

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Globalization has led the Nation-State system into a phase of rethinking. The current international structure is no longer comprised by States; rather, new forms of international State and non-State actors appear and affect the circumstances under which the system operates. The end of the Cold War presents us with new challenges in which a scheme of Global Liberal Governance has to either equal or surpass the levels of relative security of the times when states alone had entire normative power.¹ The process of globalization and the complexity of the international relations of today have opened the debate on the way global governance –if there is to be one- ought to be. The question states have at hand, then, is the revision and eventual reform of institutions and networks of institutions that would transform the relations between them to be able to achieve a long lasting state of security.

North America is at a crossroad; the new security paradigms of the United States leave Mexico and Canada with two options. One is to advance the process of integration by taking on the defying task of accommodating to the U.S. renovated homeland security apparatus. The other is to slowdown the process and accept a progressive decline of regional mobility, trade and investment. At this point and time, a comprehensive policy strategy for the region should be grounded over confidence-building steps, as the changes in temporality and allocation of immigrant communities in the United States make it logical to assume that the phenomenon of migration will continue.

¹ Mark Duffield. Mayra Moro (trans.) “Conclusión: Gobernación Mundial, responsabilidad moral y complejidad. Desplazamientos internos y el nuevo humanitarismo” in *Las nuevas guerras en el mundo global: la convergencia entre desarrollo y seguridad*. (u/a. Catarata. u/a), 316.

As stated in the beginning of this thesis, U.S. concerns over security and economic development have been driving forces in the course of this country's relation with its continental neighbors. After establishing that migration from Mexico to the United States has not only been persistent but a sensitive issue on the common agenda, I contended that, more than ever, border security is projected to be a key factor in the future of the relation, as larger and diversified amounts of people are being aggregated into the regional mobility phenomenon. Today, women and children are incorporating into the migratory patterns and immigrant settlements are found in more distant sites like the states of Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Utah and Washington, without excluding the geographically closer ones –California, Texas and Arizona.

The hypothesis I proposed was that border enforcement polices at the U.S. southwestern boundary demonstrated territorial re-assertiveness in an era of increasing interdependence. My central premise was that these polices had adverse effects as they failed in fulfilling the purposes of their original creation. In the introductory section of this thesis, I established the relevance of the Mexican contribution to the U.S. labor market, and provided a first glance of the paradox of regional integration versus the heightened levels of border security.

Throughout the three chapters I developed, I built a conceptual frame of reference, revised the circumstances that gave origin to border enforcement policies during the past century and finally, assessed their effectiveness. In chapter one, I draw near the concepts of security and migration. The versatility and evolution of the concept of security supported my argument that in an asymmetric relation like the U.S.-Mexican one, U.S national interests have outweighed bi-national concerns and have recently elevated illegal immigration into the national security scope. In attempting to outline a meaning to my subject matter, I described border security as *the absence of fear and the*

protection of shared values at the region of convergence of two countries. Furthermore, I contended that the human security approach was more accurate for the question of migration from Mexico to the United States since it places the development of the individual as the key element of the overall security of the contemporary State.

I established that besides their territorial closeness, Mexico and the United States are bound together due to a transnational labor market that has led to the massive labor migration of the last decades, and that the increasing number of illicit cross-border activities has been both the result and the propeller of state control efforts. In this chapter, I presented the idea that Mexico and the United States conceive the problem of immigration differently and that, precisely, that misconception has made U.S. immigration policies include tough reinforcement and do not contemplate the development of Mexican social and economic conditions under the auspices of NAFTA.

In the following chapter, I supported my idea that U.S. immigration control policies have traditionally revolved about reaffirming its territorial sovereignty. Chapter Two revised the construction and evolution of the boundary from the end of the Nineteenth century to the end of the Cold War. This study helped us realize the growing interconnectedness of the two countries and the paradoxical escalation of border policing.

I identified two main border problems of the twentieth century, being drug trafficking and illegal migration. I claimed that during the eighties, the smuggling of illicit substances was tantamount to the smuggling of immigrants today. Nevertheless, as the governments of Mexico and the United States are responding in a similar way to the migration issue as the trafficking of substances, I contested that, being different in nature and dynamics, border escalation is not the optimal solution. For the case of illegal drugs trafficking, law enforcement built a regime around the production and

distribution, which signaled some positive results in the short and even medium-term. Eventually, corruption invaded enforcement corporations on both sides of the border and escalation terminated after strong opposition of the political elite and the general public.

The case of illegal migration is quite different. Firstly, the United States and Mexico do not coincide on the reasons to place this topic on each of their domestic agendas. Secondly, escalation has produced pervasive results. Different from the question of drugs, immigration control initiatives are directed towards people that, initially, are not criminals. Only law enforcement has reproduced and reinvigorated the presence of immigrant smuggling organizations that have further developed transnational networks of organized crime, of which immigrants are often victims.

Finally, border policing escalation in the mid-nineties and afterwards, responded to a political environment that had little to do with a legitimate concern over the well-being of migrants. I referred specifically to Operations Hold-the-Line in El Paso and Gatekeeper in San Ysidro as the ultimate examples of “prevention through deterrence” policies.

Chapter Three went further into examining the reach, limitations and repercussions of mentioned policies. In doing that I exposed the dynamics of smuggling practices between gradually borderless neighbors.² I considered that

[f]ar more important for migrants than the simple push-and-pull factors of wage differentials were larger, global issues of market consolidation (including North American integration), the process of learning that accrues to migrants

² Referring exclusively to the commercial activity between Mexico and the United States after NAFTA. “Sure enough the biggest growth areas in the first few years of NAFTA were such services as retailing, banking, communications, transportation, insurance, publishing, tourism, film distribution, educational civil engineering, software design, and natural gas and electric power distribution.” David Lorey. *The U.S.-Mexican Border in the Twentieth Century: A History of Economic and Social Transformation*. (Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1999), 165.

(sometimes called human capital), and the networks created by migration (sometimes referred to as social capital),³ was the overall security of migrants, as a form of biopolitics.

In analyzing the state of the issue of migration after 9/11, I recognized two main responses, in terms of border security. One was securitization and the other criminalization.⁴ The first, securitization, meant the beginning of a new era of warfare, where “(...) the information network and military units are viewed as radically relational.”⁵ The other was criminalization, which gave form to another form of biopolitical control, through disciplinary practices.

In the Twenty-first century,

the project of securitizing, to steal but refashion a term coined elsewhere, is concerned with making life accessible to different social technologies: where technology refers broadly to complex techniques and relations of power established in the course of conceiving government as the administration and ordering of life rather than the politics of free peoples.⁶

A future outlook of border policy could encompass many trajectories, from the most integrationist like the idea of one fortress North America, to the most unilateral like a fortress America. Policy makers are presented with several alternatives that include terminating the operations launched since 1993, or expand the barricade along the 2000 mile borderline. In this day and age, a balanced, comprehensive policy should be grounded on incremental steps towards the securitization of borders like the Smart Borders initiative. Smart Borders, however, should be revised and expanded in terms of the inclusion of a social or a human development approach.

³ Lorey. *The U.S.-Mexican Border in the Twentieth Century*. 165.

⁴ Jenny Edkins. “Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11.” (University of Wales, Aberystwyth. u/a), 243.

⁵ Edkins. “Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11.” 250.

⁶ Michael Dillon and Julian Reid. “Global Liberal Governance: Biopolitics, Security and War.” 11-12.

Comprehensiveness can be achieved if governments build on what already exists; if they expand joint training and information sharing systems; if they revise the infrastructure, assess its capacity to deal with more people, plan for the future, outline contingency plans and coordinate, first, domestic enforcement agencies, and then, cross-border ones. They will be able to work together if they develop protocols for joint action, appropriate funding to optimally execute the programs, and if they are transparent. Immigration control can work if they focus more on employer sanctions than on border enforcement, if they regularize the migratory situation of the millions of undocumented, and legalize the current flows by increasing the number of visas,⁷ moreover if they are able to agree on a temporary guest worker program. In other words, if there is a regime on which to rely on.

⁷ Today, approximately 100 000 visas are issued yearly for temporary low skilled jobs, and only 10, 000 for permanent residency.