPONSE

Facing the migrant caravans at the end of 2018, the U.S. president stated that the United States was at risk of invasion and that a national security threat existed (Malkin & Villegas, 2019). From his neorealist perspective in international relations[4] and his hate and fear-filled discourse, he proposed walls and more military presence along the U.S.-Mexico border as a border security strategy.[5]

The discourse of hate and fear by the then U.S. president broadcast by the media in the U.S. and Mexico reproduced the image or strong idea of "invasion and threat", by linking migration and insecurity, immigrants and criminality, and fostering a false image of a "crisis" in border security. According to this narrative, a crisis threatened the "national security" of the United States, which needed to be confronted with more military presence. From our perspective, this narrative sought to create public opinion conditions so that the U.S. president obtained both public-media support and economic-budgetary funds to construct the new border wall. A wall he said would "guarantee" U.S. national security and would stop "criminals," drugs, and anything that puts the United States at risk.

However, is there truly a crisis, or is it a politically-motivated and invented crisis? Both, currently there is a double humanitarian crisis along the US-Mexico border.

The first is a humanitarian refugee and forced displacement crisis in Mexico and Central America, with thousands of people migrating and requesting international protection. The result of two other very complex crises that need to be analyzed in depth: those in Mexico

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[4] Expressed in the U.S. exit from the U.N.'s Human Rights Council and the withdrawal of the U.S. economic contribution to UNESCO because it recognized Palestine as a member State of this U.N. agency, as well as the sabotage of multilateral dialogues and negotiations, such as the one generated by the Global Compact for Migration, and the arbitrary departure of the United States from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Nuclear Agreement with Iran.

[5] See the "State of the Union" address by the U.S. president on January 8, 2019 (White House, 2019).

and the countries of the Northern Triangle of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador). The Mexican crisis is one of insecurity and violence (Díaz Carnero, 2016) and corruption and impunity (Díaz Carnero, 2017b). In the Northern Triangle of Central America, the crisis is of insecurity and violence and of a political-institutional, environmental, and social-economic nature.

The U.S. government created the second crisis with its immigration policy that avoids both the United States' historical migration issue and the constant and changing migratory flow from Central America, which intensifies the humanitarian refugee crisis. This political response affects the internal U.S. immigration policy and its foreign policy given the refugee crisis of the 2018 caravans. This crisis has been manipulated and politically used by the U.S. administration.[6]

The U.S. government's response to the migratory phenomenon and the refugee crisis, which some call a "close the border" policy (HOPE, 2018), has produced a discourse of fear criminalizing both the immigrant and the asylum seeker. The discourse of fear reproduced by the media—which foments hate crimes, discrimination, racism, and intolerance—is a narrative that fails to engage in a plural and democratic dialogue that does not result in civic, social, democratic, peaceful, and plural coexistence, and does not allow for the inclusion of diversity in the United States. This fear discourse does not contribute to serious reflection on the pending immigration reform process in the United States. It contributes less to comprehending the current refugee crisis and its causes and possible consequences for the entire Mesoamerican region.

Migratory crisis, historical crisis. Refugee crisis, current crisis. Regional context and some history to better understand current challenges

The migratory caravans of late 2018 revealed migratory and refugee crises. At the end of November 2018, approximately 3 700 migrants were camped in the *Benito Juárez* sports center located in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico (Notimex, 2018). This camp surprised politicians, the media, and local citizens. However, the *migration crisis* is not new; it is old, as described in the following.
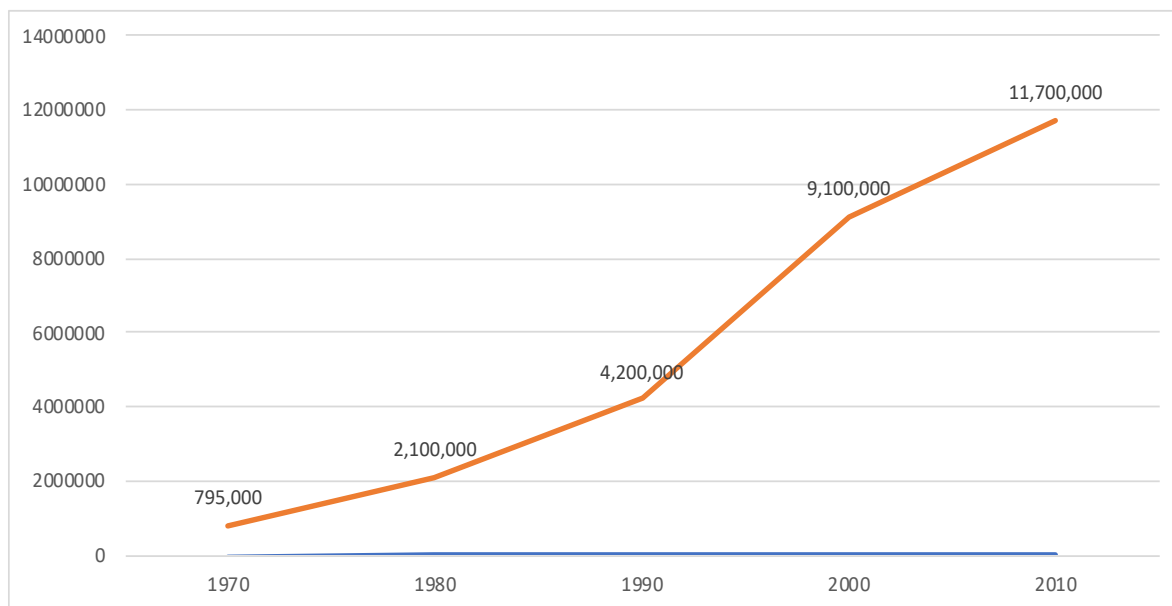
The migration of Mexican, Central American, Caribbean, and South American migrants to the United States is not new; it has existed for at least four or five decades.

According to Durand (2017), 11 million Mexicans currently reside in the United States (Figure 4). According to the Pew Research Center (2017), in 2015, 35 757 893 people of Mexican origin resided in the United States, of which 24 250 184 were of Mexican origin and the rest, 11 507 709, were born in Mexico. Adding the 20 718 884 people of non-Mexican

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[6] With the president's clear political and media intention to guarantee his reelection in 2020, since the wall's construction at the border with Mexico was the focal promise of his candidacy in 2016.

Hispanic origin currently residing in the United States makes 56 476 777 people, of which 63.3 percent are of Mexican origin.

Figure 4. Increase of Mexican migrants according to the United States census 1970-2010
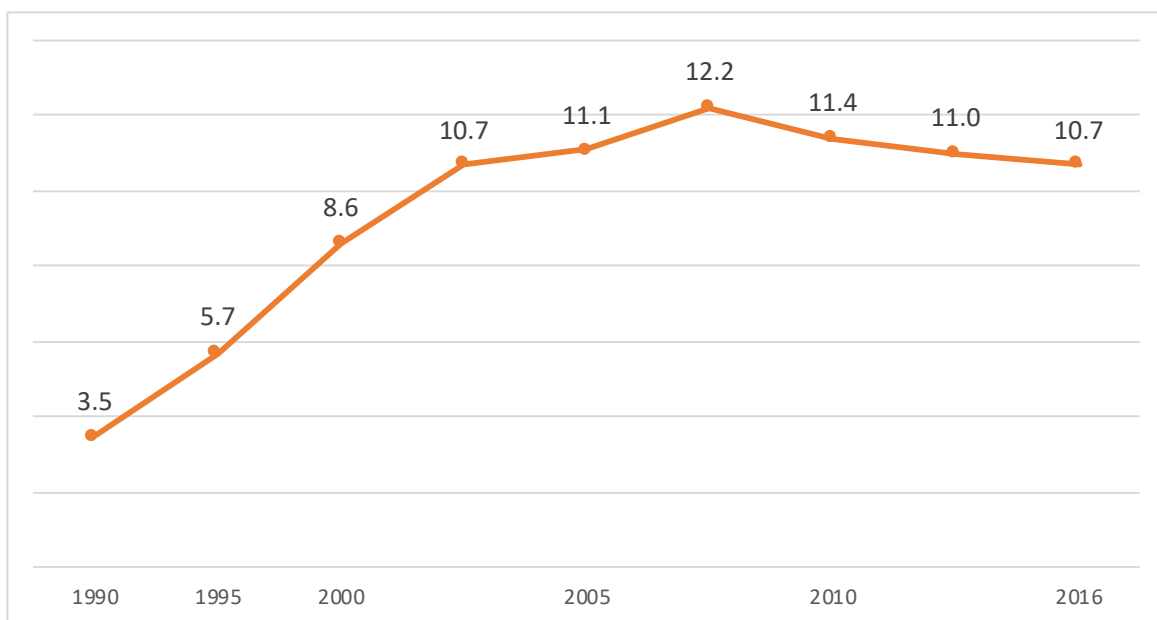

Source: Adapted from Durand (2017).

According to the Pew Center (2018), in 2008, the flow of migrants began to decrease. The highest level was registered in 2007 with 12.2 million people, but it decreased in 2008 (Figure 5).

Possible causes of this decrease were the 2008 U.S. housing market crash, which generated an economic slowdown—that stabilized in Barack Obama's second term (2012-2016)—, and the increased violence in Mexico that began in December 2006, when then-President Felipe Calderón (2006-2012) initiated the failed "Estrategia contra las Drogas" [Strategy against drugs]. This war strategy triggered violence in Mexico, with more than 250 000 people killed during Felipe Calderon´s term (Díaz Carnero, 2017a)—particularly in the U.S-Mexico border—after police operatives and military personnel deployed throughout Mexico. For example, in Ciudad Juárez, 2 026 military and 425 federal agents were deployed in 2008 (Sedena, 2008).

As a result of the increased violence following the policy of war against the drug cartels, the transit through Mexico for Central American migrants became hellish. In 2010, the massacre in San Fernando, Tamaulipas, represented the assassination of 72 migrants who had been abducted and tortured; the bodies of 193 people were found in unmarked graves in San Fernando in April 2011. Additionally, in May 2012, 49 abandoned torsos were found in Cadereyta, Nuevo León (Redodem, 2015).

Figure 5. Number of undocumented migrants in the United States. (in millions)

Source: Pew Research Center (2018).

However, in this extreme violence context, migrant flows continued and began to increase in 2014, with the unaccompanied child and adolescent (CAA) crisis. This increase can be observed in the increase in people requesting asylum in Mexico for humanitarian reasons.

According to the Migration Policy Unit of Mexico's Ministry of the Interior (UPM-SEGOB), in 2018, 11 459 Humanitarian Visitors Cards were issued (TVRH), of which 4 410 were applicants from Honduras, 3 478 from Venezuela, 3 208 from El Salvador, 596 from Guatemala, and 269 from Nicaragua. The number of cards issued in 2014 was only 623, and it began to increase exponentially with 1 481 in 2015, which more than doubled in 2016 with 3 971 and 9 642 in 2017.

Ernesto Rodríguez, quoted by Paris Pombo (2017), points out that the highest number of Central Americans in transit through Mexico was registered in 2005, with 418 000 people, decreasing the following six years and reaching a minimum of 126 000 in 2011; this was followed by an increase reaching 392 000 in 2014 and a slight decrease in 2015 to 377 000 (Paris Pombo, 2017, p.14).

There is an estimated flow of 250 000 and 350 000 people illegally transiting through Mexico since 2015, most of them Central Americans. What was different at the end of 2018? They did not transit alone; they were in a caravan to face the risks of traveling through Mexico, a country with more than 250 000 murders since 2006 (Díaz Carnero, 2017a), more than 37 000 missing people (Excelsior, 2018), and almost 2 000 unmarked graves (Political Animal, 2018).

The caravans of 2018 made visible the phenomenon of migratory transit through Mexico. Caravans are not a new phenomenon in Mexico. The *migrant Via Crucis* [Way of the Cross]

departed in March 2018 with approximately 1 000 to 1 500 people; it has been departing yearly since 2010. The *Caravana de Madres de Migrantes Desaparecidos* [Caravan of Mothers of Missing Migrants], consisting of mothers who seek their children, has, as they refer to it, "fourteen years of struggle and hope" (Movimiento Migrante Mesoamericano, 2018).

When this article was written, at the beginning of 2019, it was clear that this was not a caravan but an exodus, as migrants who were already in Mexico joined the caravans that traveled through Mexico in October and November 2018 (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2018). Migrants decided to join caravans to make themselves visible and not be in conditions of higher vulnerability and risk.

Closed border versus shared responsibility

From the Geography of Peace viewpoint (Díaz Carnero, 2018), the closed-border policy implemented in 2017 by the U.S. administration is based on five strategies: a) mass denial of asylum rights to Mexicans and Central Americans who request it; b) the detention and mass deportation of migrants and asylum-seekers; c) family separation; d) the militarization of the U.S.-Mexican border; and finally, e) the unilateral practice of the United States naming Mexico as a de facto "safe third country"—asylum seekers entering the United States through the U.S.-Mexico border have to await the conclusion of their process in Mexican territory. The U.S. president's executive order from January 25, 2017, entitled Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements, proposed returning applicants from other countries to neighboring territories, as in Mexico, to wait for their hearings in United States Immigration Courts.[7]

Regrettably, many of the U.S.-Mexico border policy strategies were accepted and replicated by Enrique Peña Nieto's administration (2012-2018) along Mexico's southern border through the *Southern Border Program*.[8] According to *Proceso*, during Peña Nieto's presidency, 691 000 Central Americans were forcibly returned to their home countries under this program (Tourliere, 2018b, p. 16).

Together with the discourse of fear and hate that criminalizes the migrant and links migration with organized crime, drug and weapons trafficking, these five strategies intensify the humanitarian crisis along the border and put the migrants and asylum seekers at higher risk and vulnerability.

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[7] Although the Mexican government has denied this possibility, since June 2016, Mexican immigration authorities have collaborated with Customs and Border Protection (CBP) so that asylum seekers wait in Mexico to be received by U.S. authorities (París Pombo *et al.*, 2018).
[8] The Southern Border Program was launched in the summer of 2014 to detain and deport Central Americans illegally transiting through Mexico to the United States (Tourliere, 2018b).
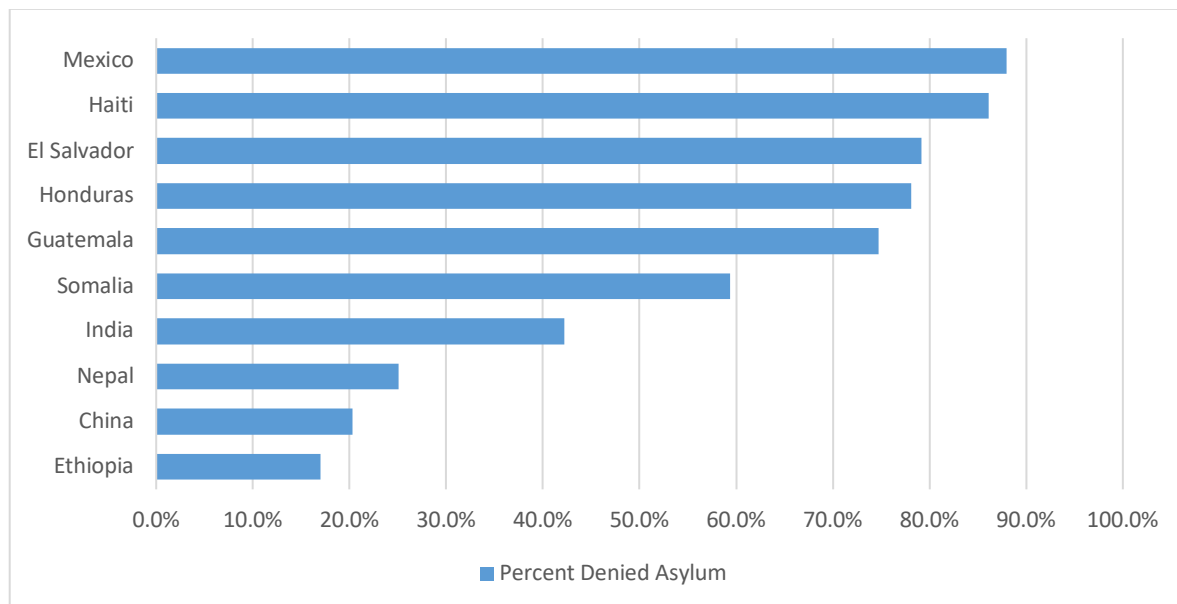
Asylum denial

Immigration courts in the United States are not part of the judicial branch, but the executive branch, through the Department of Justice, vastly consisting of former border agents. Additionally, as politicians, the media, and civil society organizations have pointed out, these courts are on the verge of collapse with more than 700 000 pending cases.

The Hope Border Institute (HOPE) reported that U.S. immigration courts are indeed about to collapse: they have 650 000 pending cases (HOPE, 2018). According to *El País*'s Washington correspondent, as of June 2018, there were 700 000 pending immigration court cases (Mars, 2018) of every type: asylum, refuge, change of immigration status, etc. Tourliere (2018b) stated that, in December 2018, the United States received 93 000 asylum claims from people at the U.S.-Mexico border. People have to wait between six months and two years to receive a government response since there are currently 300 000 pending requests.

Using TRAC information, HOPE (2018) reported that the U.S. border patrol's El Paso sector leads the asylum denial rate in the United States, reaching levels between 93.7 and 99.4 percent for individual judges in 2016, and with similar rates in 2017, well above the national average of 61.8 percent.
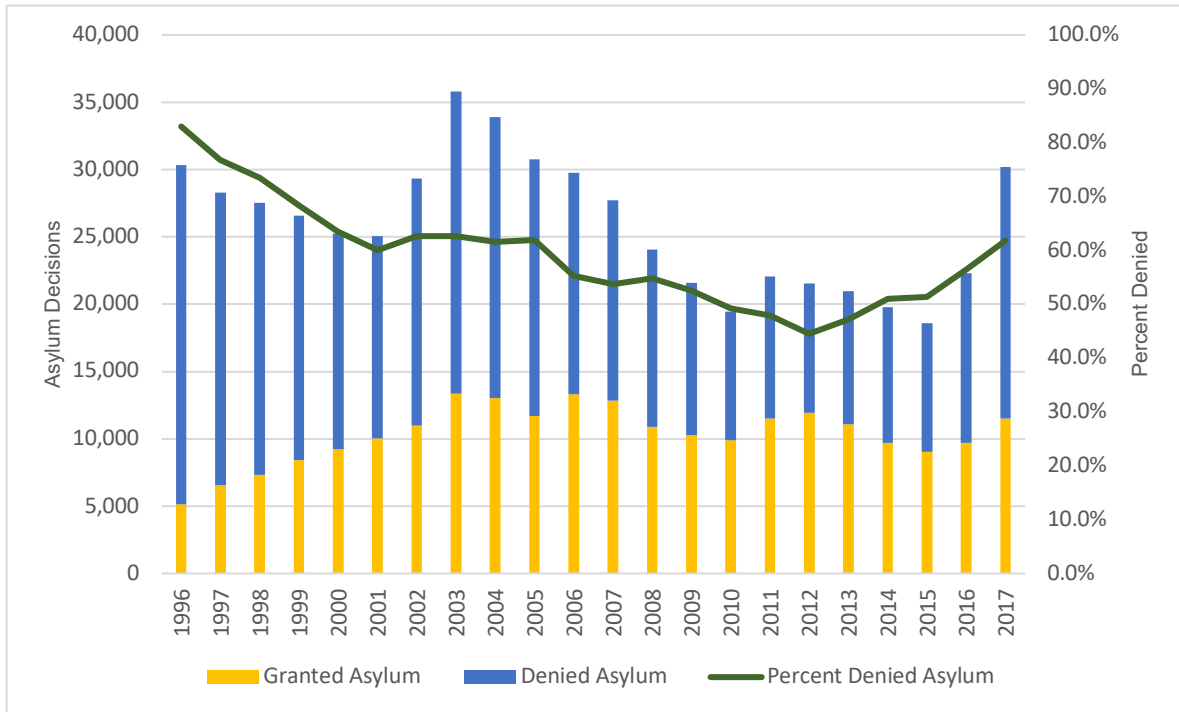
According to Rafael Alarcón (cited by Heras, 2018), during 2016, the Obama administration approved 20 455 asylum cases, of which 22 percent were for Asians, 11 for Salvadorans, 10 for Guatemalans, 7 for Hondurans, and only 5 percent for Mexicans (1,000 requests). Compared with the data presented by TRAC (HOPE, 2018), it shows a continued asylum-denying trend and increased denials with the next administration, especially for Mexicans and Central Americans (Figure 6).

Figure 6. U.S. asylum denial by nationality (2017)

Source: HOPE (2018)

Figure 7. Percentage of denied and approved asylum cases in the United States (2017)

Source: HOPE (2018).

A consequence of the *closed border policy* is the increase in Mexico's refugee applications. According to UPM-SEGOB and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR), refugee applications in Mexico increased by more than 2 200 percent between 2013 and 2018 (SEGOB, 2018). In 2013, the COMAR had 1 296 applications; in 2018, it registered 29 600, demonstrating the current refugee crisis.

Table 2. Increase in Mexico's refugee applicants (2013 to 2018)

Year	Applications
2013	1 296
2014	2 136
2015	3 424
2016	8 788
2017	14 596
2018	29 600

Source: SEGOB (2018).

Mexico granted refugee status to 22.5 percent of applicants between 2013 and 2017. According to the COMAR, 30 249 applications were received during this period, and only 6,819 people were granted refugee status.

Family separation

The family separation policy used on families detained by the U.S. border patrol and on asylum-seeking families reinforces the U.S.'s closed border policy. In the middle of 2018, by order of then-Attorney General Jeff Sesions and under the Executive Order entitled Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements (January 25, 2017), the U.S. government began a Zero Tolerance policy consisting of separating migrant children and adolescents from their parents.

According to *El País*—referencing Reuters—, from October 2016 to February 2018, there were close to 1 800 family separations (Mars, 2018, unnumbered). Additionally—referencing the *Associated Press*—, between April 19 and June 6, 2018, 2 033 children were separated from their parents when trying to enter the United States illegally at U.S. border crossings (Mars, 2018, unnumbered). In mid-2018, the United States had 11 351 migrant children distributed in a hundred detention centers (Mars, 2018).

Part of the 11 351 CAA in U.S. custody were 5 700 minors in centers from the non-governmental organization *Southwest Key*, and above all, the 1 500 "lost" children that Trump's administration could not find and the 1 700 minors still detained at Tornillo detention center (Mars, 2018).

The latter is an improvised center built with tents in the middle of the El Paso desert. Human rights organizations liken it to a concentration camp for minors, lacking the necessary infrastructure or trained professional and specialized personnel to provide adequate care and accommodate minors.

A tragedy occurred in December 2018: Jakelin Ameí Rosmery Caal Maquin, aged 7 (born in Rauxruha, Guatemala, in 2011) and Felipe Gómez-Alonso, aged 9 (born in Yalambojoch, Guatemala, in 2010) died while under U.S. Border Patrol custody. Jakelin died on December 8 at a hospital in El Paso, Texas, and Felipe died on December 24 in Alamogordo, New Mexico. According to their families, both died from influenza, contracted while under the Border Patrol's custody.

Detention and deportation

Part of the family separation policy and to reinforce the asylum and refugee status denial strategy is the immigrant detention and deportation strategy. A precursor to U.S. immigration policy's containment logic was observed during the George W. Bush administration (2001-2009).

 George W. Bush signed the Secure Fence Act in October 2006; the main objectives were "to increase Border Patrol size, deploy elements of the National Guard, and authorize a security fence for hundreds of miles along the border" (Noricumbo Robles, 2017, unnumbered). The increase in the number of border agents, which totaled 8 580 in 2000, increased to 11 032 by 2006. At the end of the Bush and the beginning of Obama's

administration in 2008, it was 15 442, to reach the official figure of 17 026 at the end of Obama's administration. According to *El País*, in May 2018, the Border Patrol detained:

> [...]51 912 people from Mexico, more than double the 19 940 arrests for May 2017. For the third consecutive month, apprehensions remained above 50 000 and continued to rise. However, the figure for May remains below the 55 442 from May 2016 and the 68 804 from May 2014, during Barack Obama's Democrat administration (Faus, 2018, unnumbered).

According to HOPE (2018), the chronic judicial delay experienced by U.S. immigration courts prolongs the waiting and detention process for immigrants and increases the government's detention costs, known as bed rates. The current administration wants to increase detention beds, of which 34 000 are legally assigned to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), to 80 000, which is why it has authorized contracts with private detention centers in South Texas. In addition to long detention periods, there are *fast-track* deportations. HOPE (2018) observed that 11 percent of detained asylum-seekers were deported in immigration courts during preliminary hearings or the bail process, which means that many were deported before their application process was over (HOPE, 2018, p, 19).
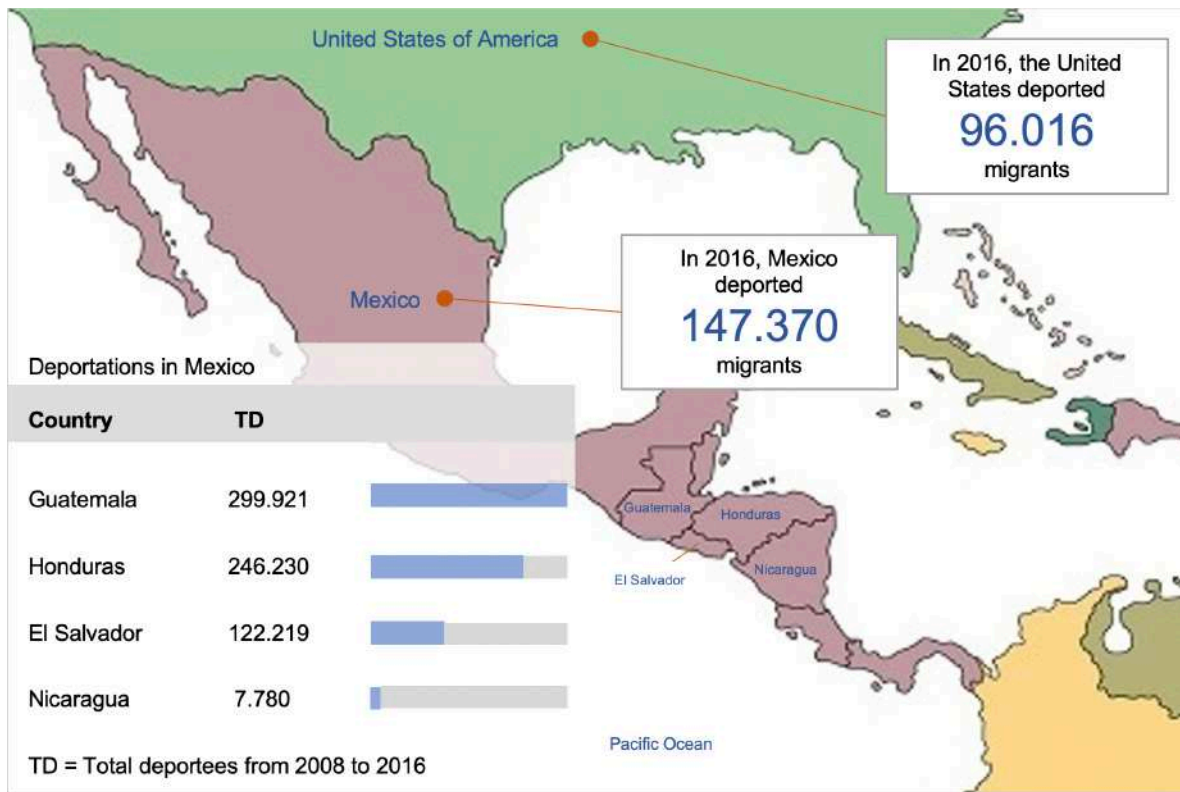
Mexico uses a similar strategy. According to Jan Jarab, a representative in Mexico of the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mexico uses a policy known as the 3Ds—detection, detention, and deportation—based on punishment and deterrence (Tourliere, 2018a). According to the official, we cannot allow the deterrence policy to be the paradigm (Tourliere, 2018a, p, 47).

Official data shows that, between January 2013 and April 2018, agents of the National Migration Institute (INM) detained 138 362 Central American migrants—55 000 of them under 12 years of age—, and nine out of every ten were deported (Tourliere, 2018a). These children were part of the 625 000 Central American migrants who were returned to their home countries by Mexican authorities during Enrique Peña Nieto's presidency at a rate of 321 per day.

Between January and July 2017, the INM arrested 53 301 foreigners, of whom 44 663 were deported. In the same period, the number of Central American migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua detained by the INM was 43 916, of which 42 600 were deported, representing 95.65 percent of the detained migrants (Soberanes, 2018, unnumbered).

The report noted that between January and July 2018, the number of Central Americans detained by the INM was 65 823, of which 57 087 were deported (Soberanes, 2018, unnumbered); that is, 86.72 percent. As a comparison, in 2016, Obama's final year, Mexico deported 50 000 more people than the United States (Figure 8).

Figure 8. People deported by the United States and Mexico during 2016

Source: Mars (2018).

Militarization

In October 2018, the U.S. administration mobilized 5 200 army members to the U.S.-Mexico border to "stop the invasion and support border agents." These army members would join the more than 18 000 Border Patrol agents and 2 092 National Guard members who had been deployed in April 2018. Joining these were 1000 CBP officers supported by Black hawk helicopters and C-130 and C-17 cargo planes (BBC News, 2018).

The U.S. President's vision for the U.S.-Mexico border is modeled after that of the border between the two Koreas (CNN Español, 2018). In a March 2018 speech, President Donald Trump said that if the United States spent millions to maintain the South Korean border, the same could be done for the Mexican border: fortify and militarize it. The border between the two Koreas is home to 32 000 soldiers, and it is heavily guarded over the four-kilometer belt known paradoxically as the "Korean demilitarized zone."

FINAL THOUGHTS

Crises and conflicts are often sources of risk and opportunity, according to the *Geography of peace*. The current refugee crisis is a risk and an opportunity. As stated earlier, there is a double crisis along the U.S.-Mexico border. The first is a humanitarian crisis, with thousands

of migrants and refugees in legal limbo waiting in risky and vulnerable conditions at the homes and shelters on both sides of the border. The humanitarian crisis is related to insecurity, violence, corruption, and impunity in Mexico and the Northern Triangle of Central America. In the latter case, we must add the drought crisis and the region's extractive economic model, which benefits only a small group of people (who control the State apparatus). State control by a small group of people who respond to their interests is the last element of the crisis: politics, whose institutional weakness is already unsustainable.

The second crisis is generated by the U.S government's zero-tolerance and closed border policies while facing the refugee crisis. The U.S. government's ineffectiveness and insensitivity to pending immigration reform caused the second crisis. The factors that intensify the crisis are the proposal to externalize the U.S. border by moving the U.S.-Mexico border to Mexico's southern border under the *Southern Border* program and the unilateral intention of converting Mexico into a de facto "safe third country" so that U.S. asylum-seekers await their process in Mexican territory.

The combination of both crises is dangerous. It puts thousands of people in extremely vulnerable conditions, lacking basic needs, and exposes them to extortion by local and migratory authorities, gangs, and criminal groups. People in this situation are being criminalized and politically used, subjected to a fear campaign and a rhetoric that criminalizes them and encourages hatred towards migrants and asylum seekers. This rhetoric fosters a fake vision of reality that confuses and fails to clarify current challenges, contributing to misinformation and sensationalism. Forced migration, be it documented or undocumented, as well as international protection, are requested only in situations of great danger: when facing threats in their home communities, when transiting through Mexico, and when crossing (legally or illegally) to the United States.

This double crisis could become an opportunity because it can facilitate change and transformation. It highlights and makes the crisis, the deficiencies, the needs, and the violated rights visible. It is a mirror that shows oneself through our fellow humans and as a society. It is an opportunity to do something, become informed and aware, take action, influence the situation's positive transformation, learn its causes, its effects on the crisis, and assume commitments and responsibilities. This is an opportunity because that puts us face-to-face with our reality and the challenges we have to overcome, transform, and improve.

There is a migratory and refugee crisis, but mainly, a humanitarian crisis. This humanitarian crisis was exploited through the media for political and electoral purposes. The crisis is manipulated with the primary purpose of supporting the criminalization of migrants and promoting fear toward poor migrants, arguing an alleged "threat to national security" that builds barriers to dialogue and understanding instead of bridges for cooperation.

The fear discourse promoted by the U.S. president is complemented by an unworthy, illegitimate, and illegal response to separate families and deny asylum and refugee rights while facing the migration and forced displacement phenomenon. These responses in the

wake of the humanitarian and refugee crisis have taken the state security paradigm to the extreme through the "zero tolerance," "closed border," and "national emergency" policies.

Transit migration and the refugee crisis are strategic issues for border security in the United States and Mexico and a fundamental issue in both countries' binational agendas. Like any human mobility flow, a migratory flow is a phenomenon that continually changes. It is the reason why it is vitally important to know its historical variations and its root causes.

The current refugee crisis is very different from the historical migratory flow. A comprehensive response has to be designed and implemented to address the migration issue with immigration reform in the United States and a joint plan in response to the effect of the refuge and the exodus—the humanitarian crisis at the refugee camps along both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border—, and the root causes of the crisis: insecurity and violence, corruption and impunity, institutional weakness, and the environmental, economic, and political crisis in Mexico and the Northern Triangle of Central America. The comprehensive response should be based on the principle of shared responsibility proposed by the human security paradigm.

The principle of shared responsibility and human security should be the criterion and focus guiding the Mexican government's border policy's proposals and objectives, for example concerning the proposed *Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and south and southeast Mexico*, and the U.N.'s *Global Compact for Migration*, that the Mexican government much supported at the international level. These criteria should be based on the principle of shared responsibility and human security at the Mexican borders.

An international response is needed because border security is intimately associated with international flows of illegal economies. The response should detect and halt human trafficking and trafficking networks and addresses people, their needs, and their rights. A comprehensive policy is needed to understand the changing migratory flows to help build the infrastructure and conditions to respond to the migration and refugee phenomenon with dignity, offering development and security instead of insecurity and impunity, as is currently the case.

Even though the human security paradigm is the belated response of the idealist doctrine, it is essential to begin designing concrete strategies and guidelines that contribute to its inclusion in public policies. In this way, we will prevent its principles and foundations from being left as a set of good intentions. In this regard, it is necessary to review previous experiences that tried to implement its principles; specifically, the contributions of the Contadora Act (the 1983 Document of Objectives and the 1984 Contadora Act on Peace and Co-operation in Central America) to learn from their successes and mistakes and the external factors that prevented their implementation.

Translation: Miguel Ángel Ríos

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