From Borderland to No-Man's Land: The United States, Mexico, and Their Common Border since the End of the Cold War

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"Frontiers, borderlines, and frames" are issues that have been with us for millennia, not just in literature and the arts, but in the physical world in which we all live. They and the structures that mark them have been facts of human life since the first encounter between two tribes. Derek Williams, a distinguished historian of Roman frontiers claims that "walls" are as old as the idea of property.[1] Fourteenth-century thinkers even conceived of the Garden of Eden as "cut off from the rest of the world by a great mountain or ocean barrier or fiery wall," so the concept can even be said to date back to the biblical beginning of humankind (Tuchman 60). John Milton, in *Paradise Lost* (book VI, line 860), also alluded to a celestial wall, describing a "Chrystal wall of Heav'n" (139). Even today, in a period often characterized, perhaps mistakenly, by the word "globalization," borders and walls remain a significant part of the landscape, artifacts reinforcing the dominant concept of the nation-state.

Unwanted or illegal border crossings range from microscopic to massive. Farmers in Montana who let fields go fallow allow Russian thistle, itself an immigrant plant, to reproduce, become tumbleweed, and spread to neighbors' property (see Fiege 22-47, Diamond 55-56). Humans seeking everything from freedom to conquest move en masse. Robert Frost, America's most popular poet in the first half of the twentieth century, considered both sides of the issue created by barriers to movement in "Mending Wall," one of his most famous works. This poem, best known for the observation that "Good fences make good neighbors," gives more than equal time to the opposite view, starting with:

> Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
> That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
> And spills the upper boulders in the sum;
> And makes gaps even two can pass abreast[,]

and including a warning to consider the consequences,

> Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
> What I was walling in and walling out,
> And to whom I was like to give offense.

before repeating the original observation:

> Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
> That wants it down." (48)

The borders and barriers thrown up to contain movements of plants, animals, and especially people, are everywhere in this age of the nation-state. These borders are more human than natural, more subjective than objective.

Looking north across the border from Mexico, at his powerful northern neighbor, dictator Porfirio Diaz is said to have lamented, "Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States" (qtd. in Eisenhower xv). Indeed, by the start of his long rule, from 1877 to 1911, Diaz had much to bemoan. The United States had already overwhelmed the Mexican hold on its vast north, first through traders who set up commercial outposts in Mexican territories, then by annexing Texas in 1845, and finally acquiring what became the states of New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, and part of Utah by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war with Mexico. Even after boundaries were fixed, just after the American Civil War and ten years before Diaz took power, the Americans forced a change of regime in Mexico. In 1866, American diplomatic pressure and the presence of 50,000 troops along the border forced Napoleon III to withdraw French troops, who had seized Mexico City in 1863 and installed the Austrian Archduke on a Mexican throne, violating both Mexican sovereignty and the Monroe Doctrine. Having lost French support, Maximilian was captured and executed by Mexican partisans under Benito Juarez. In those days, the border encounter involved mainly an assertive, expansive United States, spreading southward and westward and confronting a static, sedentary, and defensive post-colonial Mexico (Tuer 104).

By the time that Diaz took power, the territories of the two nations had been well established, and the boundary drawn, extending over almost 2,000 miles of challenging terrain, between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean. About 1,300 miles of the border follow the Rio Grande, and nearly 700 miles run overland from the river near El Paso, Texas, westward across the desert to the sea between San Diego, California, and Tijuana in the Mexican state of Baja California.[2] Today, in addition to being the "busiest land border in the world," it is "the longest and most dramatic meeting point between a rich and a poor country, and the site of the most intensive interaction between law enforcement and law evasion" (Andreas x). It is also a response to a primal urge. "Generally speaking," as Yi-Fu Tuan wrote in *Landscapes of Fear*, "every human-made boundary on the earth's surface—garden hedge, city wall, or radar 'fence'—is an attempt to keep inimical forces at bay. Boundaries are everywhere because threats are ubiquitous: the neighbor's dog, children with muddy shoes, strangers, the insane, alien armies, disease, wolves, wind and rain" (qtd in Nevins 151).

The line between the US and Mexico was drawn, marked, and mapped, but the region through which it went remained a "borderland." On the American side the nascent cattle industry was a legacy of Spanish and Mexican times. Territories new to the United States, especially New Mexico, were sparsely peopled mainly by Span-

ish-speaking Indians of Catholic faith. Spanish place names, architecture, and holidays remained. English and Spanish languages, religions, racial views, economies, and political systems met, adjusted, clashed, and adapted. We sometimes forget that the United States was settled from the south as well as from the east, but it is unmistakably clear. The borderland is part Mexico, part United States, and overall singular, its own place. Twenty-five years ago, Joel Garreau in his book *The Nine Nations of North America* called the borderland "MexAmerica," and included much of the US Southwest, Northern Mexico, and Baja California. More recently a Mexican diplomat in Washington, Jose Antonio Zabalgoitia, characterized the borderland as "the third country between Mexico and the United States" (Turbiville 32).

The complex situation cannot be deciphered using markers of color, language, and religion. There are after all Mexicans and Tejanos of Mexican origin, and their loyalties are not identical. In their book *A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory*, Randy Roberts and James S. Olson describe an Anglo graduate student accosting a Hispanic family touring the Alamo in 1999. The Alamo, you might recall, is the ultimate symbol of the Texan war of independence from Mexico. He questioned their visit to a place that symbolized "the rape and destruction" of their own people. The father responded "*Soy tejano* [I'm a Texan]. Mind your own goddamned business. It's my Alamo too" (319-20, italics in the original).

The clash between a fixed border and flexible borderland was clearly laid out in the 1995 film *Lone Star,* which depicts relations between generations of whites, Latinos, and blacks in fictional Rio Grande County, Texas. Chucho, the used tire dealer who lives just south of the border, tells Sheriff Sam Deeds: "Bird flying south—you think he sees the line? Rattlesnake, javelina—whatever you got—halfway across that line they don't start thinking different. So why should a man?" When the American sheriff reminds him that the Mexican government has "always been pretty happy to have that line. The question's just been where to draw it," Chucho shoots back: "My government can go fuck itself, and so can yours. I'm talking about people here." Put more politely, as historian Patricia Limerick did, the border could be seen as "a social fiction that neither nature nor people in search of opportunity observed" (251).

Borderland opportunity has always included the illicit as well as the legitimate. In what Peter Andreas calls an "informal process of clandestine economic integration" (32), cross-border smuggling started well before the war between Mexico and the US, when illicit goods were mainly southbound, from the US to Mexico, and consisted of arms and slaves, and later Confederate cotton bound for Europe. Later, this commerce started to move the other way: Mexico became a major source of alcohol during prohibition in the United States. Efforts to prevent illegal migration started in Mexico, not the US, and dated from the Mexican decree of 3 April 1830 against importation of slaves, and the first American efforts to restrict border crossings concentrated on Chinese workers coming from Mexico in the 1880s. By that time, the US was becoming the developed, stationary side, and a poor Mexico was becoming mobile, moving, migrating (see Ettinger 159-81, Tuer 104).

Today illegal borderland interactions, are dominated by smuggling of drugs and humans to the north, and involve desperation, corruption, militarization, fear of terrorists, domestic politics and more. It is complex, tragic, and sometimes even hilarious. For example, the Atlanta Constitution newspaper reported in 2005 that a new theme park near Mexico City enabled potential emigrants to the US to "test their survival skills at an obstacle course that replicates the rigors migrants must endure while sneaking across the border," for an admission price of about $13.50.[3] Criminal activity illuminates the problems, difficulties, and opportunities posed by a border shared by two nations of greatly different levels of prosperity, not unlike the various shorter stress points along the periphery of the European Union, at the Spanish enclaves in North West Africa and the land borders with Ukraine and Romania. And efforts to restrict or block immigration raise questions about globalization, about what gets globalized and what does not.

Current narcotic trafficking along the border with Mexico actually started in the Caribbean during the waning days of the Cold War. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan labeled the drug traffic a threat to national security, and the United States focused on Latin American exporters of drugs into the Southeastern part of the country, especially Florida. Increased US pressure reduced sea and air smuggling by way of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, and provided Mexican *narcotraficantes* the economic incentive to develop and organize sophisticated distribution systems across the land border with the US (Dunn 2-3, 25). In 1988, still before the breaching of the Berlin wall, Congress debated the possibility of requiring the armed forces to seal the border with Mexico against drug traffic and formally required the Department of Defense to become involved in detecting and monitoring the shipment of illegal drugs and to support law enforcement agencies in interdiction.[4]

At the same time that the cross-border drug trade from Mexico received its major boost from successful interdiction to the east, the number of people crossing into the US also drew unintended momentum from the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which gave legal status to about two million former illegal immigrants and thus created the base for relatives and friends to follow. This law helped set the stage for the intense reaction of the early 1990s, when the border became the focus of concern, discussion, and outrage (see Andreas 38-99).

The phenomenon was not new. First undocumented Chinese, then Europeans, and now Mexicans and other Spanish-speaking people had been entering the country seeking work for at least a century (see Ettinger 159-84). Between 1942 and 1962, many thousands of Mexican workers entered legally under the so-called *bracero* program—a scheme that provided more than 4.5 million individual contracts for temporary employment, assuring cheap labor for southwestern agribusinesses, inhibiting illegal migration, and unintentionally institutionalizing large scale labor migrations from Mexico into the United States (Andreas 33).

With the increase of cross-border drug smuggling and undocumented immigration in the 1990s, policing the border became more important. As Peter Andreas observed,

"[c]rime fighting, not war fighting, increasingly defines the border priorities of many states." This is also true along the southern and eastern borders of the European Union (3). *Kisalföld,* the Győr newspaper serving a region adjacent to the border of European Union signatories of the Schengen agreement, shows the same situation on a smaller scale, with frequent reports about desperate people from Ukraine, Turkey, Palestine, Romania and other non-member states, sometimes even dressed as Hungarian border guards, trying to enter Austria at or near Hegyeshalom and find work.[5]

Soon the drug trade across the southwestern border became a multi-million-dollar business. Smaller inefficient traffickers fell by the wayside, and large efficient cartels dominated the trade. Moreover, as increased law enforcement made crossing the border harder for prospective immigrants, they turned to professional smugglers, whose enterprises also became bigger and more lucrative. Both drug and worker smuggling became bigger businesses, the sums of money involved mushroomed, and bloodshed and brutality grew apace (Maril 150).

The effort to reduce drug traffic increased reliance on the military. Joint Task Force Six was established in 1989 and was stationed in El Paso, Texas, covering the land border with Mexico for United States Forces Command, the Army Component of United States Atlantic Command. One of three such counterdrug task forces, it also involved other government agencies, among them the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Customs Service, the Border Patrol, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as state and local law enforcement organizations (US General Accounting Office 8).[6] In addition to this organization ground troops soon augmented the uniformed, armed Border Patrol in its operations.[7] National Guard soldiers from California helped search vehicles at ports of entry and built roads ("Military Doesn't Want" 19).[8] Military technology contributed to the effort, as the Border Patrol, known along the border as the *migra*, began to use footfall detectors and infrared body sensors which had first been deployed in Vietnam (Andreas 91, Cooper 126). The Department of Defense's Center for Low Intensity Conflict became involved in planning border operations (Andreas 93). To one observer, the Border Patrol was already a "military-styled bureaucracy" based on a "paramilitary model with a highly centralized, rigid management" and a "macho military rhetorical style," with the main difference being that the Patrol was more bureaucratic than the armed services (Maril 157, 160, 208, 289-90).

Overall, expanded use of the military in counterdrug operations on the border and military involvement in coordination of efforts to stem illegal immigration put the armed forces in a role resembling that of police, enforcing laws on the border, while the police, that is, the border patrol, became more like the military, thus increasing militarization from two directions (Dunn 21, 31).[9]

While the attempt to curb narcotraffic brought in the troops, the effort to cut illegal immigration resulted in a program called "prevention through deterrence." This was the brainchild of Sylvester Reyes, Border Patrol chief in El Paso, Texas, in the early 1990s. Based on the naïve assumption that the likelihood of being caught would deter illegal migrants, this multi-year strategy was designed to disrupt illegal immigration

through traditional entry places, cities like San Diego and El Paso, and force unauthorized traffic into remote areas, where crossing would be more difficult and those who attempted it would be easier to catch. Attorney General Janet Reno and Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service Doris Meissner implemented the proposal in 1994, during the first term of President Bill Clinton (Reyes, Johnson, and Swearingen v-vi). It is still the basic government approach, just with more people, newer technology, and greater publicity.[10]

The net effect was to force migrants away from highly populated areas, where they could blend into Spanish-speaking communities, to the harsh, remote and sparsely populated Arizona and New Mexico desert. This change in patterns placated voters in coastal California, infuriated others along the new routes, and led to an increase in migrant hardships and deaths. It also indirectly increased the number of border crossers who stayed in the US, because of the difficulty involved in going back. But the strategy was good political theater. It gave the impression of meaningful activity, played well among nativist groups, and brought Reyes enough attention to win him election to the House of Representatives from the 16th district of Texas (Ackleson 3). There is no proof that it reduced the overall flow of illegal immigrants (Lyon viii-ix).

Establishment of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), made up of Mexico, the US, and Canada, exacerbated the situation and focused more attention on the border. It is hard to comprehend the scale of international trade under NAFTA. In 1999 more than 4.2 million trucks crossed legally from Mexico to the US, almost half at the Tijuana-San Diego crossing (Nevins 6).[11] Considering that it only takes nine tractor-trailers full of cocaine to satisfy US demand for one year, this huge volume of traffic, coming through 39 ports of entry, creates an unimaginably huge haystack in which to search for illegal drugs (Andreas 75-81).

NAFTA requires a porous border for movement of a huge volume of trade while control of drugs and migrants demands a less permeable frontier. Through NAFTA, the United States pursues a North American economy that integrates all markets except the one for labor (Massey 23). The combination of tighter control over the cross-border flow of drugs and migrants while weakening controls over the movement of just about everything else will surely remain "a formula for policy frustration" (Andreas 151). Meanwhile, NAFTA floods Mexico with cheap American farm products, displacing farmers and workers. In the face of growing unemployment and poverty, migration to the US represents a safety valve for Mexico, as well as a major source of funds: those who leave send back an estimated $70 billion or more to their families (Sassen 1-5). Overall, the rising number of migrants combined with heightened enforcement brings better organized people-smuggling to the land border, just as drug enforcement to the east brought increased and more sophisticated drug smuggling.

The growth of smuggling into big business inevitably led to increased corruption, on both sides of the border. In 1994, there were indications that Mexican federal police were involved in the cocaine trade, protecting smugglers. On the American side, the brothers of Colonel Richard Brito, the commander of Texas National Guard troops

in counterdrug operations, were convicted as cocaine smugglers and fled the country (Golden 1, *CBS Evening News, Radio-TV Defense Dialog*). In the summer of 2006, Federal law enforcement officials expressed concern over increased corruption along the border. Two Border Patrol agents, under investigation for taking bribes to allow illegal entry into the United States, fled to Mexico (Pomfret 1). Then, in September, another pled guilty to four charges, among them selling official identification documents to immigrants and involvement in cocaine smuggling (Barnes 26).

The most recent major change, brought on by the so-called war against terror, came in the wake of the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001. The attack provided a new justification for increased spending to provide more stringent control. Now the border mix includes legal trade, legal and illegal migration, drug smuggling, and terrorism, a problem that can legitimately be considered a national security issue, "a red-white-and-blue issue," as Sheriff Rick Flores of Webb County, Arizona, put it (Hastings and Preston 10). "9/11" has brought the border and Border Patrol "from virtual obscurity into a public spotlight." It has also driven formation of groups of citizen border-watchers, most prominently the Minutemen, named after the "embattled farmers" who took up arms at the beginning of the American revolution. Along with the war on terror has come escalating rhetoric, such as that of Representative Solomon Ortiz, a Democrat from Texas, who claims that "the southern border is literally under siege, and there is a real possibility that terrorists, particularly Al Qaeda forces, could exploit this series of holes in our law enforcement system (Maril 227; Swarns 2)."

At this point, it may be appropriate to consider the story of *Benny el elefantino*, or Benny the Elephant. Benny performed in an American circus in Houston early in 2001, then appeared weeks later in a Mexico City show, under the stage name of Dumbo. Benny is interesting because there was no record of him legally crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico. He was an undocumented three-ton American. It turned out that Mexican officials got $4,500 to look the other way when Benny crossed in a trailer pulled by a utility truck. How did this happen? Like a Border Patrol agent at McAllen TX said: "Of course you can smuggle an elephant across the river. You put the thing in a truck, you drive across the bridge, and you pay off the Mexicans. How hard is that? Happens every day. You just have to know which Mexicans to bribe." Benny embarrassed officials on both sides of the border, raising an obvious question: "If a three-ton elephant named Benny could work in Houston one day and Mexico City soon after, it was reasonable to conclude that motivated international terrorists might easily make their way to Mexico and into Deep South Texas with relative impunity (Maril 140, 171, 295)."

And five years after 9/11 triggered a drive to tighten border security, not much appeared to have changed. In the summer of 2006, a federal audit tested the system, sending undercover investigators across the border with counterfeit documents at nine different Mexican and Canadian crossing points. They managed to get into the United States in all cases, including two in which they were waved across the border without even having to show their papers (Swarns 2).

Whether because of shortcomings in enforcement or because of a lack of terrorists, there have been no seizures of explosives or terrorists along the border (Swarns 2). Carmen Mercer, the 51-year-old German-born diner-owner in Tombstone, Arizona, who is vice president of the Minutemen and their chief fundraiser and recruiter, claims she can "guarantee terrorists have come across the border. I don't want 9/11 to happen again. It's a national security thing." Moreover, she asserts that "part of the solution would be a tall, concrete wall erected along the entire 2,000-mile Mexican border between California and Texas" (Morello, Londoño and Klein 1).

Demands for a wall have become part of the conversation about the *border*.[12] Some local barriers have been built between towns, and like obstacles against the flow of water, they have diverted the flow of migrants to other sparsely inhabited portions of the border. Some politicians want more walls and a few even want to enclose the entire boundary, an expensive proposition to say the least.

Where they have been built, segments of walls conjure up images of barriers *elsewhere*.[13] Some of the comparisons are for rhetorical effect. The Berlin Wall is a favorite frame of reference for opponents of walls, although the Mexican border is, relatively speaking, much more benign. A Guatemalan migrant named Mario, hunkering down in a culvert, waiting for a chance to scamper across unseen, put the walls in perspective, "recalling a television documentary about the Berlin Wall. Despite the myriad dangers at the US-Mexico line, he says, in comparison it is a 'piece of cake. They killed people in Berlin. They were real tough. The show had this guy talking, a German. And he said this border, the Mexican one, is the best in the world. Because they don't punish. And it's true'" (Rotella 101).

The wall between San Diego and Tijuana bears some resemblance to the Great Wall of China, as it snakes over the terrain into the distance. Many see it as dividing "the civilized from the marauding hordes," while warning of the imminent danger represented by the barbarians. The wall is now 45 miles long, up from the original 14, and echoes the long-ago confrontation between the Chinese and Mongol nomads or the Romans and Germanic tribes. The barbarians of antiquity ultimately managed to get around, over, or through the obstacles, just as today's crossers find their way around, over, and even under this wall (Nevins 4, Tuer 104-05).

Today as well as historically, state efforts to repel unwanted immigrants are most intense along international boundaries that separate widely divergent levels of socioeconomic development. These walls sit along "frontiers of disequilibrium," borders between prosperous and stable societies and those that are poor and volatile, what during the cold war would have been called a first world/third world interface, such as the US and Mexico and the EU facing Ukraine.[14] They are "territorial fault lines between lands of wealth and lands of poverty" (Andreas 140). Other such borders include Europe and North Africa, Mozambique and South Africa, and Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the US-Mexican border (Nevins 7). But there are numerous other lines on which walls exist or are under construction, on the borders between Saudi Arabia and its neighbors Iraq and Yemen, between India and Pakistan as well as In-

dia and Bangladesh, between Israel and the West Bank, Egypt and Gaza, Botswana and Zimbabwe, through the Korean Peninsula, on Cyprus, in Northern Ireland, and separating Kuwait from Iraq. At least ten countries, most notably China, are building electronic walls to block out information, unfavorable opinions, and dangerous ideas. Clearly there are tendencies counter to globalization at work in the world, tendencies that can turn a borderland into no-man's land. In the United States, the whole question of unwanted immigrants represents a special irony. We are a nation of immigrants, and our national mythology proclaims the United States a refuge and haven, where opportunity awaits those who are willing to grasp it. Second, it hasn't even been twenty years since President Ronald Reagan's rhetorical flourish in Berlin, when on June 12, 1987 he demanded: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" And, although there are significant differences between the US-Mexican border and the Berlin Wall, it is still jarring to hear Americans talking about walling our own border with Mexico. Clearly, despite talk of regionalization and globalization, the theme of this conference—frontiers, borderlands, and frames—remains important, for the study of the United States and its neighbors, and for an understanding of the modern world.

NOTES

[1] Letter, Derek Williams to author, 3 March 2006, copy in author's files.

[2] For an excellent study of the establishment of the boundary, see Paula Rebert: *La Gran Linea*.

[3] On the north side, the US Border Patrol Museum in El Paso shows "various ways people have tried to sneak into the US over the years," including "an actual car-hood that was used as a raft," all for free. The display is reminiscent of the Checkpoint Charley Museum in Berlin, which emphasizes the various ways in which people tried to sneak out of East Berlin. "El Paso, Texas-US Border Patrol Museum."

[4] National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1989 PL 100-456, 29 September 1988.

[5] Here follow some samples from the Győr daily *Kisalföld*, 2005: "Seventeen in a trailer"; "Two Turks in a car trunk"; "They dressed like border guards"; "Palestinians in a small bus"; "Tragedy at the border crossing." My own translation.

[6] For an unclassified Joint Interagency Task Force East organization chart, see (S-NF) Monroe, 23; (U) "JIATF East Mission and History."

[7] Peter Andreas argues that the Border Patrol was already a "military-styled bureaucracy" that mimicked the military's top-down approach but was more cumbersome than the armed services.

[8] In fact the actual armed forces, including federalized National Guard troops, have been limited to a support role since an 1879 law, known as the *posse commitatus* provision, prohibited the military from directly enforcing domestic law. Current activities, such as searching vehicles at the border, seem to come close to violating this restriction. For a copy of the pertinent section of the 1879 Appropriations Act (Section 1385, Chapter LXVII, Title 18, US Code), see Epley, comp., 119. For many years,

historians accepted the Southern white view that this act was adopted in response to excesses and abuses of power by the military. That view survives in Epley, *Roles and Missions*, and in another official Army volume, Clayton D. Laurie and Ronald H. Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*. For more balanced perspectives, see Robert W. Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces,* and James E. Sefton, *The United States Army and Reconstruction.*

[9] Posturing and denial regarding militarization continue, ignoring the reality that militarization is an established fact. So President Bush denies that it is occurring, and angry Mexicans claim that it is indeed taking place, while in fact the process has been ongoing for years. See Rutenberg 1, Thompson 21.

[10] Much of the enforcement effort on the border is directed toward projecting an image of activity and competence rather than toward actual enforcement. Peter Andreas who examines this aspect of border policing in his book *Border Games*, notes that: "Alarming images of a border out of control can fuel public anxiety; reassuring images of a border under control can reduce such anxiety. Depending on where along the border one chooses to look, both images are readily available. Thus, one can argue, as I do in this book, that 'successful' border management depends on successful image management, and that this does not necessarily correspond with levels of actual deterrence. From this perspective, the escalation of border policing has been less about deterring than about image control. [. . .] Border enforcement has never been a particularly effective or efficient deterrent against drugs and illegal immigrants. [. . .] In the case of the US-Mexico border, signaling a commitment to the idea of deterrence and projecting an image of progress toward that goal has been more politically consequential for state actors than actually achieving results" (9).

[11] With as many as 300,000,000 maritime shipping containers in the world, the freight traffic at the Mexican-US border represents a tiny portion of the world-wide volume. See Rybczynski 22.

[12] The question of whether walls work or not is disputed. Columnist George Will, in urging construction of a barrier along the entire border, cites the Berlin Wall as an example of a wall that succeeded. Molly Ivins, on the other hand, recalls a fence-climbing contest held in conjunction with a chili cook-off in Terlingua, Texas, in the 1980s, in response to newspaper reports of proposals for a border fence: "At the time, the proposal was quite specific--a 17-foot cyclone fence with bob [sic] wire at the top. So a test fence was built at Terlingua, and the First-Ever Terlingua Memorial Over, Under or Through Mexican Fence Climbing Contest took place. Prize: a case of Lone Star beer. Winning time: 30 seconds. I tell this story to make the one single point about the border and immigration we know to be true: The Fence will not work. No fence will work. The Great darn Wall of China will not work. Do not build a fence. It will not work. They will come anyway. Over, under or through. Some of you think a fence will work because Israel has one. Israel is a very small country. Anyone who says a fence can fix this problem is a demagogue and an ass" (Will 23, Ivins 8).

[13] Comparisons work in all directions. The Oder and Neisse Rivers, which form

the boundary between Germany and Poland, are known as the "Rio Grande" of Europe. The Strait of Gibraltar has also been compared to the Rio Grande (Andreas 118, 126). Saskia Sassen compares Europe's increasingly rigid southern and eastern borders to the Maginot line, and considers current activities on the southern frontier as representing "a sort of Berlin wall across the Mediterranean and into the Atlantic," a Berlin wall that floats (Sassen, "Migration policy").

[14] In the 1990s, the politics of United States-Cuban relations and the vocal well-organized hostility to the Castro regime of the Cuban-American community of southern Florida gave a special dimension to the problem of illegal immigration, but the overall United States position regarding refugees from poor countries resembled that of other prosperous western nations. For example, Australian maritime doctrine listed under "constabulary" operations carried out by the Royal Australian Navy the "prevention of illegal immigration," and in August 2001 the Australian government adamantly refused entry to a shipload of almost 1,000 Afghan refugees. Still, Dennis McNamara, director of international protections for the UN. High Commissioner for Refugees singled out the United States as a major problem. He claimed that the United States, "our main donor, our main supporter, with a proud history of refugee involvement, has in place some of the most severe restrictions in its history, which affect asylum seekers and refugees trying to enter the United States." At the same time, the United States and several other major donors reduced their contributions to the U.N. High Commissioner, forcing the U.N. in turn to cut its assistance to the estimated 22 million refugees throughout the world in the spring of 2001. Moreover, poorer countries, according to McNamara, tended to take their cues from the United States (Gilpin 365-66).

Indeed, the developed nations of the West were not alone in judging people fleeing poor countries as undesirable prospects for residence. Zaire and Burundi viewed the thousands fleeing Rwanda in the mid-1990s with either indifference or outright hostility. Heads of state in other poor countries, including President Aristide in Haiti and King Hassan in Morocco, used the threat of increased refugee flows as leverage in attempts to secure increased aid, while prosperous countries gave assistance to contain or curb such movements. In 1999, the Chinese government expelled representatives of the UN High Commissioner from border areas, where refugees from North Korea tried to cross the border. Like the governments of wealthy western countries, the Chinese claimed that the Koreans were not political refugees, but merely economic migrants, trying to better their circumstances (Dao 16). Globalization may have increasingly applied to markets, goods, and capital, but when it came to the movement of labor, the human dimension of the global economy and "the most important factor of production" to some analysts, the trend was definitely toward parochialism and increasing restrictions on free movement. In many countries, whether among the more affluent nations with developed industrial and technical sectors or those with simpler and poorer economies, considerable effort went into assuring that the movements of populations were carefully monitored, controlled, and even prevented. All of the evi-

dence suggested that the Red Cross was right in its conclusion that "[o]ne country's refugee is another's illegal alien" (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 78, 122, Von Hippel 170).

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