Trans-border Security Cooperation and Migrant Control at the US-Mexico Borders

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Abstract: The US-Mexico border stands as a critical nexus of transnational challenges, where security concerns intertwine with migratory flows, presenting complex policy dilemmas. This study delves into the necessity of transborder security cooperation for efficient migrant control at the US-Mexico border. Amidst heightened border securitization efforts, traditional approaches have often failed to address the multifaceted nature of migration dynamics. It critiques unilateral enforcement strategies, advocating for a comprehensive framework integrating security measures with humanitarian considerations. This proposed multidimensional approach emphasizes bilateral collaboration, intelligence-sharing, joint law enforcement, and the implementation of human rights-based policies. Moreover, it underscores the role of technology and innovation in border management, with responsible deployment crucial to preventing potential abuses. Through the lens of the Migrant Control Framework, documentary method and content analysis, historical trends, policy responses, and contemporary challenges are examined. By transcending traditional security paradigms, embracing inclusivity, and prioritizing collaboration, policymakers can effectively address security concerns while upholding humanitarian values and respecting migrants' rights.

Keywords: Trans-border Security Cooperation, Transnational Crime, US-Mexico Borders, Migrant Control, Border Security Policies, and Cross-Border Movement.

Introduction

The US-Mexico border, spanning nearly 2,000 miles, stands as one of the most significant international boundaries, posing intricate challenges regarding trans-border security cooperation and migrant control. This border region has witnessed a complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors that have shaped migration patterns, security dynamics, and policy responses over the years (De León, 2015; Abrajano, Marisa, & Zoltan, 2015). The US-Mexico border represents a dynamic and complex junction where security imperatives intersect with the challenges of migration management. As one of the most heavily traversed borders globally, it serves as a focal point for discussions on trans-border security cooperation and migrant control. The evolution of policies and strategies aimed at managing this border reflects the intricate interplay between national security interests, socio-economic dynamics, and humanitarian concerns.

Several studies have extensively analyzed the historical evolution of US-Mexico border security and migration. For instance, Cornelius (2001) highlights how historical processes, including economic integration, labour demand, and geopolitical shifts, have influenced patterns of migration and border enforcement strategies. Additionally, Massey et al. (2002) underscore the role of push and pull factors, such as poverty, violence, and job opportunities, in driving migration flows across the border. The need for comprehensive approaches that go beyond

mere enforcement measures with regards to the multifaceted nature of border security and migrant control is crucial. According to Andreas and Nadelmann (2006), traditional border security paradigms have often been characterized by a narrow focus on deterrence and interdiction, overlooking the underlying drivers of migration and the human rights implications of enforcement actions. Moreover, studies by De León (2015) highlight how historical and socio-political factors shape migration patterns and impact border security dynamics.

The post-9/11 era marked a significant turning point in US border security policies, with a heightened emphasis on securitization and counterterrorism efforts (Jones & Johnson, 2014). This shift led to the expansion of border enforcement initiatives, including the deployment of additional personnel, the construction of physical barriers, and the implementation of advanced surveillance technologies. However, the securitization of the US-Mexico border has also been accompanied by unintended consequences and human rights concerns. Heyman (2017) has documented instances of increased migrant deaths, family separations, and violations of asylum seekers' rights resulting from stringent border control measures.

Transnational security threats, globalization of the economy, and changing geopolitical environments have all impacted the conversation in recent years about border security

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between the United States and Mexico. There have been requests for increased cooperation between the United States and Mexico due to the growth of transnational criminal groups that are involved in people smuggling, drug trafficking, organized crime, and other illicit activities (Dudley, 2012; Muggah, 2013). These illegal networks create difficulties for law enforcement organizations on both sides of the border by engaging in cross-border operations and taking advantage of weaknesses in border security infrastructure. Furthermore, the increase in irregular migration flows brought about by the political unrest, poverty, and violence in Central America has highlighted the shortcomings of unilateral enforcement tactics in resolving complex migratory issues (Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2015).

Amidst these dynamics, scholarly inquiry has increasingly focused on the potential of trans-border security cooperation frameworks to foster more effective migrant control strategies. By examining historical precedents, policy initiatives, and empirical data, researchers seek to identify best practices and policy recommendations for enhancing collaboration between the United States and Mexico while addressing security concerns and safeguarding human rights. In response to these challenges, there have been calls for enhanced trans-border security cooperation between the United States and Mexico. Shirk (2016) argues that bilateral collaboration is essential for addressing shared security threats, promoting economic development, and fostering regional stability.

Overall, the US-Mexico border region represents a complex and dynamic space where migration, security, and socio-economic factors intersect. This study aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in managing one of the world's most dynamic border regions. A critical consideration of these dynamics is crucial for developing effective policies and strategies that balance security imperatives with respect for human rights and international obligations.

Border Security Policies, Migration Patterns, and Migrant Experiences at the US-Mexico Border

The US-Mexico border has been a site of significant migration flows and encounters, spanning approximately 2,000 miles, and presents unique challenges for the enforcement of border security policies. This diverse and dynamic region witnesses a continuous flow of undocumented migrants attempting to cross in search of economic opportunities, asylum, or family reunification. Understanding the factors driving migration patterns and the experiences of migrants is crucial for informed policy-making. This review examines the dynamic interplay between border security policies, migration patterns, and the experiences of migrants at the US-Mexico border.

Border Security Policies:

Border security policies at the US-Mexico border have evolved over time in response to domestic political considerations and international security concerns. These policies encompass a range of measures, including increased border patrols, the construction of physical barriers, and the use of advanced surveillance technology. Their primary objective is to deter unauthorized border crossings and address transnational crime threats. Andreas provides an in-depth analysis of the evolution of border security policies, emphasizing their role in shaping the border's security environment. He highlights the political considerations that drive policy changes (Andreas, 2000).

Meyer and Leora (2016) emphasized that these policies have undergone significant changes over the past few decades, resulting in a shift towards securitization and a militarized approach to border control. They argue that border enforcement is driven by political rhetoric and public perception, which has influenced the growth of border security infrastructure and the implementation of various deterrent strategies. Likewise, De Genova and Peutz (2010) highlight how border security measures have led to the intensified criminalization and prevention of undocumented migration. They argue that border control policies not only fail to deter migration but also increase the risks faced by migrants, making their journey more dangerous and increasing their reliance on smugglers.

In his analysis of the development of border security laws, Silvestein (2017) examines the effects of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the Secure Fence Act of 2006, and other later legislation. It looks at the difficulties border enforcement organizations confront, such as a lack of resources, outdated technology, and poor interagency collaboration. Barnett-Johnson & Rhodes (2018) provide a thorough summary of the several border security measures, such as physical barriers, surveillance tools, and patrol activities. It illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of border security measures by analyzing the consequences and efficacy of these policies.

Hanson (2017) makes the following argument regarding the enhanced security infrastructure and border patrol at the US-Mexico border: border security policies have prioritized building physical barriers, augmenting the number of border patrol agents, and improving surveillance technologies. The success of these restrictions, which have been implemented to discourage unlawful border crossings, is still up for debate. According to Massey et al. (2002), border security tactics have changed from a typical "prevention-through-deterrence" strategy to one that is more focused on enforcement. This strategy places more emphasis on criminalizing and strictly enforcing illegal immigration, which will increase the number of people detained and deported from the border.

Migration Patterns and Experiences of Migrants

Migration at the US-Mexico border is characterized by its diversity. It encompasses economic migrants seeking opportunities, individuals seeking asylum or refuge from violence and persecution, and family members aiming to reunify. These patterns of migration are influenced by a multitude of factors, including economic disparities, political instability, and the presence of international agreements. Cornelius and Salehyan's research investigates the impact of border enforcement on patterns of Mexican migration. Their findings shed light on the complex relationship between border security measures and migration (Cornelius & Salehyan (2007).

Massey et al. (2002) analyze the historic and contemporary patterns of Mexican migration, focusing on the push-pull factors driving individuals to cross the US-Mexico border. It sheds light on the economic, social, and cultural aspects shaping migration flows, addressing topics such as labour markets, remittances, and globalization. Speaking on the driving force of migration patterns, Cornelius (2001) emphasizes the importance of understanding the underlying push and pull factors driving migration. Factors like economic opportunities, violence, and political instability in countries of origin propel individuals to undertake the arduous journey across the border, seeking better lives. U.S. economic

demand and family reunification pull migrants to the United States. Warren and Kandel (2018) explore the correlation between demographic characteristics, criminal involvement, and migration at the US-Mexico border. It highlights the complex relationship between these factors and their impact on migration patterns, offering insights into the dynamics of border crossings.

The border region between the US and Mexico is home to a variety of migratory patterns that have changed over time. The shifting character of migratory flows is clarified by Massey et al. (2016), who highlight the sharp drop in Mexican immigration to the US since the early 2000s. They blame this reduction on a number of things, such as tighter border controls, shifting economic conditions, and changes in Mexico's population. Moreover, they contend that an increase in undocumented immigration from Central American nations is a result of the border's changing demographics. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2011) contends, however, that family and community networks continue to enable circular movement patterns that continue to shape the US-Mexico border. She highlights the fact that migrants, especially those from Mexico, routinely migrate both seasonally and permanently, crossing the border several times. Seasonal labour movement patterns mainly for agricultural work are highlighted by Hanson (2007). The complicated character of migration patterns is shown by the fact that temporary movement frequently results in cyclical migration, in which migrants return to their home countries after earning a living.

The experiences of migrants along the border between the United States and Mexico are multifaceted and frequently shaped by factors like their gender, immigration status, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Menjívar and Abrego (2012) examine how immigration status affects people's experiences and contend that people without documentation endure a variety of difficulties, including discrimination, exploitation, and restricted access to essential services like healthcare and education. Additionally, they draw attention to how vulnerable women migrants are, as they are more likely to experience abuse and violence. Moreover, Chavez (2013) and De León (2015) reveal the harsh realities faced by migrants during their journey through the border region, including encounters with border patrol agents, physical and psychological hardships, and the perils of crossing treacherous terrains. These experiences shed light on the human rights concerns associated with border enforcement policies.

Migrants at the US-Mexico border face a wide array of experiences that are directly shaped by border security policies. Stricter security measures have deterred unauthorized crossings but have also led to shifts in migration routes, increased reliance on human smuggling networks, and exposure to humanitarian challenges. De León's work offers a harrowing account of the experiences of migrants who traverse the border, highlighting the risks and vulnerabilities they encounter. It underscores the life-threatening challenges associated with stricter security policies (De León, 2015). Donato (2008) examines the effect of heightened border enforcement on migrants' human rights. Stricter policies have led to an increase in migrant deaths, along with human rights abuses, including cases of mistreatment and violence by border enforcement authorities.

The experiences of migrants in the US at different phases of the migration process are examined by Lindquist (2012), including their reasons for migrating, difficulties assimilating, and interactions with the border enforcement apparatus. It highlights

how crucial it is to comprehend the rights of migrants and evaluate the policies that impact their lives. Martinez-Schuldt (2018) focuses on the conditions and outcomes of detention at the US-Mexico border by examining the experiences of migrants who are in detention. It offers a critical examination of the enforcement procedures and guidelines used by the US government, illuminating the difficulties encountered by migrants throughout their detention and deportation procedures. The experiences of migrants in border detention facilities are examined by García (2010). Overcrowding, poor legal counsel, and restricted access to healthcare are common problems for migrants. Migrants' mental and physical health may suffer as a result of their detention circumstances and length.

The perils of unauthorized border crossing are at an alarming stage and are continuously increasing at the US-Mexico border. Cornelius (2001) sheds light on the risks faced by migrants during unauthorized border crossings, including physical dangers, exploitation by human smugglers, and exposure to harsh environmental conditions. These risky journeys contribute to significant human suffering and the loss of lives. Varsanyi (2013) provides a critical human perspective on border security and its impact on migrants. It explores the humanitarian challenges and ethical considerations associated with these policies.

In summary, the US-Mexico border represents a complex landscape where border security policies, patterns of migration, and the experiences of migrants intersect. It demonstrates the impact of evolving border security measures, changing migration patterns, and the challenges faced by migrants. Changes in security policies have led to both intended and unintended consequences, affecting the decisions and well-being of migrants. Understanding these dynamics requires a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on research from sociology, political science, and geography, among other fields, to capture the complexity of the US-Mexico border region.

Conclusively, this review of border security policies, migration patterns, and the experiences of migrants at the US-Mexico border underscores the complexities involved in understanding and managing migration flows in this region. Understanding the multifaceted factors involved in migration can inform the development of comprehensive and effective border policies that balance security concerns with human rights considerations. It highlights the need for trans-border security cooperation and comprehensive approaches that consider push and pull factors, human rights considerations, and the experiences of migrants themselves. By drawing on scholarly works, this review contributes to understanding the complex dynamics and issues surrounding the US-Mexico border. Further research, along with evidence-based policy-making, is crucial to fostering a more humane and effective border management strategy.

Methodology

The study employed the Migrant Control Framework to analyze the various components of migrant control strategies at the US-Mexico border. This framework typically encompasses aspects such as border enforcement policies, immigration laws, detention and deportation practices, as well as the socio-economic, political, and cultural factors influencing migration patterns. An ex-post facto design was used to analyze border security policies, the impacts of migration, and the experiences of migrants at the US-Mexico border before, during, and after such policies. The study

examines trans-border security cooperation and migrant control at the US-Mexico border using the documentary method. The documentary method includes policy documents and government reports from government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Mexican Secretariat of the Interior (SEGOB), the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), and the Merida Initiative to identify specific initiatives and agreements aimed at enhancing security cooperation along the border and to understand the official stance on border security cooperation and migrant control.

Others are academic literature and media sources such as news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials from major media outlets covering issues related to border security and migration. It enables researchers to examine the evolution of border security policies, bilateral agreements between the US and Mexico, law enforcement strategies, as well as public discourse and media representations of border security issues. Document analysis provided valuable insights into the historical context, policy frameworks, and discursive formations shaping border security practices and migrant control efforts.

Content and textual analyses were adopted to identify trends, themes, and patterns of migrant control and border security policies at US-Mexico borders. This involves using various types of textual and visual data, including government speeches, media coverage, policy documents, academic research, and public statements by relevant stakeholders. By examining the language, framing, narratives, and discourses surrounding border security and migration, content analysis has elucidated dominant ideologies, power dynamics, and discursive constructions that shape public perceptions and policy responses to migration issues at US-Mexico borders. These methodological tools have systematically examined policy dynamics, historical trends, discursive formations, and socio-political contexts shaping border security practices and migration governance.

Migrant Control Framework and the US-Mexico Border Security Policies

The Migrant Control Framework is a theoretical perspective that provides a structured approach to understanding and analyzing the mechanisms, policies, and practices aimed at controlling migrant populations, their historical context, and their contemporary implications. Developed by scholars such as Nicholas De Genova and Stephen Castles, among others, this framework offers insights into the complex dynamics of migration control, encompassing both state and non-state actors, legal and extralegal mechanisms, and the interplay of power relations and social forces (De Genova, 2002; Castles, 2014). De Genova (2002) extensively elaborates on the concept of migrant control, emphasizing the centrality of deportation as a key mechanism of control, while Castles (2014) contributed to the understanding of migration control within the broader context of globalization, governance, and mobility regimes.

This framework operates on several major assumptions. Firstly, it highlights control through mobility, emphasizing the regulation and restriction of migrants' movements at borders and within receiving countries (Castles, 2014; De Genova, 2002). Secondly, it underscores asymmetrical power relations inherent in migration control, where states exercise authority over migrants

through legal frameworks, enforcement agencies, and border technologies. Thirdly, it acknowledges the social construction of migrant "illegality" and the role of discourses, policies, and practices in perpetuating marginalization among undocumented migrants (Coutin, 2007). Finally, it recognizes the involvement of non-state actors, such as employers and civil society organizations, in shaping migration control processes.

US-Mexico border security policies are often informed by theories of securitization, which view migration as a security threat. Massey et al. (2002) examine the historical roots of border militarization and its implications for migration governance. Historical trends in US-Mexico border security policies reveal a pattern of increasing securitization and militarization. The Bracero Program and Operation Gatekeeper are examples of initiatives aimed at controlling migrant flows through enforcement and surveillance (Coleman, 2011). Mexico's approach to migrant control has evolved in response to US pressure and domestic socio-political dynamics. Andreas & Nadelmann (2006) explore Mexico's role in managing migration flows and its cooperation with the US.

Contemporary US-Mexico border security policies, including physical barriers, increased border patrol presence, and immigration enforcement initiatives, have led to humanitarian crises and human rights abuses. While De León (2015) examines the deadly consequences of border enforcement policies, there is a need for a shift towards more humane and rights-based approaches to migrant control and border security. Heyman (2017) proposes alternative policies that prioritize human rights, provide legal pathways for migration, and address the root causes of migration.

The Migrant Control Framework to the study of trans-border security cooperation and migrant control at the US-Mexico borders offers a comprehensive lens through which to analyze the mechanisms and practices of migrant control at the US-Mexico borders, including border enforcement policies, detention and deportation practices, and the role of non-state actors (De Genova & Peutz, 2010). It offers a theoretical framework for comprehending the intricacies of bilateral agreements, intelligence-sharing programs, and cooperative enforcement efforts meant to manage migrant flows and fight transnational crime in the context of trans-border security cooperation between the United States and Mexico (Coleman, 2011). As a result, studying border security and migrant control policies between the US and Mexico necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates theoretical frameworks, historical analysis, and empirical research to fully grasp the ramifications of these policies for both migrants and society at large.

The Migrant Control Framework, championed by scholars like Nicholas De Genova and Stephen Castles, offers a theoretical lens for understanding migration control dynamics, while US-Mexico border security policies encompass a range of enforcement measures and bilateral agreements aimed at managing border security and migration flows. The table below presents a comparative analysis of the Migrant Control Framework and US-Mexico border security policies, considering chronological trends, policy responses, contemporary implications, and areas of cooperation between both countries.

Table 1: Migrant Control Framework and Border Security Outcome

Aspect	Migrant Control Framework	Border Security Outcome
Proponents	Nicholas De Genova and Stephen Castles (De Genova, 2002; Castles, 2014)	Government agencies, policymakers, border enforcement agencies
Major Assumptions	Control through mobility, power dynamics, social construction of "illegality", involvement of non-state actors (De Genova, 2002; Coutin, 2007)	Border enforcement, deterrence, surveillance, legal frameworks
Chronological Trends	Emphasis on deportation as a key mechanism of control, social construction of migrant "illegality" (De Genova, 2002)	Border enforcement efforts dating back to the early 20th century, Bracero Program, Operation Gatekeeper (Coleman, 2011)
Policy Responses	Calls for regularization, protection of migrant rights, critique of deportation practices (De Genova, 2002; De Genova & Peutz, 2010)	Construction of physical barriers, increased border patrol presence, implementation of immigration enforcement initiatives (Coleman, 2011)
Contemporary Implications	Increased securitization, militarization of borders, rise in migrant deaths and human rights abuses, criminalization of migration (De Genova, 2002; De Genova & Peutz, 2010)	Escalating migrant flows, humanitarian crises, family separations, legal challenges to immigration policies (Coleman, 2011)
Areas of Cooperation	Bilateral agreements, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, joint law enforcement operations, investment in socio-economic development in migrant-sending regions (Shirk, 2016)	Cross-border collaboration on intelligence sharing, joint efforts to combat transnational crime, cooperation on migration management and humanitarian assistance (Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2015)

Sources: Author's compilation from various independent sources

Table 1 juxtaposes theoretical insights from the Migrant Control Framework with practical manifestations of US-Mexico border security policies. It reveals the divergent perspectives and approaches to migration control, highlighting historical trends, policy responses, contemporary challenges, and areas of cooperation between both countries, and how theoretical frameworks inform policy responses and actions on the ground. While the Migrant Control Framework emphasizes the social construction of migrant "illegality" and the role of power dynamics, US-Mexico border security policies focus on enforcement measures, deterrence strategies, and legal frameworks. Despite these differences, both perspectives recognize the complex challenges and humanitarian implications of border security and migration management, suggesting areas of cooperation such as intelligence-sharing mechanisms and joint law enforcement operations.

The Trans-border Security Cooperation and Migrant Control at the US-Mexico Borders

Examining a complex network of agreements, regulations, and practices impacted by social, political, economic, and historical elements is necessary for trans-border security cooperation and migration control at the US-Mexico borders. To fully comprehend the dynamics of border security and migration control, one must have a solid understanding of the historical context. Colonialism, territorial expansion, and economic reasons have impacted cross-border contacts and migratory movements along the US-Mexico border for a long time. For instance, the boundary was established and migratory patterns were impacted by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and later accords (Cornelius, 2005).

Laws pertaining to immigration, enforcement tactics, and bilateral agreements are among the policies that affect border security and migration. Security problems have been addressed while advancing economic growth through initiatives like the Mérida Initiative and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Andreas, 2000). Law enforcement activities, physical obstacles, and monitoring technologies are only a few of the tactics used in border enforcement methods. Researchers have looked at these tactics' effectiveness and effects on border communities, human rights, and migratory flows (Massey & Karen 2012).

Shirk (2011) opines that trans-border cooperation involves collaboration between the US and Mexico on security issues, intelligence sharing, and joint operations. Initiatives like the Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BEST) aim to enhance coordination between law enforcement agencies from both countries. Critical perspectives emphasize the importance of respecting migrant rights and addressing humanitarian concerns in border enforcement policies. Heyman (2001) has highlighted the impacts of enforcement measures on vulnerable populations, such as asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors. Public attitudes and political discourse shape policy debates on border security and migration control. Abrajano & Zoltan (2015) examine how media representations, political rhetoric, and public opinion influence policy outcomes and perceptions of border security.

The table below provides a structured analysis of trans-border security cooperation for efficient migrant control at the US-Mexico border, covering various aspects including bilateral collaboration, intelligence-sharing, joint law enforcement, technology and innovation, historical trends, policy responses, and contemporary challenges.

Table 2: The trans-border security cooperation for efficient migrant control at the US-Mexico border

Aspect	Key Points	Sources
Bilateral Collaboration	Essential for effective border management and migrant control. -Involves cooperation agreements and joint initiatives between the US and Mexico.	Andreas, (2000)
Intelligence-Sharing	Facilitates timely exchange of information on migrant smuggling networks, trafficking routes, and security threats. -Enhances border security efforts by improving situational awareness.	Shirk, (2011)
Joint Law Enforcement	-Enables coordinated efforts to apprehend smugglers, prevent illegal border crossings, and dismantle criminal organizations. -Enhances effectiveness of border security operations.	Heyman, (2001)
Role of Technology and Innovation	-Deployment of surveillance drones, remote sensing systems, and biometric identification tools. - Enhances border monitoring and immigration processes. - Improves efficiency and effectiveness of border management.	Walters, (2014)
Historical Trends	-Evolution of border security measures over time, reflecting changing migration patterns and policy responses. -Past agreements and initiatives shaping cooperation between the US and Mexico.	Cornelius, (2005)
Policy Responses	-Varied approaches to border security challenges, influenced by political priorities and enforcement strategies. -Bilateral agreements like the Mérida Initiative aimed at addressing shared security concerns.	Abrajano & Zoltan, (2015)
Contemporary Challenges	-Adapting to changing migration patterns and addressing humanitarian concerns. -Countering emerging threats such as drug trafficking and organized crime.	Jones-Correa, (1998)

Sources: Author's compilation from independent sources

Table 2 shows that trans-border security cooperation for efficient migrant control at the US-Mexico border requires a multifaceted approach encompassing bilateral collaboration, intelligence-sharing, joint law enforcement, and the integration of technology and innovation. Scholarly research provides valuable insights into historical trends, policy responses, and contemporary challenges, informing efforts to develop comprehensive and sustainable border security strategies.

Furthermore, trans-border security cooperation and migrant control at the US-Mexico borders require consideration of historical, policy, enforcement, humanitarian, and socio-political dimensions. The table below offers valuable insights into the complexities of this issue and informs debates on effective and humane border governance.

Table 3: US-Mexico Border Security Cooperation and its Complexities

Aspect	Key Points	Sources
Trans-Border Cooperation	-Initiatives like the Mérida Initiative -Joint Task Forces for coordination on security -Intelligence sharing -Law enforcement operations -Addressing common security threats	(Andreas, 2013; Jones-Correa, 1998; Shirk, 2011)
Border Infrastructure	-Deployment of physical barriers, surveillance technologies, and infrastructure -Examples: border walls, remote sensing systems	(Walters, 2014)
Historical Context	-Legacy of colonialism, geopolitical dynamics and territorial disputes -Impact of past migration patterns on contemporary border dynamics -Evolution of border policies over time -Historical treaties and agreements shaping border relations between the US and Mexico	(Cornelius, 2005; De León, 2015)
Political Dynamics	-Bilateral agreements -Domestic political agendas and policy priorities shaping border security and immigration -Diplomatic relations between the US and Mexico -Influence of political debates and national security concerns. -Immigration reform	(Andreas, 2000; Shirk, 2011; Abrajano & Zoltan, 2015)
Economic Considerations	-Labour demands in the US influencing migration patterns -Economic disparities between the two countries -Impact on migration patterns -Economic incentives and opportunities driving migration flows	(Massey & Karen, 2012; Hanson, 2007)
Social Factors	-Cultural ties -Community dynamics	(Heyman, 2001; Abrajano & Zoltan,

	-Human rights concerns and societal perception	2015)
Humanitarian Concerns	-Risks faced by migrants, treatment of asylum seekers	(Heyman, 2001)
Enforcement Strategies	-Increased patrols, interdiction operations, prosecution of unauthorized border crossers	(Massey & Karen, 2012)
Policy Frameworks	-Immigration laws and bilateral agreements -Examples: Operation Gatekeeper, Operation Hold the Line	(Andreas, 2000)

Sources: Author's compilation from various independent sources

This tabular presentation (table 3) underscores the interconnectedness of historical, political, economic, social, and humanitarian factors in shaping US-Mexico border security cooperation and migrant control strategies and policies. Each factor influences the development and implementation of policies aimed at managing migration flows and ensuring border security and sustainable border governance mechanisms.

Changes in Border Security Policies and Migration Patterns and Experiences

The US-Mexico border has long been a site of complex interactions between policy, migration patterns, and the experiences of migrants. The changes in border security policies have had a significant impact on patterns of migration and the experiences of migrants. These policy changes have influenced the decision-making of migrants, the methods of crossing the border, and the challenges they face. This analysis draws from existing policies and measures to provide insights into the effects of these policy changes, including border security policies, migratory patterns, and the challenges faced by migrants. For a robust and in-depth understanding of this issue, here are several ways in which border security policies impact migrants at US-Mexico borders.

Deterrence Policies and Unauthorized Crossings: US border security policies have undergone significant transformations over the years. The creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003 marked a paradigm shift, with a renewed focus on border control and enforcement. Scholars have analyzed the implementation of policies such as the Secure Fence Act (2006) and Operation Streamline (2005) to highlight the impacts of militarization and increased law enforcement presence along the border (Andreas, 2009). The US-Mexico border has been undergoing significant changes in terms of border security policies over the years. One key policy is the implementation of physical barriers, such as fences and walls, aimed at deterring unauthorized crossings and drug trafficking. Hagan and Palloni (1999) found that increased border enforcement results in a decrease in unauthorized migration.

Stricter border security measures, often implemented as deterrence policies, have had a substantial impact on unauthorized border crossings. These measures include increased border patrols, the construction of barriers, and the use of surveillance technology, and they have deterred migrants from attempting unauthorized border crossings. This has led some to choose alternative routes or methods, affecting migration patterns. Massey et al. (2016) demonstrate that increased border enforcement, particularly in the form of deterrence policies, has led to a significant decrease in the likelihood of Mexican migrants making unauthorized crossings. This reflects the direct impact of border security policies on migration patterns.

Shifts in Migration Routes: As border security is fortified in one area, migrants may adapt by shifting their routes to find areas with perceived weaker security or where enforcement measures are less concentrated. Such shifts can change migration patterns. Changes in border security policies have prompted migrants to adapt by shifting their migration routes, seeking areas perceived to have weaker security or less concentrated enforcement measures. Martínez's work on indigenous Oaxacans shows that migration routes can be highly flexible in response to security changes. Migrants may choose different crossing points or routes in response to security policies, affecting the geography of migration flows (Martínez, 2019).

Understanding the migratory patterns at the US-Mexico border requires considering push and pull factors. Research has identified factors such as economic disparities, violence, and political instability in countries like Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala as driving factors for migration (Massey et al., 2016). Economic opportunities, family reunification, and the pursuit of the "American Dream" in the US act as pull factors. Migrants at the US-Mexico border often face challenging experiences due to both border enforcement measures and the dangerous migration journey itself. De León (2015) explores the perilous encounters migrants have with the Sonoran Desert when crossing into the United States and the various ways they adapt and survive in this hostile environment. Furthermore, Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2005) explore the social and economic implications of border enforcement on Mexican migrants living along the US-Mexico border, particularly focusing on discrimination, labour market experiences, and social support networks.

Increased Human Smuggling and Trafficking: Stricter border security has driven some migrants to rely on human smugglers and traffickers, leading to exploitative and dangerous experiences. Anderson (2014) highlights the risks and vulnerabilities that migrants face when they resort to human smuggling networks, often driven by stricter border security. Changes in policy can exacerbate the reliance on these illicit networks, exposing migrants to exploitation. Migrants, particularly women and children, face increased risks of exploitation and violence during their journey and while being held at detention facilities (Garcia, 2016).

Humanitarian Challenges and Response: Some migrants have taken more dangerous routes over difficult terrain as a result of the strengthening of border security measures, putting them in danger of severe weather and other humanitarian issues. It is concerning how border security tactics affect the distribution of migrant fatalities. Tighter regulations have made migrants choose riskier routes through isolated regions, increasing the likelihood of fatalities and humanitarian emergencies (Leutert, 2019). Hanson et al. (2017) reveals a decrease in Mexican immigration to the US, while Central American migration has increased. This shift reflects changing economic conditions, violence, and humanitarian crises in Central American countries. The experiences of migrants at the US-Mexico border have been marked by various vulnerabilities. Humanitarian issues arise due to hazardous border crossing conditions, exposure to violence, and psychological trauma (García

Hernández, 2019). Caballero-Novelo et al. (2019) has highlighted the risks faced by women, children, and LGBTQ+ individuals during migration journeys.

On the part of humanitarian response, studies have examined the role of humanitarian aid organizations and advocacy groups in mitigating the challenges faced by migrants. Such efforts range from providing medical assistance, legal support, and shelter to raising awareness about the human rights violations occurring at the border (Fernandes, 2019). Stricter border security may prompt responses from humanitarian organizations and advocacy groups, which can influence the experiences of migrants by providing assistance, legal representation, and support.

Policy Impact on Decision-Making: Changes in border security policies directly influence migrants' decision-making processes as they weigh the perceived costs and benefits associated with migration. Zong and Batalova's research emphasizes how policy changes, including those related to border security, impact the decision-making of Mexican immigrants. They evaluate factors that influence the choices migrants make regarding their migration journey (Zong & Batalova, 2020).

Family Separation and Human Rights Considerations: Scholars have also examined the impacts of US border security policies on human rights. For instance, the practice of "metering" at ports of entry, where asylum seekers are compelled to wait in Mexico for extended periods, has been criticized for violating the principle of non-refoulement (Bodeau-Livinec et al., 2021). Stuesse (2016) has scrutinized the consequences of these policies, such as family separations and the detention of migrants, on individuals' rights to seek asylum and access to due process. Changes in border security policies, such as "zero tolerance" policies, can lead to family separations when individuals are detained or deported. These experiences have profound emotional and psychological impacts on migrants. Over time, different trends have been seen in the migration movement across the US-Mexico border. The transition from circular movement to permanent migration is highlighted by Massey et al. (2002). Reports of human rights abuses, including excessive use of force, inadequate medical care, and family separations, have emerged, challenging the treatment of migrants at the border (Amnesty International, 2020). They argue that increasing border enforcement through the 1990s led to families being divided between the two countries as migrants opted to stay in the US rather than risk repeated border crossings.

Legal Pathways and Border Wait Times: Border security policies can impact the accessibility and viability of legal pathways for migration, including asylum processes. Changes in these policies can influence migrants' experiences and outcomes. Increased security can lead to longer wait times at official border crossings for legal entry. This affects migrants who are following legal channels, impacting their experiences and the organization of their journeys. Migrants at the US-Mexico border often face dehumanizing treatment, as they are frequently portrayed as dangerous criminals or threats to national security (Chavez, 2013).

Detention and Processing: Migrants intercepted at the border may experience detention and processing procedures that vary with changing policies, affecting their conditions and treatment.

Local Community Impact: The implementation of border security measures can also affect local communities along the border, influencing the experiences of migrants based on the reception and assistance they receive.

Border security policies are dynamic, subject to changes in administration, and have wide-ranging implications for migration patterns and the experiences of migrants. It's essential to consider these policies in the broader context of immigration and asylum systems when studying their impact on migration at the US-Mexico border. In a nutshell, the changes in border security policies at the US-Mexico border have resulted in shifts in migration patterns, increased risks for migrants, and the adaptation of migrants to policy changes. These effects demonstrate the substantial impact of border security policies on the experiences and decisions of migrants. The table below provides an overview of the efficacy and multifaceted impact of changes in border security policies on migration patterns and the experiences and decisions of migrants at the US-Mexico border.

Table 4: Impacts of Border Security Policies and Migrants Decisions

Aspect of Impacts	Description	Source
Unauthorized Crossings	Stricter border security policies have led to a decrease in unauthorized border crossings as a result of increased deterrence measures.	Massey, Durand & Pren (2016).
Shifts in Migration Routes	Changes in border security policies have prompted migrants to adapt by seeking areas with perceived weaker security measures, resulting in shifts in migration routes.	Martínez (2019).
Increased Human Smuggling and Trafficking	Stricter border security has driven some migrants to rely on human smugglers and traffickers, leading to exploitative and dangerous experiences.	Anderson (2014).
Humanitarian Challenges	The fortification of border security measures has led migrants to take more perilous routes through harsh terrain, exposing them to extreme weather conditions and humanitarian challenges.	Leutert (2019).
Policy Impact on Decision-Making	Changes in border security policies directly influence migrants' decision-making processes, as they weigh perceived costs and benefits associated with migration.	Zong & Batalova (2020).

Source: Compiled by the authors from different sources

Briefly, table 4 highlights the multi-faceted impacts of border security policies on migration patterns and migrant experiences, demonstrating that changes in these policies have direct and indirect consequences on migration flows, the routes migrants take, the risks they face, and their decision-making

processes. It highlights the impacts of policies on human rights, reveals changing migration patterns, and emphasizes the vulnerabilities faced by migrants. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for the development of comprehensive and humanitarian approaches to border management and immigration policy at the US-Mexico border.

Findings and Discussion

The United States-Mexico border represents one of the most significant global migration routes, with a long history of migration patterns and evolving border security policies. This analysis delves into the border security policies implemented in recent years, explores the patterns of migration between the US and Mexico, and sheds light on the experiences of migrants at the US-Mexico border. The table below presents some specific border security policies at the US-Mexico border and their outcomes on migration patterns and migrant experiences.

Table 5: Some Specific Border Security Policies at US-Mexico Border and its Outcomes

Policies	Outcome on Migration Patterns	Outcome on Migrant Experiences	Sources
Migrant Protection Protocols of 2019 (Remain in Mexico)	Asylum-seekers returned to Mexico faced risks including violence, extortion, kidnappings, and reduced access to legal representation	Heightened insecurity and hardships faced by migrants, often leading to prolonged uncertainty and psychological distress	Human Rights First. (2019).
Heightened Border Patrol Presence post-9/11	Increased enforcement efforts led to more sophisticated smuggling networks and alternative routes, with shifts in migration flows	Harsher conditions for migrants, including instances of mistreatment and human rights abuses by smugglers and border enforcement agencies	Gomberg-Muñoz, (2011); García & Freilich (2012).
Secure Fence Act of 2006	Increased deterrence along the border and redirected migration patterns towards more treacherous and remote areas, affecting unauthorized migration patterns	Increased risks for migrants due to dangerous crossing routes such as deserts, mountains, and rivers	U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2017); Massey & Pren (2012).
Operation Gatekeeper (1994)	Funneled migration flows towards more dangerous regions, increased reliance on smuggling networks, and contributed to migrant deaths	Increased vulnerability and risks for migrants, as smuggling fees rose and border crossing became more precarious	Cornelius & Martin (1998).
Operation Hold the Line of 1993	Significant shift in border control strategies, focusing on border enforcement to deter unauthorized migration	Increased risks for migrants due to dangerous crossing routes and border crossing became more unsafe	Cornelius, (2001)
Zero-tolerance policy and family separation	Increased use of detention facilities for migrants, deterred some families from attempting to cross the border	Psychological trauma and family disruptions, affecting both children and parents at the border	Kaiser Family Foundation. (2019);

Sources: Authors compilation from different sources

Table 5 demonstrated that there have been substantial changes to US-Mexico border security policy over time, with differing effects on migratory patterns and immigrant experiences. In order to improve border security and specifically target unauthorized crossings, the Secure Fence Act of 2006 brought about the installation of physical barriers along the border (Smith, 2006). Heightened Border Patrol Presence post-9/11: Operation Gatekeeper (1994) and Operation Hold the Line (1993) represented a significant shift in border control strategies, focusing on border enforcement to deter unauthorized migration (Cornelius, 2001). Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) were implemented in 2019, and the zero-tolerance policy and family separation allow for the return of certain asylum seekers to Mexico to await their immigration court hearings, impacting the experiences and well-being of vulnerable migrants (Kerwin, 2020). Economic factors, historical context, and social networks continue to shape migration trends. However, migrants often face dehumanization, human rights abuses, and increased vulnerability during their journey and at the border. It is crucial to address these challenges while working towards more comprehensive immigration policies that uphold human dignity, respect human rights, and provide viable solutions for migrants at the US-Mexico border.

The table below presents a comparative analysis of trans-border security cooperation and Migrant Control at the US-Mexico Borders. It considers the security policies of both countries, their effects on migrants, and potential ways forward to address challenges and promote more humane migration management strategies.

Table 6: Comparison of security policies at US-Mexico borders and way forward

Aspect	Security Policies of both Countries	Effects on Migrants	Way Forward
Policy Approach	The US emphasizes deterrence, border enforcement, and immigration control (Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2015). Mexico focuses on border security, economic development, and migration management (Andreas & Nadelmann, 2006).	Increased border securitization, militarization, and surveillance disproportionately affect migrants, leading to human rights abuses, deaths, and family separations (De León, 2015).	Promote cooperation and dialogue between the US and Mexico to address shared challenges; shift towards more humanitarian and rights-based approaches to migration management (Shirk, 2016).
Bilateral Agreements	The US and Mexico have signed various agreements, including the Merida Initiative and USMCA, aimed at enhancing security cooperation and addressing transnational threats (Muggah, 2013).	Bilateral agreements often focus on law enforcement and counter-narcotics efforts, potentially leading to increased border militarization and securitization (Dudley, 2012).	Enhance bilateral cooperation on migration management; prioritize investments in economic development and social programs in migrant-sending regions (Andreas & Nadelmann, 2006).
Border Infrastructure	Both countries have implemented border infrastructure projects, including physical barriers and surveillance technologies, to enhance border security and control migration flows (Jones & Johnson, 2014).	Border infrastructure projects can impede migrants' access to asylum and increase the risks of exploitation and violence during border crossings (Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2015).	Invest in alternative border security measures that prioritize human rights, facilitate legal migration pathways, and ensure access to asylum for vulnerable populations (De León, 2015).
Enforcement Practices	US enforcement practices include detention, deportation, and family separation policies aimed at deterring irregular migration (Heyman, 2017). Mexico implements immigration enforcement measures, including deportation and detention, to manage migration flows and comply with US pressure (Massey et al., 2002).	Harsh enforcement practices contribute to the criminalization and stigmatization of migrants, exacerbating vulnerabilities and risks during migration journeys (De León, 2015).	Adopt rights-based enforcement practices that prioritize the protection and dignity of migrants, provide access to legal representation and humanitarian assistance, and promote alternatives to detention and deportation (Heyman, 2017).

Sources: Author's compilation from various independent sources

Table 6 provides a comprehensive overview of the security policies implemented by the US and Mexico at the US-Mexico Borders, their impacts on migrants, and potential pathways for addressing challenges in migration management. It underscores the need for cooperation between both countries to adopt more humane and rights-based approaches to border security and migrant control, emphasizing investment in economic development, social programs, and alternative enforcement practices that prioritize human rights and dignity.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The humanitarian issues underlying migration frequently collide with efforts to strengthen border security. Securing protection for human rights while maintaining security measures is a difficult task. To achieve equilibrium, all-encompassing immigration regulations that tackle the underlying reasons for migration and enhance border safety while maintaining human rights protection are necessary. Comprehensive policies balancing security precautions with humanitarian concerns are needed to address these complicated issues. In order to advance the general safety and wellbeing of border communities, collaborative methods involving community involvement and resilience-building programs are essential.

In conclusion, the US-Mexico border is a complex landscape where border security policies, patterns of migration, and the experiences of migrants intersect. Scholars from diverse disciplines have contributed to our understanding of this multifaceted issue. Border security policies impact the decisions and well-being of migrants, and patterns of migration reflect the interplay of economic, political, and humanitarian factors. The experiences of migrants underscore the challenges and vulnerabilities they face on their journeys. To comprehensively address these challenges, interdisciplinary research and a focus on human rights and humanitarian considerations are essential.

To promote safety, stability, human rights, and social cohesion at US-Mexico borders, we especially recommend the following:

➢ Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborations between law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities can enhance community resilience. Initiatives such as community-based policing and joint task forces promote trust, communication, and shared responsibility in addressing transnational crime.

➢ Community Empowerment: Community empowerment includes providing education, employment opportunities, and other support systems to vulnerable populations impacted by migration and crime. These initiatives aim

to reduce the susceptibility of individuals to being exploited by TCOs.

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