

Walls and migration Mexico-United States

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Abstract:

This essay criticizes the construction of a wall along the US-Mexico border to retain undocumented migration. It begins mentioning the assumptions normally accepted in regard the main historical background of Mexican immigration. It argues that this population flow is due to socio-economic inequalities, labor markets in the United States where Mexican and Central American migrants are traditionally inserted, as well as difficulties of their entry. It presents a historical overview of several important walls built in the world and their main purposes. It mentions recent trends of deportation events, highlighting the seemingly contradictory fact of their reduction, which is attributed to reduction of total undocumented migrants due to large voluntary returns and increasing difficulties of crossing the border.

Key words: Walls, migration, inequality, insecurity, deportations.

Resumen:

Este ensayo critica la construcción de un muro a lo largo de la frontera México-Estados Unidos como barrera que podría detener la migración indocumentada. Inicia con la mención de los supuestos normalmente aceptados respecto a los antecedentes de la migración de mexicanos a ese país. Argumenta que los flujos tienen que ver con las desigualdades socioeconómicas, los mercados laborales de Estados Unidos donde tradicionalmente se insertan los migrantes mexicanos y centroamericanos, así como las dificultades de entrada para unos y otros. Se presenta una reseña histórica de la existencia de varios muros importantes y sus propósitos. Se analizan las tendencias recientes de eventos de deportación, resaltando el hecho, aparentemente contradictorio, de la reducción de tales eventos, lo cual se atribuye al amplio retorno voluntario, la reducción del total de migrantes indocumentados y las crecientes dificultades para entrar en aquel país.

Palabras clave: Muros, migración, desigualdad, inseguridad, deportaciones.

INTRODUCTION

Walls and other physical barriers are built, among other reasons, due to the need to have protection against countries and people who are considered different because of their socio-economic or group status or because of a historically formed identity, which may include similarities of race, religion, ideology, culture, language and other characteristics that give them cultural or racial cohesion; and as for the economic, by condition of property or to defend of employment. Social groups have been developed the need for protection as a gregarious psychosocial feeling almost inevitable for many, given the great diversity of population groups that share a certain territory. This feeling has also been used to confront the domination of some social groups over others, which has led to innumerable violent and non-violent conflicts that normally implies territorial expansion of the dominant groups. Hence, the need to delimit the territory where the societies that share a consolidated identity settle demands limits or borders.

On the other hand, these barriers are supposed to protect employment, productive means, natural resources or a specific economic system, which makes the *sui generis* characteristics of a prevailing society. Moreover, when development of capitalist market system began the expansion of markets was required to take advantage of technology development and the economies of scale inherent in that system. At that time, thanks to this, the system of feudal production was gradually replaced, which impeded the expansion of markets and hindered trade, which gave rise to nation-states; of course, along with this many other socio-cultural and political changes were experienced. Here only very general features stand out in order to try something similar to an explanation of the existence of walls since antiquity and appearance of new ones. It can be said, then, that the majority of modern nation-states have a territorial threshold that allows them to maintain some economic autonomy and have possibilities of production growth. And with the delimitation of that territory a society is identified that normally has socio-cultural and racial similarities. This is why there are international trade institutions that regulate it, movements of population between nations —international migration— and, although to a lesser extent, financial capital flows.

Technological change in production allows ever greater scales; increasing returns are achieved through the international division of the produc-

tive processes of many goods and provision of services, which demands a great growth of international trade, consequently reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers. To do this, groups of countries sign broad or restricted free trade agreements. A financial system has also been created that allows exchanges using predominantly dollar as currency; its regulation is practically in the hands of the Federal Reserve Bank of the United States (FED), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In short, according to the degree of internationalization and globalization of national economies, they have a large number of markets for products, services and inputs globally developed, so that the flow between countries is very large and growing because they are increasingly more interdependent, especially when their societies want to live in accordance with the pattern of Western consumption.

Besides, population flows face great obstacles, especially in the case of workers, with exception of countries member of the European Union. However, financial flows have virtually no restrictions, as a result of development of information and communication technologies since they are carried out instantaneously within a framework of an international financial system with practically no regulation. This is due to the fact, in the first place, because the FED acts as the world's banker; its monetary policy of taking out or putting dollars in circulation affects interest rates and can destabilize many countries through speculation and management of expectations and risks by those who have financial capital in large quantities.

The inequality patterns are inherent to the capitalist market system (Pikety, 2015) as well as the concentration of capital in a decreasing number of families or individuals, also manifest themselves at the territorial level, both within countries and between them. In the first case, a vast economic literature shows that cities concentrate production, services, best opportunities, etc. Currently, about 60 percent of the world's population lives in cities. The process of urbanization accelerated along with the development of technology, the economies of agglomeration and of scale and migration. Recently, an important stage of it took place immediately after the Second World War, especially within developing countries like Mexico, and is known as rural exodus; However, at least in this country, today the rural-urban flow is no longer the main migratory flow, since most of the migration is between small and medium-sized cities, large metropolitan areas and megalopolises; that is, the pattern of urban-urban migration predominates (Sobrino, 2016: 61). Even so, at the present, many large cities do not grow significantly. When the rural exodus took place it was com-

mon to accuse immigrants from rural areas of swelling the belts of misery in cities, to take jobs from the natives, the deterioration of public services, etc. This migration was fundamental in the growth and development of Mexican cities. But, in Mexico and other Latin American countries, social and territorial inequality persists, which manifests itself more closely and palpably in small, medium and large cities. In short, migration to cities has causes and impacts similar to international migration, with the difference that the latter interposes borders and other obstacles to the change of residence.

In the international context, wealth, capital and opportunities for higher real income are concentrated at a rate similar to that of capital accumulation and technological development. The latter has impacted on access to information and communication technologies, so that now people are better communicated and more informed of what is happening in their country and in the world. It can be assumed that there is a new revolution in expectations after the mid-twentieth century; the first encouraged rural-urban migration, the second has international reach and widely motivates migration to large cities and other countries.

In this regard, Hodara, mentions that Víctor L. Urquidi exposed, in an unpublished work, the following:

... the demographic surpluses will inevitably tend to mobilize towards the nations of the world that have already reached high standards of living and well-being. In other words, (...) it is almost certain that migratory movements from South to North will be registered of unprecedented magnitude (...) And a strong social and political hostility to these movements is already emerging in the developed countries... Many believe that these problems interrelated with traditional instruments can be tackled. It would be a grave error to (...) rely on natural and spontaneous responses of societies to the global problem (...) The increasing complexity and intense interrelation of global and regional problems require a thorough evaluation of what is real and formulating bases for dynamic actions (...) that allow to reduce and control the risks of chance (Hodara, 2014: 183-184).

In this context of rich global North and poor global South, it should not surprise anyone, for example, that part of the population of African countries decides to emigrate to European countries to improve their standard of living. Neither does it increase the flow of migrants from Central America and Mexico to the United States; migration stimulated by the desire for progress and by the increasing insecurity experienced by both the Central American region and Mexico. Given these socioeconomic conditions, the

border wall that the United States builds on its southern border will be able to deter some and impede the passage of others, but this measure will not prevent completely the entry of undocumented immigrants.

A LONG HISTORY OF WALLS

Ancient, medieval, pre-Hispanic and colonial walls

There have always been walls with similar purposes. In the case of China, in order not to be invaded by her neighbors, each of the seven kingdoms of the ancient Chinese built its own wall and when the empire was unified built only one: the Great Wall of China that dates back to 656 BC and it has been renewed or enlarged several times. The largest and most recent restoration was made by the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) (Su *et al.*, 2003: 212). There are different estimates of its length; a recent Chinese research claims that it measures 21 196 km. For its part, the Roman Empire built walls for military and aesthetic purposes; at the present there are remains of the Servian wall in Rome, 11 km long and 3.5 meters high, erected before the Christian era by Servio Tulio, and the Aurelian wall of greater length and height. The Romans also built 118-km-long Hadrian's Wall in 122 BC to establish the boundaries of the province of Britannia and defend themselves against peoples from the north. After the fall of the empire, in the old Roman cities the walls were maintained or they were reduced to protect only a part of them.

In the Middle Ages, feudal cities had a marginal role, they were not administrative centers but small-scale production and exchange sites. By the tenth century, cities and bishoprics were walled. As the "Burgos" grew outside cities, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They went from being only military bases to also becoming commercial places fortified with walls. In England the second international defensive wall was built, the Hadrian's Wall; when peace came, in the fourteenth century, without losing its military function, the English walls became customs barriers to collect taxes on products that entered cities. In Europe, urban growth forced the construction of new walls to form inner cities concentric circles. In medieval Spain the walls served to defense and differentiate inhabitant of the city from rural inhabitant (Arizaga and Añíbarro, 2011), the former had a privileged status and more opportunities. In the same country, previous Roman cities almost abandoned were occupied by Muslim invaders who rebuilt the walls of Seville and Algeciras among others. In the new Spanish cities, the protective and differentiating walls also became a distinctive symbol.

In pre-Hispanic America there were also cities with walls. In the Mayan world, for example, Mayapan was a typical walled city and Tulum was also protected by the sea. During the militarist period and until the arrival of the Spaniards, “the city is located in high positions or protected by walls and other defensive means” (Piña, 2013: 14). There were many other walled Mayan cities (Schávelzon, 2011: 49). In Peru, the Chimú culture had as its capital the city of Chan Chan, formed by nine small cities or walled enclosures. In Tenochtitlan Mexico, the main temple was inside a square surrounded by walls.

In the Spanish colonies of America there were few walled cities (Hardoy, 2016: 2, 13) due to large costs building them. Only defense works were built in ports through which international trade was made, such as Havana and Veracruz. Other examples of colonial walled cities are Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, with walls to resist attacks by pirates; Campeche, in Mexico, and Trujillo, Peru, which had their walled historic centers.

Walls and conflicts

In the Middle East, essentially to prevent terrorist acts and keep Palestinians out of Israel, walls have been built separating this country from the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Also, Egypt built a fence with the latter to prevent smuggling. Likewise, faced with the threat of the Islamic State, Saudi Arabia completed in 2014 a wall and an electronic surveillance system on 900 km along its border with Iraq, seeking to protect her from the conflicts in the area. On the Kuwait-Iraq border, the United Nations (UN) began the construction of a wall, which in 2004 was reinforced by Kuwait. For their part, without having a true conflict with Mexico, some Americans have wanted to see in their southern border a potential danger of suffering attacks by radical Islamic groups such as Al Qaeda (Sherwood, 2008), to which the group of Islamic State is added as terrorist now.

Several Mediterranean countries have built walls to face conflicts. One of them separates the Greek Cypriots from the south of Cyprus from the Turkish Cypriots from the north since the island was divided in 1974. It is 180 km long and a zone of exclusion of both communities controlled by the United Nations. On the continent, Greece built a double barrier of 11 km on its border with Turkey in 2012. Between Morocco and the Western Sahara the “wall of shame” was raised to prevent the Sahrawi people from returning to their land occupied by the Moroccans since 1975.

In Asia, India built a 742 km fence on its border with Pakistan in the Kashmir region, which is disputed by both countries, and another 230 km on the internationally recognized border. In addition, it erected a 2,700 km fence on its border with Bangladesh to prevent illegal immigration and smuggling. On the other hand, after the war that divided the two Koreas in the fifties of the twentieth century a demilitarized zone four kilometers wide by 250 kilometers long was created, which paradoxically is one of the most militarized borders in the world.

In Northern Ireland, since 1969, several walls separate Catholic neighborhoods from Protestants in Belfast, the capital. The “walls of peace” seek to avoid violence between them. The government committed in 2013 to destroy them within a period of ten years. Also, a gate separates Spain from the territory of Gibraltar, in the hands of England.

International anti-immigrant walls

Nowadays, most walls mentioned in the media and the academy studies are the ones erected to avoid international migration. Academics and analysts agree that those who have this objective are useless, but governments continue to fill the world with hurdles to stop migrants. Europe tries to prevent African immigrants from entering the continent and faces massive migration from Arab countries in conflict such as Syria, which is suffering a civil war and another with the Islamic State. Migrant flows seek refuge in countries where they can obtain high incomes, which makes them also economic migrants. To prevent the clandestine passage of migrants to Great Britain, in the north of France, metal fences of 30 and 40 km were installed in 2015 to protect the port of Calais and the railway tunnel that crosses the English Channel. In 2016, a wall in the port prevents migrants from boarding trucks heading to England. For its part, the Hungarian government placed in 2015 a barbed wire fence along its 175 km border with Serbia, and another on the border with Croatia. The borders of Macedonia with Greece, Slovenia with Croatia and Austria with Slovenia were also fenced off, and Bulgaria surrounded its border with Turkey, the main entry point for migrants who do not cross the Mediterranean. Spain has protected with entanglements in North Africa, which are Ceuta and Melilla, the only land access gates for candidates for illegal immigration from Morocco and other African countries to the European Union.

Wall United States-Mexico

Donald Trump, president of the United States fulfilled one of his main campaign promises by signing an executive act in which he ordered to complete a wall of which about one third already exists and seeks to prevent undocumented migration, drug trafficking and possible terrorist acts in his country along the border with Mexico. This project is accompanied by an anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican discourse, but in reality it will affect all of Latin America and other countries as people from Central and South America, the Caribbean and even Europeans, Asians and Africans that have entered in the United States. In addition to being “one of the most important barriers of our times” (Carlsile, 2007: 57). It represents an attack on ecosystems and human groups that do not recognize frontiers such as the *pápagos* Indians of Arizona and Sonora. Trump justifies the wall arguing that with it he will return security to his country because it will prevent entry of illegal immigrants, terrorists who could attempt against their citizens and the activities of drug cartels. It is a solution similar to that used to face border conflicts such as those already described or stop migratory flows in Europe. It is also an economic measure that seeks to protect employment and prevent outflow of capital and drug trafficking from Mexico.

For Reece Jones, the construction of the wall obeys to three factors: i) that “Walls and fences are the most efficient way to mark the territorial differences in the land because they take the abstract idea of a territory and materialize it” (Jones, 2012: 70); ii) the existence of a poorer country south of the border; in 2010 the GDP per capita of Mexico was \$ 14 000, while that of Canada amounted to 39 000 and that of the United States to 47 000; 3) that throughout its history this country has felt its values “threatened by the values” of the immigrants; before this happened with Irish, Chinese and Italians, now the threat to the “American” is embodied by Muslims and Latinos, who do not adhere to the mainstream of American culture. The argument of building a wall to avoid possible terrorist attacks is denied by US Army Maj. John T. Sherwood, who does not see conditions in Mexico for illegal al Qaeda terrorists to enter because they lack bases of support, so it would not be the most viable option. He says that since the September 11, 2001 attack, the border wall has not only stopped illegal immigration and drug trafficking from Mexico to the United States, it would not also guarantee preventing the entry of terrorists.

THE SHAMELESSLY POROUS WALL AND THE MEXICO-UNITED STATES MIGRATION

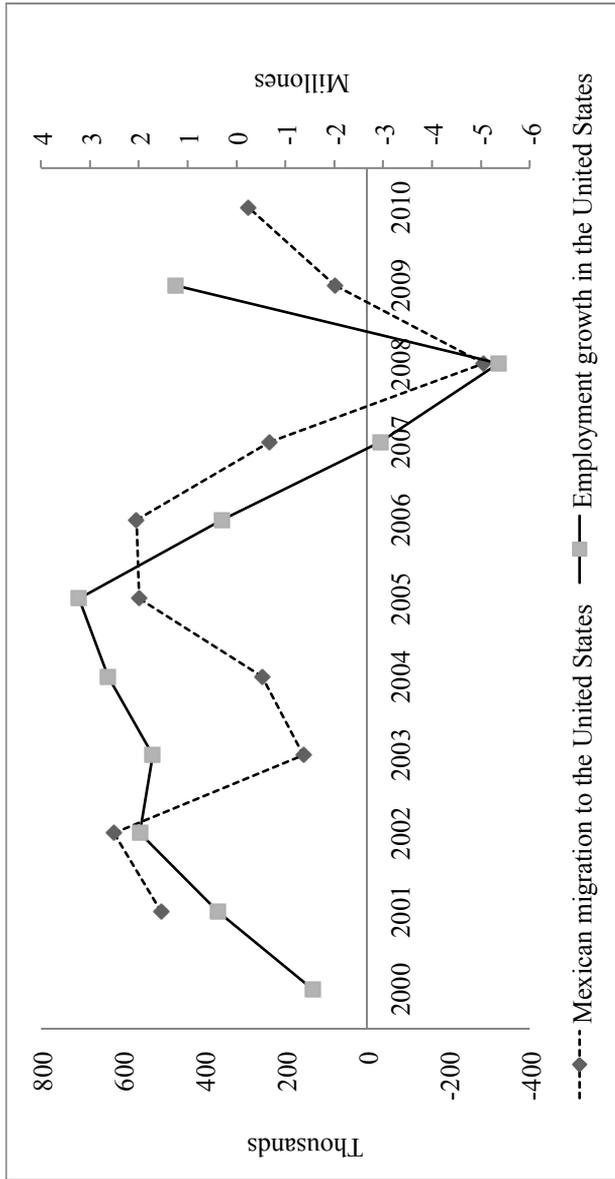
In order to have a more adequate and objective understanding of the reason for President Trump's policy of extending the barriers of passage between Mexico and the United States, it is necessary to mention important precedents. It should be considered that there are around 700 km of metal fences, and other type of barriers along border states. But Trump insists on building a 2,300-km wall along the border between the two countries that would cost about 15 billion dollars, he also insists that it will be paid by the Mexican people.

The first antecedent is that the current US-Mexico border was traced after the annexation of more than half of the Mexican territory by the United States in 1848, a territory in which Mexicans lived. Such annexation was the booty of a very unequal and unjust war, under the pretext of the so-called "manifest destiny" of the American people. Therefore, from the point of view of territorial socioeconomic functionality, this initial frontier line was in some way "artificial". The US population began to grow more than the Mexican one, but as it expanded its economy required more labor to build infrastructure - such as railroads - for the growing agriculture and the construction of cities in the south and southwest of U.S. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, with or without US policy, Mexican workers were sought in various ways, not only from the north of the country, which was then sparsely populated, but also from other regions of Mexico that had a relatively high population density such as Jalisco, Michoacán and Guanajuato, especially those that joined the brand new Mexican railway network. It is not an exaggeration to mention that the Mexican workers largely contributed to the expansion and colonization of the southwestern United States. Thus, the networks of socioeconomic relations between the Mexican and the American population began; and that of Mexican origin increased along with temporary and permanent migration. A second antecedent was the first and second world wars. For this facts, the United States required a strong growth of its steel industry, armaments and agriculture, which could only be achieved with immigration from many other countries in the world, mainly from Mexico. This initiated the tradition of Mexican population flows to Chicago, California, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, that later on extended to other USA states.

At this time it was very easy to obtain immigrant documents. But the Great Depression, which began in the 1920s and spanned most of the 1930s, was the reason for the repatriation of 423,049 Mexican Americans (Hoffman, 1974: 175) from 1929 to 1934, documented and undocumented, because it caused a high unemployment of Americans. During the Second World War and shortly thereafter, the United States demanded a large number of Mexican workers, for which it established with Mexico the Bracero Program, that regulated the presence of immigrants by the US and Mexican governments; the former did not fully comply with the terms of the agreement, since it did not protect the braceros from the abuses of their employers, and neither Mexico because did not demand the guarantees established therein (Durand, 2007: 39-40; Delano, 2014). When this program was suspended in 1964, the need for Mexican workers continued, so that from this year until the 1980s, undocumented migration increased, with the United States' complacency. US employers, particularly in the agricultural sector, had realized the great advantage of hiring undocumented Mexican immigrants: they could be paid less, they were helpless and they could be fired at their convenience. For their part, US immigration officers, mainly those who guarded the border, acted as regulators of the labor markets of their country, to which Mexicans have traditionally incorporated. When there was a great demand for them, they were allowed to pass without problems, they were even invited to enter through the borders of Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez. On the other hand, when the demand for undocumented workers decreased and there was unemployment among Americans, border guards became very strict, deportations increased and raids were carried out to stop them. Therefore, it can be affirmed that since the end of the Bracero Program until the 1980s, the United States' non-explicit immigration policy consisted in regulating the flow of undocumented immigrants along the southern border according to the demand of their labor market and helping to maintain lower cost of labor in activities that native Americans did not want to work.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the increase or decrease of employment in the United States and the increase or decrease in the volume of Mexican migrants. Employment growth lags behind in one year, assuming that migration would respond to employment opportunities the following year.

Figure 1: Employment in the United States and Mexican migration, 2000-2010



Source: Arroyo and Rodríguez (2014). For the Mexican population, data from the American Community Survey were used; Employment in the United States is estimated from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

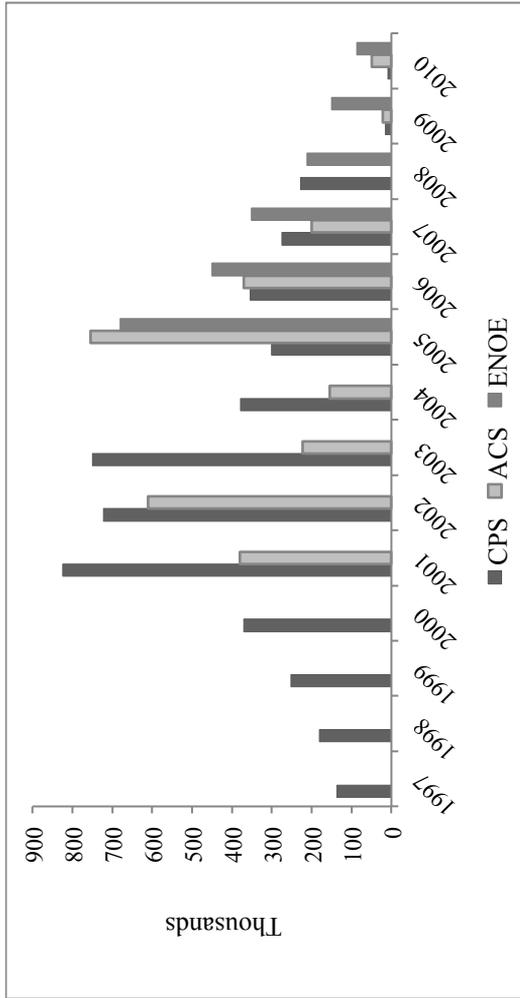
Despite of all, migration has been substantially reduced since 2005, according to sources in the United States and Mexico: from around 700,000 migrants in 2005 to a comparatively low figure in 2014 of approximately 159,000 (Figure 2; Secretaria de Gobernacion, 2016). But, if return of migrants in these years is considered, the result is that the total volume of Mexicans in the United States has probably been reduced more than estimated. During the 1985-2005 period, the total number of return migrants -persons who resided in Mexico at the time of the population census and declared that they lived in the United States five years ago- increased from approximately 100 000 to approximately 859 000. However, after 2010 the returnees were an amount that exceeded by more than 200 percent the return of those who returned in the eighties of the last century. After that, a significant decrease in the return begins, which continues until 2015.

In middle of the 2000s, the group made up of Mexicans with documents, the undocumented, those born in the United States of Mexican origin and even the children of undocumented immigrants caused much concern to both countries. In addition, the financial crisis that began in 2008 immediately affected unemployment in the United States and set the stage for a very important deportation of undocumented Mexicans during the administration of Barack Obama. Therefore, it can be affirmed that there was a turning point since the migration to the United States was considered a matter of national security, after September 11, 2001, which caused the government to take more stringent measures for its control, especially of undocumented workers, while in the United States there was a relative saturation of labor markets in the sectors in which migrants have traditionally been incorporated.

Figure 3 shows the downward trend in repatriation events for Mexicans starting in 2001. Although there was a slight recovery in 2009, the number of them continued to decrease until reaching 36 percent. Of the total of repatriates, up to 92 percent of the events correspond to men between 20 and 25 years of age, and those of 25 years¹ of age are more frequent. Although the expectation of the massive return of population to their country of origin shows a downward trend, it is to be assumed that as deportation events decrease, the number of returnees increases. It is important to remember that, in the event that there are 100 possible deportation events, in fact the same person could have been deported up to five times, obviously, after as many entries in the United States.

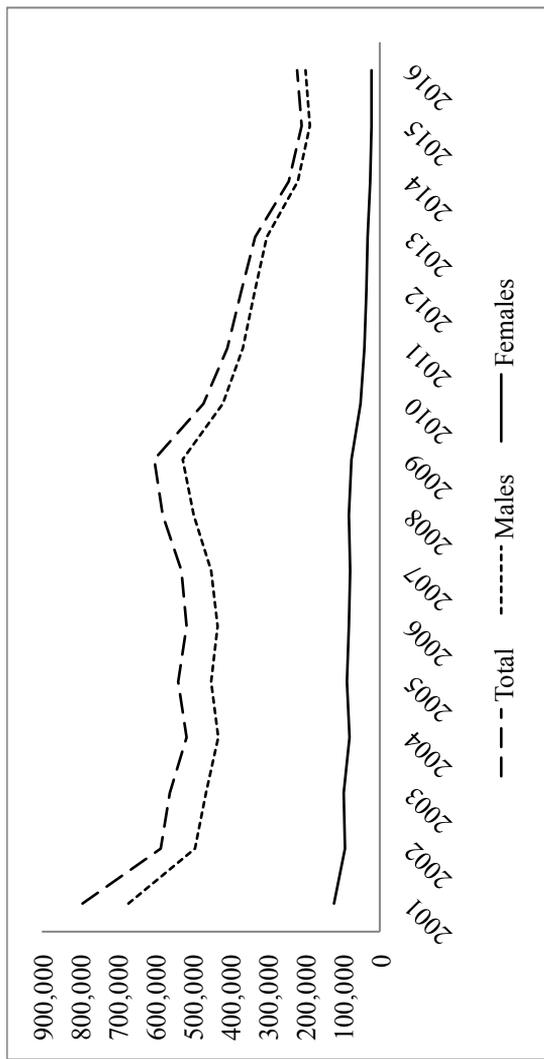
¹ Survey of Migration of the Northern Border of Mexico (EMIF in Spanish).

Figure 2: Migration of Mexicans to the United States according to various sources, 1997-2010



Source: Arroyo and Rodríguez (2014), US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), American Community Survey (ACS) and the National Occupation and Employment Survey (ENOE, in Spanish).

Figure 3: Mexican repatriation events by gender, 2001-2016



Source: Statistical bulletins of the Immigration Policy Unit Mexican Government (2017).

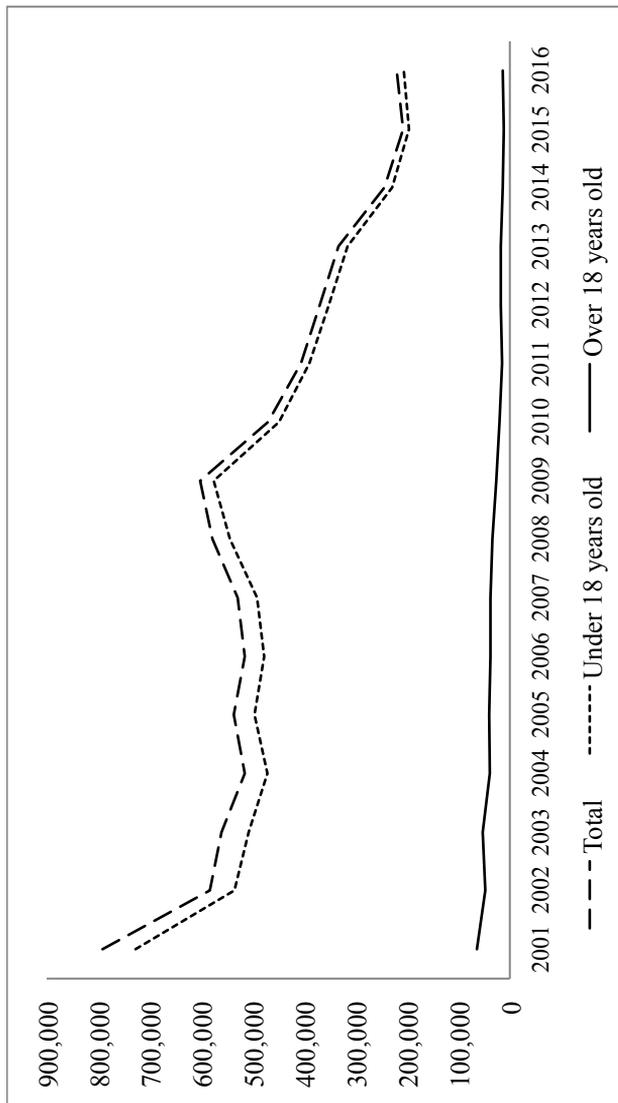
This implies that both migrants who travel alone and those who accompany them, because it is currently more difficult to enter that country, may decide not to take the risk, the number of those who try to cross the border is less and, therefore, so is the number of deportees. In other words, because the data refer to events and are quite approximate to those given by the estimate of the number of people deported, the assumption seems contradictory, but considering the greater difficulty to enter the United States reduces the number of events and there is an increase in the number of people deported, most of whom can no longer return to the United States.

According to data of Mexican migrants under 18 years old deported by US authorities, present the same pattern as people aged 18 years and over. In Figures 4 and 5 can be seen that in the growth and decrease that occurred from 2001 to 2016, the number of deportees from 0 to 11 years of age accompanied is almost similar to that of those who are 18 years of age. They also allows to see that to the extent that the number of returned adults changes, it will have a strong influence on the number of those under 18 years old accompanied deported. Although in 2015 and 2016 there was an increase in deportations in both infants and those over 18 years old, from January 2016 to January 2017 deportations show a drop of up to 5 percent for adults and 1 percent for children under 12 years.

Another antecedent is that for the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the mentioned “migratory labor” practice and the economic growth of the United States caused the undocumented population to spread to Central American countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, where also the instability politics, wars and poverty pushed a good number of people to emigrate to the United States. The flow continues to date.

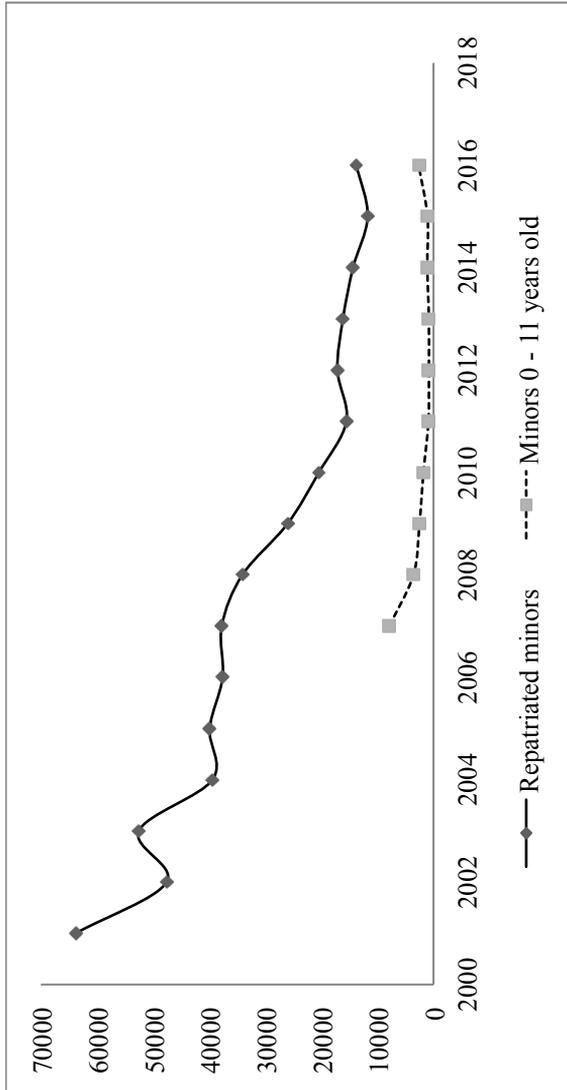
The fall in growth rate of the US economy at the beginning of the twenty-first century and the growing influx of immigrants, with documents and undocumented immigrants, began the tendency to make it more difficult for migrants to cross the southern border. It is then that the construction of the “wall” begins. It was also considered that undocumented immigration was getting out of US control. The growth of the Mexican population in the United States peaked in 2007, then began to decrease (Passel *et al.*, 2012, cited in Gandini *et al.*, 2015: 11). This decrease has to do with several factors, including unemployment in that country and the quiet but persistent policy of deportation of President Barack Obama.

Figure 4: Repatriation events for Mexicans, adults and peoples under 18 years old, 2001-2016



Source: Statistical bulletins of the Immigration Policy Unit Mexican Government (2017).

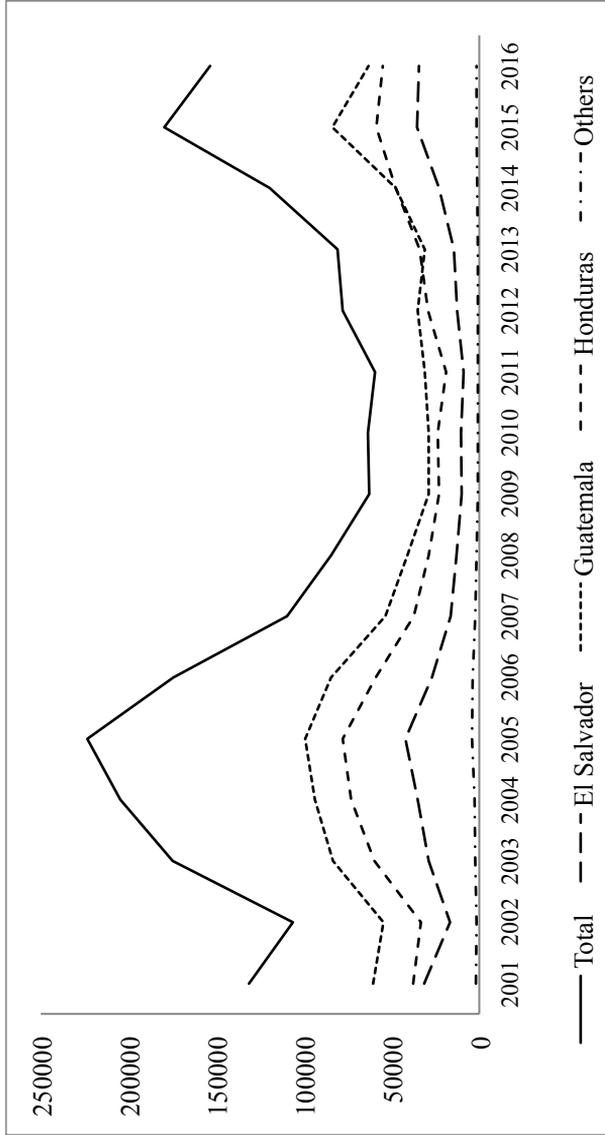
Figure 5: Repatriated Mexican minors, 2001-2016



Source: Statistical bulletins of the Immigration Policy Unit Mexican Government (2017).

Figure 6 shows how the total and disaggregated repatriation from Mexico to the countries of Central America since 2001 has evolved. Migration from these countries to the United States plays an important role in the total that passes through the Mexican border. The return of foreigners by Mexican authorities shows that Guatemalans rank first in deportations with 41 percent of all deportees in the Central American region in 2016; followed by Hondurans with 35 percent and Salvadorans with 22 percent. In the first half of the decade of the 2000s there is an increase in the number of deportations, which perhaps reflects a greater difficulty to enter the United States and the rise of undocumented immigration in that country. Subsequently, there is a strong decrease in returns, which reached its minimum in 2011, that can also be explained by two assumptions: on the one hand, the crisis in the United States, which caused an increase in unemployment, and opportunities in the markets of traditional work in which undocumented migrants are incorporated; on the other, the insecurity and violence caused by organized crime in Mexico, which increased the risk faced by Central American migrants as they pass through the country. The increase after 2012, which reaches its peak in 2015, is related to the largest number of deportation events from the United States, the new measures taken by the Mexican government in response to a growing number of people from Central America who are trying to cross Mexico to go to the United States and, the fact that those who manage to reach the border probably face formidable difficulties in crossing. In addition, it could be added that the economic crisis due to the fall in oil prices, which had an impact on the labor markets of Mexico, put pressure on the Mexican authorities to deport more Central American migrants. To explain the growing number of them trying to establish themselves in Mexico, it can be assumed that it is because many do not manage to enter United States nor are they deported by Mexican government due to its insufficient capacity to return them to their respective countries. Also, what has been constructed of the wall has stopped more Central Americans than Mexicans in recent years, maybe because there are relatively larger Central American people trying to enter than Mexicans. In addition, deportations of Central American migrants from Mexico, the criminal gangs that harass them and other problems they face as they pass through this country are a virtual wall that they have to overcome before facing a physical wall and other measures that the United States has taken to avoid the entry of undocumented migrants through its border with Mexico.

Figure 6: Events of foreigners returned by Mexico according to nationality, 2001-2016



Source: Statistical bulletins of the Immigration Policy Unit Mexican Government (2017).

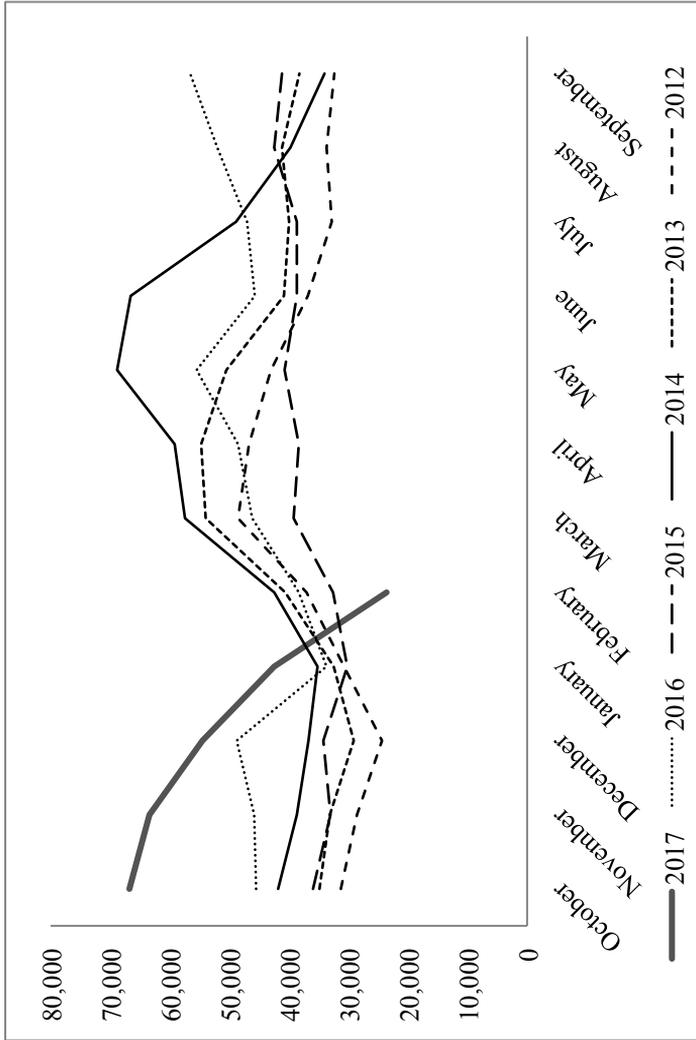
Given the above, it can be said that the national security system established by the administration of President George Bush Jr. allowed to put additional barriers to migration, increase deportation and, of course, continue with the construction of the “wall” that his predecessor started, William Clinton in 1994.

Meanwhile, in Mexico and in the Central American countries, low economic growth, inequality, poverty and insecurity continue, and may worsen. The nearly three million deported by Barack Obama (Clemente, 2016), the voluntary returns of Mexicans and the number of those who will no longer be able to emigrate make it possible to affirm that emigration to the United States is no longer an “escape valve” to the precarious socio-economic situation that afflict them in their country. So, underemployment, growth of informal sector and poverty will keep them in a scenario of economic and political uncertainty, particularly in Mexico.

According to figures obtained from US sources, it can be affirmed that decrease in deportations has played an important role since the beginning of the administration of Donald Trump, which implies that it has important effects on immigration policies in the United States. Figure 7 shows the drop in the number of 2017 deportations compared to 2012; nevertheless, it should be considered that from March to June there is an increase in deportations typical of those that have been occurring for more than five years. This indicates that the decrease in deportations can be attributed more to a cyclical effect than to a new immigration proposal in the strict sense since, except in 2016, in all other years it can be seen that deportations have a downward trend in the months of July, August and September, to increase again in February and March. However, it must be recognized that, in fact, in the few months that the new US government has been in office, there is a spectacular fall in deportation events, which is greater than the 2016 season. Of course, it is too early to know the results—beyond the clear intentions of President Trump—of the new government’s migration policies. For example, the construction of the wall, has not been able to advance so far due to lack of budget, and the deportation of Mexican “criminals” only highlights the arbitrariness committed by his government.

As already explained, it is assumed that this is due to greater difficulty in overcoming the barriers that migrants face on the border, the significant increase in the deportation of people, a increase in voluntary returnees, who are less the ones who decide take the high risk of trying to cross and, that many employers of undocumented persons are becoming more comply the laws of hiring these immigrants than in other governments.

Figure 7: Total apprehensions of the Southwest border, 2012-2017



Source: Department of Homeland Security, US. Southwest Border Migration (2017).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The movements of population from one region to another throughout history have had economic and security motivations, since there have always been significant socio-economic and cultural inequalities between territories and their populations. On the other hand, different human groups have been protected in different ways, and one of them has been the construction of physical barriers, which have given them the psychosocial sensation of having greater security. However, history shows that such an effect can only be temporary, because they have not been able to preserve the tranquility of the peoples permanently; walls and fences have ended up falling.

The current walls require technological and military reinforcement since inequalities persist between sending and receiving countries, and in some regions of poor countries there is greater insecurity and wars, in which rich countries often intervene. Likewise, the “expectations revolution” generated by the media increases the pressures of international mobility, at the same time that production is globalized and capital acquires greater international mobility. If these trends prevail, it is expected that international flows continue due to the lack of socio-economic opportunities in the regions of origin, as well as political and religious conflicts, the advance of crime and the consequent insecurity. As long as these causes exist, there will be no walls that can totally contain such flows.

The wall that President Donald Trump intends to continue has a political connotation because it was a popular campaign topic among native Americans - particularly Anglo-Saxons - who perceive that their employment opportunities have been reduced and their salaries have decreased due to immigration, especially undocumented. Meanwhile, Mexico-US socioeconomic integration continues and inequality increases between both countries and between regions of Mexico.

It is hoped that President Trump will do everything in his power to deport the undocumented immigrants who are already in the United States and to prevent the entry of others along its southern border, particularly Mexicans and Central Americans. It is certain that the new government will more strictly apply the migratory laws for employers to prevent them from giving employment to undocumented persons. The construction of the wall, greater vigilance and the rejection of immigrants may reduce its entry, but not stop it altogether, so that the Mexican border may become a temporary and partial dam for migrants. On the other hand, if the Central Americans who are now passing through Mexico desist from entering the

United States, this country will soon become their second option and they will increasingly decide to stay in cities located along the migratory routes, since even here they would have better living conditions than in their countries of origin. Although Central American migrants decrease due to their change of expectations, Mexican authorities cannot prevent their entry and surely many will be established in the country. For all of the above, it is possible that the deportation events from the United States to Mexico and from this country to Central America continue at the same pace as they have been in recent years as the total number of undocumented migrants in the country of the north has decreased, and increase the difficulties of passage.

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