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Central American Migrant Caravans: A Case Study of US-Mexican Relations



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Abstract

This essay is a study of the Central American migrant caravans that travelled through Mexico from 2018 to 2019 in order to reach the US. It aims to explain how the US influenced Mexico's handling of the caravans and further explores how the people of the caravan were affected by Mexico's migration policies. The essay uses Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis to explain the unequal relationship between the US and their southern neighbor, Mexico. The method used was the case study methodology and newspapers, peer-reviewed academic articles and reports conducted by international agencies were analyzed using content analysis in order to reach reliable conclusions. The findings of this essay were that the US was able to use economic pressure to influence Mexico's handling of the migrant caravans and that the resulting harsh deterrence policies implemented by Mexico, despite disbanding the caravans in the short term, will in fact exacerbate migration in the long term.

Keywords: migration, caravans, US-Mexico, world-systems analysis, migrant deterrence policy

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1. Introduction

Every year thousands of Central American migrants undertake a journey of almost 4000 kilometers that takes them all the way from their native countries, mainly from the so-called Northern Triangle (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala), through Mexico with the final goal of reaching the United States of America¹. These migrants are forced to leave their countries due to the lack of economic opportunities and the extreme violence that torments their hometowns and neighborhoods. Just in 2015, El Salvador reported a rate of 104 murders for every 100,000 people making it the deadliest place on earth that is not at war². Furthermore, along their journey through Mexico, migrants are subject to numerous dangers such as robberies, scams, extortion, rape, murders, and even social rejection and prosecution³.

In 2018, migration took a new form, the migrant caravan. In this new form, migrants would band together to help protect each other from the aforementioned dangers on the way to the US. However, policies coming all the way from Washington gradually affected the caravan's fate. The Mexican government, despite being a sovereign state, has shown that it tends to compel most of the times to American policies in order to line up with the harsh US anti-immigration policy and avoid economic sanctions from its northern neighbor. Caravans ended up being used as a coin of trade between governments, most of the times on an unequal exchange, leaving aside, if not overlooking completely, the humanitarian needs of the caravan members and the reasons why they are migrating in the first place.

It is left to see if in the long term, migrant deterrence policies pursued by Washington and President Donald Trump will have an effect on overall migration trends. Migration routes and safety conditions have become tougher and riskier, but so too have circumstances at home for Central Americans who often find themselves in desperate situations that can arguably be labelled as a humanitarian crisis.

¹The Economist, "Donald Trump And The "Onslaught" From Central America", 2018.

²The Telegraph, "El Salvador Becomes World's Most Deadly Country Outside A War Zone", 2016.

³D. Agren and A. Holpuch, "Where Is The Migrant Caravan From – And What Will Happen To It At The Border?", *The Guardian*, 2018.

2. Aims and Research Question

2.1 Research Aim

I will research how the American government and its foreign policy might influence the way the Mexican government acts towards the Central American caravans. After this has been sufficiently explored, the focus will be on the people of the migrant caravans themselves. I will analyze how the policies implemented to deter the caravans affected the migrants' migration trends, safety and human rights.

2.2 Research Question

How did the US influence Mexico's handling of the Central American caravans from 2018 to 2019, and how did this affect the migrants themselves?

3. Literature Review

In the first part of this essay I will be discussing whether the US was able to influence Mexico's handling of the caravans, and if so, how. In order to do this I used relevant literature related to the relationships between nation states and their influence on one another. Regarding the relationships between nation states, world-systems theory is one leading theory that seeks to explain the relationships between nations. Researchers in the world systems theory field include Immanuel Wallerstein, above all, and his concept of world-systems analysis. His work is based on the Annales School tradition developed by scholars such as Fernand Braudel. Similar to Wallerstein, this school of thought focuses on "long term processes" (*longue durée*), which sees history as a long-term process with structure rather than a series of disconnected events⁴.

Wallerstein's world-systems analysis is also based on the Neo Marxist dependency theory, that is the idea that resources flow from poor, undeveloped countries to richer ones⁵. This is the basis of Wallerstein's idea, and is the theory that I will use to understand Mexico's dependency on the US and the unequal relationship between the two countries.

⁴M. Grote, *What Could The 'Longue Duree' Mean For The History Of Modern Sciences?*, Boston, Greenstone, 2015, p. 5.

⁵P. James, "Post dependency? The Third World In An Era Of Globalism And Late-Capitalism", *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1997, p. 205–26.

However, this extensive school of thought has been greatly criticized by post-colonialists. Post-colonialism, introduced by writers such as Edward Said, is a modern school of thought that seeks to see the world from a non-Western perspective⁶. Post-colonial theory seeks to understand the world in its complex nature, as El-Ojeili explains, "...perhaps, today, there is, after all, no system at all, just a disorganized tangle of multiple processes and events with unpredictable consequences"⁷. Post-colonialists are critical of reductive ways of organizing the world, especially when they rest on old ideas of Western Europe in the center and the rest of the world at the periphery. Writers such as Franco Moretti argues that Wallerstein's world systems analysis "brusquely reduces the many independent spaces ... to just three positions"⁸. In Wallerstein's world-systems analysis he divides the world into "core", "periphery", and "semi-periphery" nations, exactly what post-colonialists warn against.

Therefore, the current literature and research in regards to the relationship between nation states can be divided into two schools: scholars who see the world as a historical process and explain relations between nations as a "system", which, according to Wallerstein can be divided into "core", "peripheral", and "semi-peripheral" countries. The second school, the post-colonialist one, sees the world as complex rather than of one coherent system, and argues that the world should not be divided into simplistic categories. Therefore, while in the first part of this essay I will use Wallerstein's world-systems analysis as a basis to understanding the US' influence on Mexico, and the reason they were able to influence Mexico's handling of the caravans, I will also refer to existing post-colonialist literature.

In the second part of this essay I will be analyzing the effect on the people of the migrant caravans themselves. In this section, I will be analyzing how deterrence policies affect these migrants, policies like those implemented by Mexico through American pressure. I am not the first to discuss this issue. In the last years, especially in the last couple of decades, the issue of migration and refugee crisis has gained a notorious center role in the agenda of many political groups, governments, international organizations and media. After notorious international refugee crisis such as the one in Syria on 2015, Somalia from the beginning of the 1990's, the ongoing one in Venezuela since 2017, etc. countries had debated one central question: To welcome these people or to close their borders.

For many it is a matter of humanitarianism and support to a group of people in severe need of protection and security, whereas for others it is a matter of national security and sovereignty.

⁶ S. Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions: Postcolonialism, Feminism, And World-Systems Theory", *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2001, p. 398.

⁷ C. el-Ojeili, "Reflections On Wallerstein: The Modern World-System, Four Decades On", *Critical Sociology*, vol. 41, no. 4-5, 2014, p. 692.

⁸ el-Ojeili, "Reflections On Wallerstein", p. 685.

Politicians and certain academics support policies of deterrence, otherwise known as the “deterrence through prevention doctrine”⁹. This doctrine supports the idea that implementing policies that deter migrants from entering the country is a way to lower migration and protect national security. Certain academics who support this idea include Christopher Rudolph who outlines his ideas in the book *National Security and Immigration: Policy Development in the United States and Western Europe Since 1945*. He argues that border control is an important part of national sovereignty¹⁰ and that deterrence policies are an important way to stop terrorist attacks and to discourage the recruitment and arrival of “undesirable” groups which might include refugees and asylum seekers¹¹. He explains further that in a world of globalization, terrorism and economic liberalization, the country’s national security interests and internal security policy are crucial¹². Politicians also echo this sentiment. In the 1990s, during the increased deterrence policies in the US, Barbara Jordan, Chair of the Congressionally mandated US Commission on Immigration Reform, stated, “It is far better to deter illegal immigration than to play the cat and mouse game that results from apprehensions followed by return followed by reentry. To accomplish a true deterrence strategy will require additional personnel as well as a strategic use of technology and equipment”¹³. Thus, we can see that there is literature supporting the idea that deterrence is vital for security and for overall decreases in migration.

However, on the opposite side, certain international organizations, academics, and certain politicians argue through reports, peer reviewed journals, and statistics that the prevention through deterrence doctrine is paradoxical. Rather than preventing immigration, it accentuates the problem. Academics such as W. A. Cornelius and I. Salehyan, in their data, found that “increased enforcement resources deployed along the border have had little effect on the probability of undocumented migration...”¹⁴. Many scholars such as Joppke and Freedman note a gap between the objectives of immigration control policies and the outcomes of these policies¹⁵. Reece Jones argues that deterrence decreases the amount of migrants who successfully arrive at the border, but increases the amount of deaths of migrants on their trek there¹⁶. The United Nations (UN) and Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have produced reports that argue that more protective and humanitarian approaches are needed rather than

⁹ W. Cornelius and I. Salehyan, "Does Border Enforcement Deter Unauthorized Immigration? The Case Of Mexican Migration To The United States Of America", *Regulation & Governance*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2007, p. 140.

¹⁰ Cornelius and Salehyan, "Does Border Enforcement Deter Unauthorized Immigration?" p. 140.

¹¹ S. Mazurana, "National Security And Immigration: Policy Development In The United States And Western Europe Since 1945 By Christopher Rudolph", *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 122, no. 3, 2007.

¹² Mazurana, "National Security And Immigration...".

¹³ Cornelius and Salehyan, "Does Border Enforcement Deter Unauthorized Immigration?" p. 142.

¹⁴ Cornelius and Salehyan, "Does Border Enforcement Deter Unauthorized Immigration?" p. 141.

¹⁵ Cornelius and Salehyan, "Does Border Enforcement Deter Unauthorized Immigration?" p.141.

¹⁶ R. Jones, "Borders And Walls: Do Barriers Deter Unauthorized Migration?", *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute*, 2016.

deterrence¹⁷. They argue this would keep migrants away from traffickers and allow receiving countries to manage refugee flows better¹⁸. Thus, we can see that as research stands today, there is a debate whether the prevention through deterrence doctrine is actually successful. The status quo in politics is that strict border control policies successfully deter migrants. However, data and researchers show otherwise. My essay lies within this context using the migrant caravan to develop this debate further, and to see whether the deterrence policies put in place after the migrant caravan actually were able to deter the people of the caravan or not.

4. Background

4.1 An Introduction to the Migrant Caravan

Central American migration passing through Mexican territory is a phenomenon that has occurred since decades ago where migrants coming mainly from the countries of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador represent an important number of the total number of immigrants crossing the US-Mexico border illegally. The flow of people from these countries to the US has been so steady that already in 2013 there were around 3 million people from these countries living in the US¹⁹. This meant that roughly 10% of the 30 million “Northern Triangle” countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras) population had relocated to live on the US²⁰.

Despite organized groups of Central American migrants crossing Mexico to reach the US as early as 2010, the phenomenon of migrant caravans as such, or at least on the fashion that concerns this essay, started on March 25th 2018²¹. On that day, a march held annually as a protest designed to draw attention to the plight of migrants, departed from the Guatemala-Mexican border city of Tapachula catching particularly the attention of United States president Donald Trump²².

The caravan, formed mainly by Hondurans and organized by the Mexican NGO “Pueblo Sin Fronteras” (People Without Borders), was an annual event. It consisted of a procession of migrants, some dressed even in biblical garb and carrying crosses, protesting against the

¹⁷ S. Bermeo, "Violence Drives Immigration From Central America", *The Brookings Institute*, 2018.

¹⁸ Bermeo, "Violence Drives Immigration From Central America".

¹⁹ R. Crandall, "Exodus From The Northern Triangle", *Survival*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2019, p. 93.

²⁰ Crandall, "Exodus From The Northern Triangle", p. 93.

²¹ K. Semple, "As Migrant Caravan Splinters, Trump Takes Credit And Mexico Scoffs", *The New York Times*, 2018

²² C. Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico Before President Trump Even Started Tweeting About It", *Time Magazine*, 2018.

kidnappings, extortion, beatings and killings suffered by many Central American migrants as they cross Mexico²³.

However, President Donald Trump gave special attention to this 2018 caravan in March and tweeted on different occasions about it, mainly in a “complaining” fashion towards the Mexican authorities saying that very little if anything was being done to contain Central American migration.

He tweeted on April 1st 2018:

“Mexico is doing very little, if not NOTHING, at stopping people from flowing into Mexico through their Southern Border, and then into the U.S. They laugh at our dumb immigration laws. They must stop the big drug and people flows, or I will stop their cash cow, NAFTA. NEED WALL!”²⁴

A day later, he tweeted with a similar attitude:

“Mexico has the absolute power not to let these large “Caravans” of people enter their country. They must stop them at their Northern Border, which they can do because their border laws work, not allow them to pass through into our country, which has no effective border laws....”²⁵

This caravan, mentioned by Trump, in reality featured a mixture of people with different aims. Some were migrants simply demonstrating for their rights as was the annual tradition, others were trying to seek asylum in Mexico, and some had the intent to travel all the way to the US²⁶. The caravan was officially reported as a legal demonstration and the asylum-seekers officially stated their intention to turn themselves in to border inspectors²⁷. The US government was continuously well informed about the whole situation, however the caravan sparked president Trump’s anger²⁸. In an avalanche of condemning tweets, he demanded action from the Mexican government to stop the caravan and even threatened to cut US cash flows and revisit important

²³ Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico ..".

²⁴ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘Mexico is doing very little, if not NOTHING...’, Twitter, 01 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/980451155548491777?lang=es>>, accessed 21 July 2019

²⁵ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘Mexico has the absolute power not to let these...’, Twitter, 02 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/980762392303980544?lang=es>>, accessed 21 July 2019

²⁶ Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico...".

²⁷ Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico ..".

²⁸ Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico ..".

economic agreements like NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) if no action was taken²⁹.

On April 2nd, 2018, Donald Trump tweeted:

“Mexico is making a fortune on NAFTA...They have very strong border laws - ours are pathetic. With all of the money they make from the U.S., hopefully they will stop people from coming through their country and into ours, at least until Congress changes our immigration laws!”³⁰

Following the tweets of President Trump, the Mexican government mobilized to disband the caravan sending immigration officials to register its participants³¹. They set a plan to either orderly send back willing migrants to their home countries or to get temporary visas and start their legal processes to apply for asylum in Mexico³².

However, the Mexican government rejected that such decisions were a result of pressure from the US and through its interior secretary Alfonso Navarrete Prida, it stated that “Under no circumstances does the Mexican government promote irregular migration”³³. Moreover, the secretary explained that the Mexican government always had informed the American government about the situation of the caravan procession and that the caravans were “a public demonstration that seeks to call attention to the migration phenomenon and the importance of respecting the rights of Central Americans”³⁴.

Caravans had been a frequent tactic among advocacy groups for years. They attempt to bring attention to Central American migrants seeking asylum in the U.S. due to criminal threats from gangs or political persecution³⁵. Nevertheless, the fact that midterm elections in the US were to be held during November 6th 2018 raises the question of a correlation between 2018’s Pueblo Sin Fronteras march and Trump’s vigorous reaction to it as an attempt to win more support for his planned border wall and to appeal to his broad Republican voter base.

²⁹ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘The big Caravan of People from Honduras, now coming across...’, Twitter, 03 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/981121409807155200?lang=es>>, accessed 23 July 2019

³⁰ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘Mexico is making a fortune on NAFTA...’, Twitter, 02 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/980794173279342592?lang=es>>, accessed 21 July 2019

³¹ J. Partlow and D. Agren, "Mexico Works To Break Up Migrant Caravan", *The Washington Post*, 2018.

³² Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico...".

³³ Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico...".

³⁴ Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico...".

³⁵ E. Spagat, “A caravan of asylum seekers that infuriated president Trump has arrived at the US-Mexico border”, *Time Magazine*, 2018

For example, in Donald Trump's tweet from April 3rd, 2018, he attributes the migrant caravan to the failure of previous policies passed by the Democrats. This tweet was an effective way to discredit the Democratic Party in the upcoming midterm elections. He tweeted:

“Honduras, Mexico and many other countries that the U.S. is very generous to, sends many of their people to our country through our WEAK IMMIGRATION POLICIES. Caravans are heading here. Must pass tough laws and build the WALL. Democrats allow open borders, drugs and crime!”³⁶

After President Trump's tweets and the Mexican government's actions, the caravan largely dissipated and only a few participants continued independently or in smaller groups by bus or truck to the US border³⁷. From the approximately 1,200 migrants that the caravan reached during its highest peak, roughly 250 to 300 people actually managed to reach the US-Mexico border and file asylum requests at the Mexican border city of Tijuana³⁸.

After some months of relative “calm” around the topic, or at least with no major clashes to be reported, six months later on October 12th of that same year, less than a month before the midterm elections, a new migrant caravan appeared in San Pedro Sula, a city in the north of Honduras famous for its high levels of violence³⁹. It originally, just like the previous caravans, accounted for less than 200 people. But as the news propagated, the caravan grew quickly. When the group crossed the border into Guatemala it had grown to more than 1,000⁴⁰.

The caravan had no single organizing group and the figures of how many people participated on it ranged with several estimations from 4,500 to up to 7,200⁴¹. In interviews with caravan members, many of them revealed that they learned about the caravan mainly from Facebook posts and also from a report of the public local TV channel “HCH Honduras”⁴². Rumors that anybody joining would get almost automatic asylum at the US spread quickly, prompting the quick incorporation of hundreds of people⁴³. Like the previous caravan in March/April earlier that year, most of its participants were Hondurans although this time a higher number of Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans followed⁴⁴. Just like the previous caravan, the news of this new caravan ignited once again the fury of President Donald Trump who through a series

³⁶ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘Honduras, Mexico and many other countries...’, Twitter, 03 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/980961086546632705>>, accessed July 2019

³⁷ Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico..."

³⁸ Agren and Holpuch, "Where Is The Migrant Caravan From..."

³⁹ K. Semple, "What Is The Migrant Caravan And Why Does Trump Care?", *The New York Times*, 2018.

⁴⁰ Semple, "What Is The Migrant Caravan And Why Does Trump Care?"

⁴¹ Agren and Holpuch, "Where Is The Migrant Caravan From..."

⁴² Agren and Holpuch, "Where Is The Migrant Caravan From..."

⁴³ Agren and Holpuch, "Where Is The Migrant Caravan From..."

⁴⁴ Agren and Holpuch, "Where Is The Migrant Caravan From..."

of heated tweets demanded action both from the Mexican government to stop this caravan, and from the Central American governments to discourage their citizens to join it⁴⁵. His anger was so great that he threatened with suspending all foreign aid from the US to Central America⁴⁶ and even with shutting down completely the US-Mexico border⁴⁷.

In the first two parts of a three-part tweet from October 18th, 2018, Trump's threats were clear:

"I am watching the Democrat Party led (because they want Open Borders and existing weak laws) assault on our country by Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, whose leaders are doing little to stop this large flow of people, INCLUDING MANY CRIMINALS, from entering Mexico to U.S. ..."

"...In addition to stopping all payments to these countries, which seem to have almost no control over their population, I must, in the strongest of terms, ask Mexico to stop this onslaught - and if unable to do so I will call up the U.S. Military and CLOSE OUR SOUTHERN BORDER!".⁴⁸

Nevertheless, shutting down the entire 3,145 km U.S.-Mexico border, including shutting legal ports of entry, blocking trade flows, and halting tourism and travel would have represented a massive blow to the 600 billion US dollars that the Mexico-US annual trade represents⁴⁹. The border closure could have also represented a major deterioration of the bilateral relations between the two countries, and senior officials and advisers talked president Trump out of such a measure⁵⁰.

However, on October 20th, just a couple of days after the avalanche of the president's tweets, the caravan coming from Guatemala, and by that time already with at least 3000 participants, crossed into Mexico illegally. Many of its participants crossed through rafts along the Suchiate River, a very common practice that has been going on for decades in an uncontrolled way⁵¹. Nevertheless, the major bulk of the caravan broke forcefully into the border by swarming into the

⁴⁵ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), '... In addition to stopping all payments to...', Twitter, 18 October 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1052885781675687936?lang=es>>, accessed July 2019

⁴⁶ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), 'I am watching the Democrat Party led...', Twitter, 18 October 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1052883467430694912>>, accessed July 2019

⁴⁷ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), '...In addition to stopping all payments to...', Twitter, 18 October 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1052885781675687936?lang=es>>, accessed July 2019

⁴⁸ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), '... In addition to stopping all payments to...', Twitter, 18 October 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1052885781675687936?lang=es>>, accessed July 2019

⁴⁹ D. Nakamura, J. Dawsey and N. Miroff, "'Close The Whole Thing!': Border Tensions Boil Over As Trump's Frustrations Grow", *The Washington Post*, 2018.

⁵⁰ Nakamura, Dawsey and Miroff, "'Close The Whole Thing!' ..".

⁵¹ K. Sieff, "Central Americans In Caravan Cross Into Mexico", *The Washington Post*, 2018.

gates and fences of the international crossing bridge between the Mexican city of Ciudad Hidalgo and the Guatemalan city of Tecún Umán⁵². Photage of the dramatic scenes went around the world and despite the Mexican government's efforts to contain the caravan and persuade its participants to register and apply legally for asylum status, president Trump's fury unleashed once again⁵³. He declared a National Emergency as the caravan's final destination was the US-Mexico border⁵⁴.

On October 22nd, 2018, Donald Trump tweeted:

“Sadly, it looks like Mexico’s Police and Military are unable to stop the Caravan heading to the Southern Border of the United States. Criminals and unknown Middle Easterners are mixed in. I have alerted Border Patrol and Military that this is a National Emergency. Must change laws!”

After the unfolding of events at Mexico's southern border and all the declarations and threats from president Trump, on October 29th, Homeland Security and Pentagon officials announced the deployment of 5,900 US active-duty personnel from the armed forces to the borderlands of Texas, Arizona, and California in an operation called “Faithful Patriot”⁵⁵. The deployment, barely one week before the midterm elections on November 6th, was seen by critics and political opposition as a “cynical electoral ploy” and an inappropriate, even illegal, use of the armed forces in a domestic context⁵⁶. Furthermore, the Pentagon acknowledged that the deployment, the largest internal US active-duty forces mobilization in a century, cost nearly 72 million US dollars despite the existence of almost 2,100 members of the National Guard already deployed at the border since April when the previous caravan marched⁵⁷.

On November 6th, with the migrant caravan making its way through Mexico, the midterm elections were finally held, and despite Trump's efforts to contain the caravan and appeal to his broad rural voter base, the Republican Party lost 40 seats in the House of Representatives meaning a loss of the majority in the House of Congress to the Democratic party⁵⁸.

Finally, on November 25th what had been a slow-moving saga erupted finally with a violent episode when members of the caravan attempted to cross illegally the US border at the San

⁵² Sieff, "Central Americans In Caravan Cross Into Mexico".

⁵³ Sieff, "Central Americans In Caravan Cross Into Mexico".

⁵⁴ Sieff, "Central Americans In Caravan Cross Into Mexico".

⁵⁵ D. Lamothe and N. Miroff, "U. S. Will Deploy 5,200 Additional Troops To The Mexican Border, Officials Say", *The Washington Post*, 2018.

⁵⁶ R. Crandall, "Exodus From The Northern Triangle", *Survival*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2019, p. 93.

⁵⁷ Lamothe and Miroff, "U. S. Will Deploy 5,200 Additional Troops To The Mexican Border, Officials Say".

⁵⁸ Crandall, "Exodus From The Northern Triangle", p. 93

Ysidro sector between the cities of San Diego and Tijuana⁵⁹. US border officers as well as members of the National Guard, blocked the border bridge of San Ysidro and contained migrants that attempted to cross the border⁶⁰. The clash between migrants and authorities resulted in a violent exchange of projectiles with some migrants throwing rocks at officers, who responded with tear gas⁶¹.

The episode of the migrant caravans of 2018 ended with a violent clash and the frustration of thousands of Central American migrants, but above that with the accentuation of a humanitarian crisis. After a journey more than 4,000 kilometers long, migrants were forced to either go back to their home countries to distressful and violent situations or to stay at migrant shelters along the Mexico-US border in situations equally uncertain. While politicians and governments discussed and bargained political deals around them, the migrants' situation is still unresolved, and it is them who have to deal with the consequences of an uncertain humanitarian and legal situation. Now that we have seen the background and series of events regarding the migrant caravans of 2018, analysis is needed to understand this situation on a deeper level.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1 Wallerstein and World-Systems Analysis

I will be using the theory of Immanuel Wallerstein to understand the relationship between Mexico and the US in their response to the migrant caravan. In his book *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* from 2004, Wallerstein summarizes his ideas that make up “world-systems analysis” that he had built upon since 1974. From a macrosociological perspective, this theory seeks to understand the relationships between nations. Wallerstein divides the world into core, peripheral and semi-peripheral countries whose behaviors and relationships are determined by their production processes. He outlines in his book the relationships between these core and peripheral countries, and the power that core countries exercise over peripheral ones.

World-systems analysis, as Wallerstein explains, is not a theory to explain the entire world, but to explain the relationship between certain countries. This relationship then becomes in a sense a world of its own. Wallerstein explains: “A world-system is not the system of the world, but a

⁵⁹ Crandall, "Exodus From The Northern Triangle", p. 93

⁶⁰ Crandall, "Exodus From The Northern Triangle", p. 93

⁶¹ Crandall, "Exodus From The Northern Triangle", p. 93

system that is a world and that can be, most often has been, located in an area less than the entire globe”⁶².

The core, periphery and semi-periphery areas are determined by whether they have “core production processes”, “peripheral production processes” or a combination of the two⁶³. Core production processes are for instance processes that are “relatively monopolized” and are “far more profitable than those that are free market... This made the countries in which more core-like processes are located wealthier”⁶⁴. For example, he gives the UK’s textile industry in the 1700s as an example, their monopoly over the state-of-the-art technology and the resources needed to make textiles meant they had a monopoly over this market. In consequence, this market gave them an advantage in the international arena. Consequently, in the same fashion today one might think of the US’s Silicon Valley as an example of a core nation having a monopoly on a certain industry. Wallerstein states that the existence of patents, state restrictions on imports and exports, state subsidies, tax benefits and states as large-scale buyers⁶⁵ help a country to create a monopoly and thus have a core-like production process.

Peripheral processes are conversely free-markets, where there is high competition and little monopoly. Textile industries in the modern age count as a peripheral processes since any country today can make textiles and there is a lot of competition on the international market regarding cheap textiles⁶⁶. Since the core countries have monopolized, high-profitting industries, and peripheral country have competitive, cheaper industries, it creates an “unequal power of monopolized products vis-a-vis products with many producers in the market”, this results in core-like countries buying products from multiple peripheral countries since there is a high competition, while peripheral countries only have the choice to buy from the core countries since they hold the monopoly on a certain product⁶⁷. Wallerstein also outlines the characteristics of the “semi-peripheral” countries which have a mixture of “core-like and peripheral products”⁶⁸.

As Wallerstein explains, peripheral countries are eager to climb the ladder to become core-like. “These states, of intermediate strength, spend their energy running very fast in order at the very least to stay in their intermediate place, but hoping as well that they may rise on the ladder”⁶⁹. They are constantly in competition with peripheral countries, trying to define themselves as very

⁶² I. Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, 5th edn, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2004, p. 99.

⁶³ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p.18.

⁶⁴ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 18.

⁶⁵ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 26.

⁶⁶ M. Morris and G. Einhorn, "Globalisation, Welfare And Competitiveness: The Impacts Of Chinese Imports On The South African Clothing And Textile Industry", *Competition & Change*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2008.

⁶⁷ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p.28.

⁶⁸ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p.29.

⁶⁹ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p.57.

different to the peripheral countries, and accentuate their similarities to the core countries ⁷⁰. Wallerstein explains, “Under pressure from the core states and putting pressure on peripheral states, their major concern is to keep themselves from slipping into the periphery and to do what they can to advance themselves towards the core”⁷¹.

Wallerstein outlines that strong, core states have power over weak, peripheral states in a number of ways, three of which are pertinent to this essay. The first is their upper-hand in trade, the second is their power to control what passes between borders, and the third is their power to have influence over the politics in weaker states.

First, in regards to trade, Wallerstein states, “Strong states relate to weak states by pressurizing them to keep their frontiers open to those flows of factors of production that are useful and profitable to firms located in the strong states, while resisting any demands for reciprocity in this regard”⁷². He also says, “In debates on world trade, the United States and the European Union are constantly demanding that states in the rest of the world open their frontiers to flows of manufactures and services from them.”⁷³.

Secondly, Wallerstein argues that strong states have more influence when it comes to who gets to cross their borders. He says, “The stronger the state, the larger its bureaucratic machinery and therefore the greater its ability to enforce decisions concerning transboundary transactions. There are three principal kinds of trans-boundary transactions: the movement of goods, capital, and of persons...”⁷⁴.

Thirdly, Wallerstein explains that the unequal relationship between the core and peripheral countries means that the core countries can have influence over the politics of the weaker, peripheral ones. Wallerstein states, “Strong states relate to weak states by pressuring them to install and keep in power persons whom the strong states find acceptable, and to join the strong states in placing pressure on other weak states to get them to conform to the policy needs of the strong states”⁷⁵.

Therefore, Wallerstein’s relationship between the core, periphery, and semi-peripheral countries is first and foremost the outcome of unequal production processes. However, he explains that this unequal relationship extends beyond the economic realm. The unfair economic exchange means that the stronger core states have control over trade and the flow of goods across borders, they

⁷⁰ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p.29.

⁷¹ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p.29.

⁷² Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p.55

⁷³ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p.55.

⁷⁴ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p.46.

⁷⁵ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 57.

also have control over migration across their borders and even influence over the political decisions of weaker states. This relationship between peripheral, core and semi-peripheral countries as outlined by Wallerstein will be a lens from which to understand the influence that the US has over Mexico. This is relevant specifically in regard to the US' influence on Mexico's handling of the migrant caravan.

5.2 Post-Colonial Criticism of Wallerstein

However, Wallerstein has been critiqued heavily in post-colonial theory. Critics argue that his rhetoric of “core” and “periphery” is too simplistic, and falls into “third worldism”. Post-colonialism as a field seeks to “center-margin binarism of imperial discourse”⁷⁶. It is therefore not surprising that the post-colonialists have a problem with Wallerstein's division of the world into three categories. As Moretti explains, “ world-systems thinking ‘brusquely reduces the many independent spaces ... to just three positions’”⁷⁷. Post-colonialism seeks to end the binarism of East and West, the hegemony of the Western, white, middle-class reality and the centrality of the core⁷⁸. Post-colonialism wants to stop the creation of Europe in the center and all other places as “the other”, Wallerstein's framework is therefore problematic since “the world-systems perspective...pivots on the needs and power of the core”⁷⁹. Perhaps Hopkins has the hardest attack when he says:

“Unfortunately, the end-terms ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ all too often become themselves respective foci of attention, categories in their own right, as it were. And the relation which joined the terms slips into the background, sometimes out of sight entirely ... hence the relational categories, also drop from sight, and we are left with only the categories, which, as a result, are now mere classificatory terms, neither grounded theoretically nor productive analytically”⁸⁰.

However, even though the binary of “core” and “periphery” is criticized amongst post-colonialists, Shelley Feldman in her paper “Intersecting and Contesting Positions: Postcolonialism, Feminism, And World-Systems Theory” does concede that Wallerstein's theories are important in order to understand the “discourse of dependency and unequal exchange”, and is especially important in rethinking the process of globalization⁸¹. So while post-colonialists agree that Wallerstein's focus on capitalist accumulation, different production

⁷⁶ S. Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions: Postcolonialism, Feminism, And World-Systems Theory", *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2001, p. 398.

⁷⁷ el-Ojeili, "Reflections On Wallerstein", p. 685.

⁷⁸ Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions...", p. 351.

⁷⁹ Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions...", p. 351.

⁸⁰ Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions...", p. 357.

⁸¹ Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions...", p. 354.

processes and unequal exchange are important to understand the history of nations and the relationships of nations today, they are still “not sole determinants in the understanding and unfolding of history.”⁸² In consequence, in this essay Wallerstein’s theory should be seen as a lens from which to gain a better understanding of the US and Mexico’s unequal relationship, rather than a way to understand how the entire world works. Perhaps El-Ojeili says it best when she refers to Wallerstein’s theory as a “scaffolding around which more nuanced, elaborative arguments can and have been built”⁸³. Rather, Wallerstein can be seen as a “...cognitive map...”⁸⁴.

Using Wallerstein as a cognitive map in this essay, one could say that Wallerstein is a suitable theoretical framework in order to understand Mexico and the US’ “unequal relationship” on the macro-political level. The relationship between the governments and the economic aspects at play, can be seen in a “core-semiperipheral” perspective, as explained by Wallerstein. However, when it comes to the micro-perspective and how the US-Mexican relationship and immigration policy affects the people of the caravan themselves, there are a lot more aspects at play. Therefore post-colonialism is more apt on the micro-level. For the people of the caravan themselves, there are socio-cultural, economic issues and more at play. Using Wallerstein’s theory to understand the people of the caravans would need a more nuanced post-colonial perspective rather than a broad sweeping perspective like Wallerstein’s. Therefore, Wallerstein’s theory will be used to explain the first half of the research question “How did the US influence Mexico’s handling of the Central American caravans from 2018 to 2019” whereas a more nuanced view will be used to understand the complex nature of how immigration policies affect the people of the caravans themselves. Therefore, Wallerstein will not be used to understand the second part of the research question, “...how did this affect the migrants themselves?”.

6. Methodology: The Case Study

6.1 The Case Study Method

This paper’s research question focuses on how the US government might push Mexico towards deterrence immigration policies and how migrants are affected by these policies. This study is based on a specific contemporary event, the Central American migrant caravans from 2018 and

⁸² Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions...", p. 345.

⁸³ el-Ojeili, "Reflections On Wallerstein", p .694.

⁸⁴ el-Ojeili, "Reflections On Wallerstein", p. 694.

2019. Therefore the research method that I have used to write this paper is the case study method.

This method focuses on a phenomenon that occurred in a specific time and space and as Feagin et. al develops in their book from 1991 *A Case For The Case Study*, it is an ideal methodology when a holistic in-depth investigation is needed⁸⁵.

According to Robert Yin, the case study method is suitable to answer research questions that focus on contemporary events as well on answering the *how* and *why*?.⁸⁶ Yin explains that questions that concentrate on answering *how* and *why* have a more explanatory essence because these kind of questions usually handle with “operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence”⁸⁷. In other words, if I would have asked *who* was affected by stricter Mexican migration policies or *how much* harm has been done to illegal migrants as a consequence of them, it would have been more suitable to conduct a survey among migrants on a specific area or examine governmental records through an archival analysis and not through a case study. However since this essay will answer the questions: *why* did Mexico enforce harsh policies against the caravans? *How* did the US influence Mexico’s policies and *how* did these policies affect the migrants? Then, according to Robert Yin, a case study is the most suitable.

Furthermore, Yin poses that unlike other data collection methods like an ethnography, that normally requires long periods of time on the field gathering observational evidence, or participant-observation, that also requires considerable on-field efforts, case studies of high-quality and validity can be done without “leaving the telephone or internet”⁸⁸.

Criticism against case study methodology claims that it offers very little support for scientific generalization. That is, critics argue that it is not possible to draw general conclusions from a particular case. Nevertheless, Yin argues that case studies are in fact generalizable although they are not generalizable to populations or universes, but rather to theoretical propositions⁸⁹.

In other words, case studies should be seen as a way to generalize and expand theories, and not as a sample to enumerate frequencies or to perform statistical generalization⁹⁰.

6.2 Analysis Method: Using Robert Yin as a Reference

⁸⁵ J. Feagin, A. Orum and G. Sjoberg, *A Case For The Case Study*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

⁸⁶ R. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 2009, p 8.

⁸⁷ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, p. 9.

⁸⁸ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, p. 15.

⁸⁹ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, p.15.

⁹⁰ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, p. 15.

When looking for an appropriate analysis method for this case study, I decided to refer to the leading scholar on the case study methodology, Robert Yin. In his book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* he outlines four methods for analyzing the data in a case study. The first one involves “relying on theoretical propositions”, which means following the original theoretical propositions that lead to the case study⁹¹. The theoretical proposition, Yin argues, shapes your case study and therefore is a good place to start for the analysis. He explains that a theoretical orientation can guide the analysis by “...pointing to relevant contextual conditions to be described as well as explanations to be examined”⁹². While some researchers might let data guide the analysis, this approach outlined by Yin lets the theory guide the analysis of the case study. In this essay, my analysis uses the guiding theory of Wallerstein as an initial way to understand the migrant caravan issue. Therefore, I will be using Yin’s method of “relying on theoretical propositions” since this is a suitable analysis method for a case study.

However, I will also be using Yin’s analysis method of “examining plausible rival explanations”, his fourth “analytical strategy”⁹³. Yin explains this method can be used together with the other analysis methods that he describes. In this analysis method, the researcher decides that the “observed outcomes were in fact the result of some other influence besides the planned intervention” and their data analysis must take into consideration other possible influences⁹⁴. In other words, the analysis should take into consideration rivaling ideas or influences. In my analysis, I constantly mention the different contending ideas and evidence. For example, Wallerstein against post-colonialism, deterrence against humanitarianism and even smaller contentious such as whether NAFTA really benefited Mexico. Therefore, using both of Yin’s analysis methods of “relying on theoretical propositions” and “examining plausible rival explanations”, my analysis was reached by using the original theoretical framework as a guiding tool, but also constantly taking into consideration other rival factors that might influence my findings.

6.3 A Critical Look at Sources Used

Although citing newspapers as a primary source might represent a challenge since they are not peer-reviewed nor have the same scientific rigor as academic journals or textbooks, they represent an invaluable asset for this paper. Newspapers can offer up-to-the minute information about current events and trends, and allow the researcher to trace the historical development of a specific issue⁹⁵. Furthermore, using newspapers as a primary source allows researchers to get a

⁹¹ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, pg 136.

⁹² Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, pg 136.

⁹³ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, pg 140.

⁹⁴ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, pg 140.

⁹⁵ "Research Guides: Newspapers: Why Use Newspapers", *Ohio State University Website*, 2017, https://guides.osu.edu/newspapers/why_use (accessed 10 June 2019).

snapshot of a time period detailing how a certain event was perceived and experienced when and while it happened⁹⁶. These characteristics are very relevant to this essay since the events of the migrant caravans developed less than a year before the essay was written. While academic texts have not thoroughly inquire over the issue of the caravans yet, journalists have been covering the topic since day one.

Nevertheless, I was well aware of the limitations and downsides of using newspapers as a primary source while developing this paper. One must have caution when using media sources since they might have biases influenced by political orientations or other ideological agendas that must be taken into consideration in order to correctly assess their credibility and reliability⁹⁷. For example, as Tom Quiggin explains, *The Washington Times* newspaper is a publication owned by organizations related to the Unification Church of Korea, this fact in itself does not mean that one should or should not cite it for academia or research purposes, but one should inquire if there might be a specific agenda behind reporting on the particular story one is reading⁹⁸. Consequently, this is a query that should be posed for all newspapers and magazines intended to be used for research.

More specifically, in this essay I used newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post*. Criticism for *The Guardian*, for example, might be that it is a renowned left-leaning newspaper in the UK⁹⁹ and thus may contain bias. On the other hand, *The Guardian* relies on funding from readers and funding from The Scotts Trust which “forms part of a unique ownership structure for The Guardian that ensures editorial interests remain free of commercial pressures”¹⁰⁰. *The New York Times* receives advertising that may influence reporting if certain advertisers have commercial interests in editorial content. However, Kirk Semple, the immigration reporter that I used in my research, has worked for the *Times* for 13 years, speaks fluent Spanish, and has been covering Mexico and Central America and the Caribbean¹⁰¹. Thus, he is undeniably an expert in his region. *The Washington Post* was recently bought by Jeff Bezos, owner of Amazon, which may create a conflict of interest if the editorial content goes against the parent company’s financial interests¹⁰². One journalist was reported as

⁹⁶ "Research Guides: Newspapers: Why Use Newspapers", *Ohio State University Website*, 2017.

⁹⁷ T. Quiggin, "Sources And Information In Academic Research Avoiding Mistakes In Assessing Sources Forresearch And During Peer Review", *Terrorism Research Initiative*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2013, p. 104

⁹⁸ Quiggin, "Sources And Information In Academic Research...", p.104

⁹⁹ M. Smith, "How Left Or Right-Wing Are The UK’S Newspapers?", *Yougov.Co.Uk*, 2017, <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/03/07/how-left-or-right-wing-are-uks-newspapers> (accessed 29 June 2019).

¹⁰⁰ The Guardian, "The Scott Trust: Values And History", 2015,

<https://www.theguardian.com/the-scott-trust/2015/jul/26/the-scott-trust> (accessed 3 May 2019).

¹⁰¹ The New York Times, "Kirk Semple", 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/by/kirk-semble> (accessed 9 July 2019).

¹⁰² D. Matthews, "Jeff Bezos Is Buying The Washington Post. Here’S What You Need To Know About The Sale.", *The Washington Post*, 2013,

saying “We do not have any policies around employees being critical of Amazon” however as the HuffPost points out, “influence doesn’t always work in obvious ways. Just the knowledge that the man paying the bills also owns a major subject of coverage can be complicated in itself”¹⁰³. However, the articles used from *The Washington Post* in this essay were often written by more than one journalist with different relevant fields of expertise¹⁰⁴. This means that these articles are less likely to have the bias of one individual, and use a range of knowledge to report on a subject.

As we can see, all newspapers have their benefits and disadvantages. Above all, when using newspapers it is important to use newspapers where journalists have covered stories in the region for a vast number of years, and are experts in their field just as academics. Also, it is important not to just rely on one newspaper, but to read a vast range of sources in order to compare their details, and fact check. This is what has been done in this essay. Overall, assessing reliability and avoiding the trap of assuming a source credibility solely based on its reputation is a must for reliable referencing¹⁰⁵.

Reports from international agencies were also used in this essay. Using reports from governmental offices, international agencies or non-governmental organizations provides researchers with a valuable insight regarding statistics and hard numbers. They help to provide facts to support claims, discover trends, or get a more accurate diagnosis of a particular phenomenon. Nevertheless, just as newspapers, it is important to take into consideration the possible biases that the organization might have depending on who finances it, if they advocate for a particular ideology or promote any political agenda.

Books and academic journals enclose authoritative information that include experts’ views on topics/themes, historical data and comprehensive accounts of research. Books can be used to provide background information and relevant research on a certain topic adding depth and putting the research topic in context with other important subjects¹⁰⁶. Nevertheless, extended and detailed research, as well as the peer-review process, are time-consuming and can take even

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/08/06/jeff-bezos-is-buying-the-washington-post-heres-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-sale/> (accessed 13 July 2019).

¹⁰³A. Feinberg, "What Washington Post Employees Actually Think About Amazon", *The Huffington Post*, 2018, (accessed 13 July 2019).

¹⁰⁴D. Nakamura, J. Dawsey and N. Mirotff, "'Close The Whole Thing!': Border Tensions Boil Over As Trump's Frustrations Grow", *The Washington Post*, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/close-the-whole-thing-border-tensions-boil-over-as-trumps-frustrations-grow/2018/10/19/afe45462-d3a6-11e8-8c22-fa2ef74bd6d6_story.html (accessed 13 August 2019).

¹⁰⁵ Quiggin, "Sources And Information In Academic Research...", p. 104.

¹⁰⁶ "Library Guides: Evaluating Books, Journals, Journal Articles And Websites: Books/Articles/Websites", *Central Queensland University Website*, 2016, <https://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/evaluating-resources> (accessed 27 June 2019).

years to be concluded. Therefore it might be hard to find current topics in books and academic journals as was the case with the migrant caravan analyzed in this paper¹⁰⁷.

7. Findings and Analysis

During the events of the migrant caravan starting from March of 2018, Mexico went from recognizing the first caravans as legal demonstrations, to sending the National Guard to stop them. Why this change? In the first part of this analysis section (labelled “7.1”), I will discuss my findings about the relationship between the US and Mexico behind the scenes of the migrant caravan, and analyze whether the US was able to influence how Mexico dealt with the caravans. Also I will analyze how they were able to influence Mexico, and what the influence resulted in. In the second part of the analysis section (labelled “7.2”), I will present my findings of how the decisions made by Mexico, as a result of American pressure, affected the people of the caravans themselves. Also, I will be analyzing how these decisions affect migrant flows and the situation of these migrants in the short term and the long term.

7.1 The US’ Influence on Mexico’s Handling of the Migrant Caravans

7.1.1 The US’ Economic Pressure on Mexico

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is an economic and trade agreement passed in 1994 by the US, Mexico, and Canada that radically liberalized the trade between the three countries either eliminating or dramatically reducing previous tariffs on goods and services¹⁰⁸. At the time it was ratified and implemented, NAFTA became the most extensive free trade agreement ever signed, conceiving the world’s largest market for services and goods¹⁰⁹. Since the agreement came into effect, trade between the three countries increased stunningly from 290 billion in 1993 to over 1.1 trillion US dollars in 2017¹¹⁰. NAFTA induced unprecedented North American integration increasing regional trade and cross-border investments basically reshaping the economic relations between Canada, Mexico, and the US¹¹¹.

Discussing specifically the US-Mexico trade relations, just in 2018 the trade between the two countries accounted for 671 billion US dollars making Mexico the third largest US trade partner

¹⁰⁷ "Library Guides: Evaluating Books, Journals, Journal Articles And Websites: Books/Articles/Websites", 2016.

¹⁰⁸ M. Burfisher, F. Lambert and T. Matheson, "NAFTA To USMCA: What Is Gained?", International Monetary Fund, 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Burfisher, Lambert and Matheson, "NAFTA To USMCA".

¹¹⁰ Burfisher, Lambert and Matheson, "NAFTA To USMCA".

¹¹¹ Burfisher, Lambert and Matheson, "NAFTA To USMCA".

after China and Canada¹¹². Exports from Mexico to the US accounted for 372 billion US dollars whereas conversely, exports from the US to Mexico accounted for 299 billion dollars leaving Mexico with a trade surplus of almost 73 billion¹¹³. In addition, U.S. exports to Mexico accounted for 15.9% of the overall U.S. exports in 2018 while conversely, Mexico exports to the US represented around 73% of Mexico's total exports¹¹⁴.

Moreover, despite the firmly growing trade between the two countries and Mexico being the US' second largest supplier of goods imports in 2018, U.S. imports from Mexico accounted for only 13.6% of overall U.S. imports in 2018, whereas Mexican imports from the US accounted for roughly 51% of overall Mexican imports¹¹⁵.

These numbers shows us the great importance that trade with the US represents for Mexico. Furthermore, the Mexican trade surplus from 2018 is by no means an isolated event and from 1995, just a year after the implementation of NAFTA, Mexico has scored a positive trade balance with the US every single year¹¹⁶. Mexico's trade surplus shows a tendency of continuously growing, where 2018 has been the best year yet¹¹⁷. In fact, even if it came as a consequence of circumstantial events (i.e. the trade war between the US and China, and the drop on Canadian oil prices), during February 2019 Mexico became the biggest trading partner with the US for the first time in modern history¹¹⁸. Furthermore, by the time this essay was written (August 2019) and with the data available at the time, Mexico remains the top trading US partner as May 2019 data showed¹¹⁹.

Despite some workers and industries facing painful disruptions and increased competition, NAFTA has shown at least from a macro-economic perspective, being a positive agreement for the Mexican economy. Since entering NAFTA, Mexico's trade surplus continued to grow. As stated above, it is clear that Mexico has been reliant in the last two decades upon the benefits reaped by the NAFTA deal.

It is important to note that Mexican success may not be attributed to NAFTA alone. The extent to which NAFTA alone has furthered Mexican economic interests is debated. As Burfisher et. al state, "... it has proven difficult to isolate the agreement's beneficial effects from other factors,

¹¹² Office of the United States Trade Representative, "U.S.-Mexico Trade Facts", Washington D.C, Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2019.

¹¹³ Office of the United States Trade Representative, "U.S.-Mexico Trade Facts".

¹¹⁴ "OEC - Mexico (MEX) Exports, Imports, And Trade Partners", 2019, <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/mex/> (accessed 14 May 2019).

¹¹⁵ "OEC - Mexico (MEX) Exports, Imports, And Trade Partners", 2019.

¹¹⁶ United States Census Bureau, "Trade In Goods With Mexico", United States Census Bureau, 2019.

¹¹⁷ United States Census Bureau, "Trade In Goods With Mexico", 2019.

¹¹⁸ K. Roberts, "Mexico Is Now Top U.S. Trade Partner, Ahead Of China, Canada", *Forbes*, 2019.

¹¹⁹ Roberts, "Mexico Is Now Top U.S...".

including rapid technological change, expanded trade with other countries such as China, and unrelated domestic developments in each of the countries”¹²⁰. However, the economic success of a country always has many causes. Although NAFTA is by no means the only cause for the success in Mexico, it has also brought positive impacts to the country. Importantly for this essay, NAFTA has created Mexican dependence on the US in terms of trade. This is why, since the beginning of NAFTA, Mexico has depended more and more on the US’ decisions. Thus, economic pressure by the US can affect Mexican policy decisions.

Bearing this in mind, and with the self-proclaimed premise that NAFTA was “the worst trade deal on the history of the US”¹²¹ President Trump used the agreement as a bargain chip to put pressure on Mexico to stop not only the caravans, but overall migration flows into the US. His rhetoric was blatant and around the time the caravan was at its peak, Trump referred to NAFTA as Mexico’s “cash cow”¹²² from which Mexico was “making a fortune”¹²³.

In this tweet from April 1st 2018, Trump threatened Mexico with the end of NAFTA if they did not disband the migrant caravan:

“Mexico is doing very little, if not NOTHING, at stopping people from flowing into Mexico through their Southern Border, and then into the U.S. They laugh at our dumb immigration laws. They must stop the big drug and people flows, or I will stop their cash cow, NAFTA. NEED WALL!”¹²⁴

Trump combined his tweets calling for an end of the migrant caravan to the creation of a new NAFTA deal. In this tweet, already in April 23rd of 2018 when the first caravan was at its peak, Trump lays out that Mexico’s attitude towards immigration will be an important aspect of the new NAFTA deal:

“Mexico, whose laws on immigration are very tough, must stop people from going through Mexico and into the U.S. We may make this a condition of the new NAFTA Agreement. Our Country cannot accept what is happening! Also, we must get Wall funding fast”¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Burfisher, Lambert and Matheson, "NAFTA To USMCA".

¹²¹ R. Partington, "Nafta: What Is It And Why Is Trump Trying To Renegotiate?", *The Guardian*, 2018.

¹²² Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘... The big Caravan of People from Honduras...’, Twitter, 3 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/981121409807155200?lang=es>>, (accessed July 2019).

¹²³ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘... Mexico is making a fortune...’, Twitter, 2 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/980794173279342592?lang=es>>, (accessed July 2019).

¹²⁴ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘... Mexico is doing very little...’, Twitter, 1 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/980451155548491777?lang=es>>, (accessed July 2019).

¹²⁵ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘... Mexico whose laws on immigration...’, Twitter, 23 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/988415011382091776?lang=es>>, (accessed July 2019).

Trump's threats were not empty words. On November 30th, Mexico, the US and Canada came to sign the new NAFTA deal, the USMCA (United States, Mexico, Canada Agreement) one that negatively affected Mexico. Trump's threats during the caravan to end NAFTA became reality. In this new deal, one of the biggest changes was the introduction of two measures concerning the auto industry, one of the biggest and most important for Mexico. The agreement requires that, to avoid trade tariffs, 75% of an automobile's content must originate within North America – an increase from 62.5% – in order to reduce imports of components from Asia¹²⁶. It also requires that by 2023, 40% to 45% of production comes from workers who are paid an average of more than \$16 an hour, well above Mexican wage levels¹²⁷. This means that under the new deal auto companies that previously manufactured their cars in Mexico due to the benefits under NAFTA will likely move to a cheaper country like China. The new 75% North American content of an automobile's rule, in comparison with the previous 62.5%, represents an extensive reshape and re-planning of the already intricate production chain¹²⁸. Such a change in the fabrication process will inevitably represent a rise in the production costs diminishing the competitive advantages for car companies to keep producing in Mexico¹²⁹. As we can see, Trump's new deal put Mexico at a disadvantage.

Mexico's reliance on trade with the US meant that they were more likely to work together with them on the migrant caravan issue. Trump used Mexico's reliance on NAFTA as a way to put pressure on Mexico to end the caravan. In Trump's tweets, he makes a direct threat that Mexico has to stop the migrant caravans in order to preserve their "cash cow" NAFTA. As we have shown through data above, Mexico is more reliant on trade with the US than vice versa, the US' upper hand means they can put pressure on Mexico to change their attitude towards the migrant caravans.

On May 30th, 2019, a year after the famous migrant caravans, President Donald Trump went further on his demands against the Mexican government and explicitly threatened to impose a 5% tariff on all Mexican goods coming into the US if Mexico failed to tackle immigration flows coming into the US southern border¹³⁰.

¹²⁶ J. Frankel, "Trump Hasn't Improved On Nafta – But At Least He Hasn't Blown Up Trade", *The Guardian*, 2018.

¹²⁷ Frankel, "Trump Hasn't Improved On Nafta...".

¹²⁸ Frankel, "Trump Hasn't Improved On Nafta...".

¹²⁹ Frankel, "Trump Hasn't Improved On Nafta...".

¹³⁰ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ' On June 10th...', Twitter, 30 May 2019, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1134240653926232064?lang=es>>, (accessed July 2019).

Donald Trump tweeted on May 30th, 2019:

“On June 10th, the United States will impose a 5% Tariff on all goods coming into our Country from Mexico, until such time as illegal migrants coming through Mexico, and into our Country, STOP. The Tariff will gradually increase until the Illegal Immigration problem is remedied,..”¹³¹

The measure would have come into implementation on June 10th, and tariffs would have gradually increased 5% monthly to reach a top of 25% if the “illegal immigration problem was not remedied” by Mexican authorities¹³². The exact conditions and goals to be fulfilled by Mexico in order to avoid such tariffs were never publicly mentioned and other than public threats on social media and statements made to different media channels, the issue was handled confidentially by diplomatic delegations of both countries¹³³. However, three general goals were actually mentioned in order for Mexico to avoid or postpone the tariffs: strengthening security at the border with Guatemala, attack criminal organizations, and help the US more with asylum seekers¹³⁴. The impact of such threats was immediately felt on the Mexican economy, and despite being just threats, they provoked an immediate weakening of the Mexican peso against the US dollar¹³⁵.

While the US has previously used trade tariffs against other countries, usually it has been as a way to counter trade violations and predominantly against non-ally countries. This, however, was unprecedented use, or intended use, of such penalizing tariffs against a country that is, let alone a US-ally, but its major trading partner. Mexico’s deputy foreign minister for North America, Jesús Seade, declared after the publication of the threats that such a measure would have been “disastrous” for both countries and suggested that Mexico would have retaliated against the US, risking the possibility of a destructive trade-war between the two countries¹³⁶.

Nevertheless, after three days of negotiations in Washington and just three days before the implementation of the tariffs, on June 7th both countries reached an agreement. Mexico agreed to strengthen control over its southern border and reinforce the implementation of a program called “Remain in Mexico”, a migratory program where asylum seekers at the US border remain in

¹³¹ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘....On June 10th...’, Twitter, 30 May 2019, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1134240653926232064?lang=es>>, (accessed July 2019).

¹³² Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), ‘....On June 10th...’, Twitter, 30 May 2019, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1134240653926232064?lang=es>>, (accessed July 2019).

¹³³ A. Karni, A. Swanson and M. Shear, "Trump Says U.S. Will Hit Mexico With 5% Tariffs On All Goods", *The New York Times*, 2019.

¹³⁴ Karni, Swanson and Shear, "Trump Says U.S....".

¹³⁵ Karni, Swanson and Shear, "Trump Says U.S....".

¹³⁶ Karni, Swanson and Shear, "Trump Says U.S....".

shelters and migratory facilities on the Mexican side while they wait for the process of their asylum applications¹³⁷.

On the one hand, President Trump thanked cooperation with the Mexican Government while on the other, president of Mexico, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and Mexico's foreign minister Marcelo Ebrard, pronounced themselves pleased with establishing dialogue between the two countries and reaching cooperation agreements¹³⁸. Three days after the publishing of the reached agreement, 6000 members of the Mexican National Guard started their deployment along the Mexico-Guatemala border¹³⁹. Furthermore, numerous checkpoints were positioned throughout southern Mexico in order to stop future caravans. These measures were successful and in 2019 just some weeks after they were implemented, two migrant caravans were disbanded¹⁴⁰.

This deal was a clear message to Mexico: a reminder that the US has the upper hand. Unless Mexico is willing to work together with them on issues such as the migrant caravan, the US has the power to negatively affect their trade and economic situation. Thus, we can see that the US has power over Mexico economically through trade deals such as NAFTA and the threat of trade tariffs. As a result, the US can use this economic pressure to affect Mexican political policy towards the migrant caravans. However, the details of these political policies will be analyzed in the section below.

7.1.2 The US' Influence on Mexican Political Policy

So far we have discussed the way that the US was able to influence Mexico in regards to the migrant caravan. The US was able to use economic pressure and their upper hand in trade in order to influence Mexico's handling of the caravans. However, how did Mexico handle the caravans? Here, I argue that the US was able to use economic means to affect Mexican political policies towards the caravans. These political policies not only affected the caravans in 2018, but continued to affect them in 2019.

Before the caravan from October 2018 arrived at the border, Mexico did mobilize upon their arrival. Two airplanes of the Federal Police with around 500 anti-riot officials were directly sent from Mexico City to the border beside the deployment of extra personnel from the migration authorities and local police¹⁴¹. Furthermore, even months after the whole episode involving the

¹³⁷ M. Pengelly, "Trump Calls Off Tariffs After US-Mexico Deal But Mnuchin Says Threat Remains", *The Guardian*, 2019.

¹³⁸ Pengelly, "Trump Calls Off Tariffs...".

¹³⁹ Deutsche Welle, "Mexico Sends 6,000 National Guardsmen To Control Migrants At Guatemalan Border", 2019.

¹⁴⁰ P. McDonnell, "At Mexico's Southern Border, Migrants Feel The Pinch Of A Crackdown Spurred By U.S.", *Los Angeles Times*, 2019.

¹⁴¹ H. Alexander, "Donald Trump Threatens To Shut US-Mexico Border Unless Migrant Caravan Stopped", *The Telegraph*, 2018.

caravans both from April and October ended, the Mexican Government fortified the presence of government officials at its southern border and expanded the number of agents up to 6,000¹⁴². Moreover, in June 2019, a new attempt from Central American migrants to cross into Mexico as a semi-organized caravan of around 400 people, was immediately suppressed by the Mexican authorities just 20 km after they had come into Mexico and migrants were sent to detention centers to be processed¹⁴³. This series of actions, just to mention some of the most significant on behalf of the Mexican government to stop migrant caravans and to reinforce control at the border, show a tendency of intensification on Mexican migration policies.

All of Mexico's previously mentioned actions, came shortly after US president Donald Trump complained through social media and during public rallies on allegedly weak Mexican action to contain Central American migrant flows into the US southern border. Moreover, Trump's declarations did not consist only of complaints, but they also came accompanied by threats surrounding the jeopardy of NAFTA¹⁴⁴, the renegotiations for a new economic agreement (USMCA), the imposition of tariffs on all Mexican goods coming into the US¹⁴⁵, and even the possibility of shutting down completely the border¹⁴⁶. Thus, it makes sense to say that the economic pressure from the US has led to Mexico implementing deterrence migration policies that aim to discourage caravans from entering the country.

However, every time Mexican authorities have been questioned by the media regarding the motive of their actions and the relation with Trump's threats, the answer has always been a strong denial regarding any correlation¹⁴⁷. Even during the latest episode where president Trump threatened to set 5% tariffs on all Mexican goods if migrant flows did not decrease, Mexican authorities declared their actions to toughen up control at the border with Guatemala as the result of a continuous dialogue and "cooperation" with the US surrounding the immigration issue¹⁴⁸. They deny economic pressure from the US.

Whether Mexico complies directly to the US government, and specifically to president Trump's demands to stop the migrant caravans and reduce immigration numbers, remains open for debate as it is hard to prove the direct correlation. However, the timing between the political and economic pressure from the US came at the same time as Mexico began to harden controls at its

¹⁴² Deutsche Welle, "Mexico Sends 6,000 National Guardsmen To Control Migrants At Guatemalan Border", 2019.

¹⁴³ D. Schrank, "Mexico Meets Migrants At Southern Border With Armed Forces", *Reuters*, 2019.

¹⁴⁴ D. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), 'Mexico whose law on immigration...', Twitter, 23 April 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/988415011382091776?lang=es>>, (accessed 21 July 2019).

¹⁴⁵ D. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), 'One June 10th...', May 30 2019 <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1134240653926232064?lang=es>>, (accessed July 2019).

¹⁴⁶ D. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), 'In addition to stopping all payments...', October 18 2018, <<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1052885781675687936?lang=es>>, (accessed July 2019).

¹⁴⁷ C. Sherman, "The Immigrant Caravan Halted In Mexico Before President Trump Even Started Tweeting About It", *Time Magazine*, 2018, (accessed 14 July 2019).

¹⁴⁸ Pengelly, "Trump Calls Off Tariffs...".

southern border. As mentioned above, what started off as heated rhetoric and aggressive threatening tweets from president Trump eventually resulted in the renegotiations of NAFTA and talks of increased trade tariffs. Therefore Mexico does have an incentive to yield to American pressure.

I started this essay looking into how the US was able to influence Mexico's handling of the migrant caravans. So far, my findings are that the US was able to influence Mexico predominantly through economic means both by pressurizing them through the threat of increased trade tariffs and by the threat of renegotiating NAFTA in a way to disfavor Mexico. These threats were ramped up by Trump's declarations through social media and public declarations at political rallies, which were then widely circulated through international media. In what way did this economic pressure manage to influence Mexico's handling of the caravans? It did so politically, which resulted in Mexico's deployment of the Federal Police on the 19th of October 2018 and the deployment of 6,000 National Guard members in early June 2019, as mentioned above. These policies not only repressed the 2018 migrant caravans, but the deployment of the National Guard this year (2019) has repressed new caravans that have made recent attempts to reach the US. In the next section, I will analyze my findings on how these harsh deterrent Mexican policies, under the US' influence, affected the people of the caravan themselves. I will analyze how these policies, under the influence of the US, had impacts on the 2018 caravans in the short term, and will continue to have impacts in the long term.

7.2 The Effect of Deterrence Policies on the People of the Caravans

In this section I will outline my findings on how the Mexican response to the migrant caravans affected the people of the caravans in 2018, and how it continues to affect recent caravans to this day. I will be analyzing how these decisions to disband the caravans will affect migration flows in the short term and long term. First, however, I will explain who the people of the caravans are and why the caravans formed, in order to better understand how political policies affect them.

7.2.1 The People of the Caravans

The people integrating the caravans are Central American migrants predominantly from countries of the so called "Northern Triangle" which consists of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador¹⁴⁹. These are migrants including men, women, and entire families that are escaping from the danger of violence in their home countries¹⁵⁰. However, the US government argues that these people do not fit under the definition of refugees and blame economic factors for the

¹⁴⁹ R. Crandall, "Exodus From The Northern Triangle", 2019, p. 93.

¹⁵⁰ D. Agren and A. Holpuch, "Where Is The Migrant Caravan From...", 2018.

reasons to emigrate, averting their obligation to offer them asylum¹⁵¹. Nevertheless, in the spirit of the agreements reached at the United Nations after the Second World War and in line with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the UN Refugee Agency has concluded that a significant percentage of the fleeing migrants do need protection and asylum due to violence they face at home¹⁵².

Even though economic incentives do form part of the push factors for Central American immigration, according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, generalized violence “has played a decisive and forceful role” for recent arrivals to the US border¹⁵³. Furthermore, the economic incentives are in fact argued as a byproduct of the violence experienced in the region as gangs and drug trafficking networks break down the social tissue and family unit by forcing youth to join them hindering them from studying or working¹⁵⁴. Gangs demand as well expensive protection fees that suffocate businesses and families’ economies¹⁵⁵.

In 2015 Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) interviewed people from the Northern Triangle *en route* through Mexico. When they were questioned about the reason for leaving their countries, almost 40% of them mentioned attacks or threats to their families or themselves as the cause for fleeing. Furthermore, more than 40% declared having a relative murdered in the past two years, 31% percent knew someone that had been kidnapped, and 17% knew somebody that had disappeared¹⁵⁶. Overall, 50% of migrants entering Mexico from the Northern Triangle leave their home country due to at least one violent reason and 35% due to more than one¹⁵⁷.

The fact that the migrants of the caravans are fleeing from violence is important to keep in mind for the analysis below. Migration is largely due to the violence in Central American countries, therefore anything that exacerbates this violence will cause more migration. I will argue below that the deterrence policies used by the US through Mexico is a form of deterrence that increases violence in Central American countries and perpetuates migration.

¹⁵¹ S. Bermeo, "Violence Drives Immigration From Central America", *The Brookings Institute*, 2018.

¹⁵² S. Escobar-Jaramillo, "Protection And Solutions Strategy For The Northern Triangle Of Central America", UNHCR, 2019, p. 5.

¹⁵³ M. Seitz and others, "Mission To Central America: The Flight Of Unaccompanied Children To The United States", United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2013, p. 6.

¹⁵⁴ Seitz and others, "Mission To Central America...", p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Seitz and others, "Mission To Central America...", p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ C. Rodríguez, "Forced to Flee Central America's Northern Triangle: A Neglected Humanitarian Crisis", *Medecins Sans Frontieres*, 2017, p. 10.

¹⁵⁷ Rodríguez, "Forced to Flee Central America's Northern Triangle...", p. 10.

7.2.2 *The Reasons for the Formation of Migrant Caravans*

Unfortunately, when asked about their experiences while migrating through Mexico, migrants gave negative accounts. In fact, when asked about violence, almost 70% of the interviewees reported being victims of violence experiences at least one time during their trip and 39% at least two, while almost one-third of women reported to have been sexually assaulted¹⁵⁸. Furthermore, migrants reported to MSF that perpetrators of such of violence included not only members of gangs and other criminal organizations, but even members of the Mexican security forces that are responsible for the migrants' protection¹⁵⁹. Therefore, due to the high insecurity reflected on these numbers and facts, migrants prefer to continue to make their way up to the US through Mexico rather than staying and look for asylum there.

As a response to such harsh conditions, migrants saw in the formation of caravans their opportunity for traveling "en masse" as their way to travel safer through Mexico. In large numbers, it was harder for violence to befall them. It also allowed them to avoid paying expensive and unreliable coyotes or people smugglers. The caravans served as well as the way to protect themselves from criminals who target them for extortion, kidnaps, and rape and even as a way to bypass Mexican migration checkpoints that have become more and more frequent throughout the whole country¹⁶⁰. Therefore, we can see the migrant caravan as a response to an increasingly dangerous migration route.

In addition to this, deterrence policies like the ones used historically by the US, i.e. border walls and acute border surveillance, do not necessarily stop migrants, but rather divert the migrant flows to other less patrolled but much dangerous border sectors¹⁶¹.

One of the clearest evidence of this is precisely the Mexico-US border when during the early 1990s the first sections of the fence between the two countries were built along the San Diego and El Paso border sections. In 1993 "Operation Blockade" in El Paso, Texas and parallelly a year later "Operation Gatekeeper" in San Diego, California, militarized completely both sectors of the border accompanied with the physical erection of walls¹⁶². Followed by an extensive deployment of Border Patrol agents, the number of illegal crossings across those sections dropped to virtually zero. Nevertheless, these measures *did not* stop the overall flow of illegal migrants into the US. Instead, both migrants and smugglers started to use much less guarded and

¹⁵⁸ Rodríguez, "Forced to Flee Central America's Northern Triangle...", p. 5.

¹⁵⁹ Rodríguez, "Forced to Flee Central America's Northern Triangle...", p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ Agren and Holpuch, "Where Is The Migrant Caravan From...".

¹⁶¹ Jones, "Borders And Walls...".

¹⁶² Jones, "Borders And Walls...".

isolated areas of the western Arizona desert that were much more dangerous and diverted migrants flows from traditional final destinations in Texas and California to other parts of the country¹⁶³.

In consequence, the one statistic that increased closely correlated to the construction of walls was the hike in the number of deaths¹⁶⁴. Migrants, after being funneled to alternative paths chose ever more dangerous routes to arrive to their destinations. While an evident decline in the number of deaths occurred in California, a simultaneous rapid increase in the number of deaths occurred in Arizona¹⁶⁵. The Coroner's office in Tucson, Arizona reported a significant increment in the number of migrant deaths just after migration routes were redirected to the dangerous deserts¹⁶⁶. In the 1990's the Tucson morgue reported on average 18 deaths per year related to migration while during the 2000's the number grew noticeably to 200 per year¹⁶⁷. Despite a decrease in the number of border detentions, in 2010 the Border Patrol reported more than 250 found bodies just at the Tucson border sector¹⁶⁸.

The tendency to implement deterrence policies, is a phenomenon seen not only in the US, but around the world in developed countries that usually receive high numbers of asylum seekers and migrants. This estrangement from the global refugee protection regime has been a response to changes in migration patterns and it can be understood as the "deterrence paradigm" as Gammeltoft and Tan call it¹⁶⁹.

Nevertheless, even if deterrence measures might be effective in preventing the flow of migrants at particular illegal border crossing points, the constant innovation of smuggling techniques, the shifting of migrant flows to alternative routes, and the innovation of migrant themselves often undermine significantly or even completely the effect over time¹⁷⁰. In response to deterrence policies, migrants find as well other ways to move and are forced to come up with more innovative and safer ways to cross the border. Deterrence policies like those from the 1990s have lead, in part, to the creation of migrant caravans. With an increasingly dangerous route, migrants could band together in large groups to keep safe.

Thus, in answer to the question: why did the caravans form? It is clear that the migrant caravans was a way for migrants to travel more safely at a time when the migration routes are more

¹⁶³ Jones, "Borders And Walls...".

¹⁶⁴ Jones, "Borders And Walls...".

¹⁶⁵ Jones, "Borders And Walls...".

¹⁶⁶ Jones, "Borders And Walls...".

¹⁶⁷ Jones, "Borders And Walls...".

¹⁶⁸ Jones, "Borders And Walls...".

¹⁶⁹ T. Gammeltoft-Hansen and N. Tan, "The End Of The Deterrence Paradigm? Future Directions For Global Refugee Policy", *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2017, p. 29.

¹⁷⁰ Gammeltoft-Hansen and Tan, "The End Of The Deterrence Paradigm?... ", p. 43.

dangerous than ever. This danger is partly caused by deterrence policies, which are pushing migrants to more hostile migration routes, or leaving them to the mercy of human traffickers.

7.2.3 The Short Term Effects of US-Mexican Deterrence Policies on Caravans

As already mentioned above, we have shown that the US has been able to influence the way Mexico handles the migrant caravans. Through a threatening rhetoric by president Donald Trump backed by economic pressure and actions, the US has influenced the shape of Mexican migration policies. Mexican domestic policy reflected this pressure when the government mobilized different corporations such as the Federal Police, the marines, and the National Guard, and fortified its southern border before and after the arrival of the caravans.

These deterrence policies and the hardening of Mexican migration policy hindered the progression, and even the formation of migrant caravans in the short term. Migrant caravans were stopped by the implementation of a “containment belt” throughout the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in 2019¹⁷¹. In addition, the Mexican government deployed around 6000 members of the National Guard and set on the roads a system of migratory checkpoints in order to bottle up migration at its southern region¹⁷².

Thus, my findings are that the deterrence policies that Mexico implemented after pressure from the US have been able to stop the caravans in the short term. Nevertheless, I also found that migrants will shift to other migration routes or methods as long as their necessity to flee is still there. In consequence, rather than stopping migration, deterrence policies will only harden the conditions for migrants and make the journey much more dangerous forcing them to paths and practices that are more unsafe and even deadlier. However this long term effect will be discussed below.

7.2.4 The Long Term Effects of US-Mexican Deterrence Policies on Caravans

As my findings illustrates, the deterrence paradigm shows us how the deployment of National Guards, both at Mexico’s and US’ southern borders, and the overall tightening of migration policies will make the entrance of migrant caravans into Mexico harder and harder every time. However, although this tightening will probably prompt the disband of caravans, it will trigger the reliance of migrants on human traffickers and criminal organizations to cross the border. In return, trafficking organizations will increase their income and resources, gangs will obtain more power especially in Central America fostering the incrementation of violence, and migrants will

¹⁷¹ Mcdonnell, "At Mexico'S Southern Border...".

¹⁷² Mcdonnell, "At Mexico'S Southern Border...".

experience a greater need to flee their countries¹⁷³. The result will be translated thus in an overall increment of migration numbers despite the strict deterrence policies. If the tough and violent route migrants face while crossing through Mexico do not hinder them from leaving their countries, it is unlikely that US policy will do it as long as they have to flee for their lives¹⁷⁴.

The danger of empowering already powerful human smuggling organizations is an imminent risk across Mexico and Central America. Human trafficking has shown to be one of the most profitable business in the underworld and according to the United Nations, already in 2005, its total value was estimated to be over the 32 billion US dollars mark¹⁷⁵. In Mexico, already very strong and sophisticated criminal organizations like the Gulf Cartel and “Los Zetas” have made human trafficking one of their core revenues. However, the initiation for criminal gangs into such activities can also start reversely as it has been the case for several prominent Central American gangs that started initially with human trafficking and then later on ventured into drug trafficking as they already possessed the infrastructure, routes and contacts¹⁷⁶.

The consequences of strengthened criminal organizations means a more unstable region, more corruption, more violence, and exactly against president Trump intentions: more immigration. Incentives for gangs, cartels, and other criminal groups to venture into human trafficking activities will increase with deterrence policies and harder law enforcement. Not only because the number of clients increase, but because the price for their criminal services rise as well¹⁷⁷. Higher levels of enforcement require in consequence higher levels of sophistication and greater amounts of resources in order to successfully smuggle people across the borders, not to mention the higher risk of the whole venture. Accordingly, a study published in 2010 by the US Department of Homeland Security showed a direct correlation between the rise of enforcement at the border and the rise on the prices for human smuggling¹⁷⁸.

Despite the development of new border control technologies and gatekeeping strategies that have been generated as a result of harder deterrence policies, human traffickers still manage to bypass border controls despite the difficulties. In defiance of the increased criminalization and more intense targeting of human trafficking, smugglers are still able to produce high-quality faked documents, develop new trafficking methods, bribe immigration officials at different levels, and quickly adapt to new migration routes. As a billion-dollar industry, human smuggling is a highly resourceful and versatile enterprise¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷³ S. Bermeo, "Violence Drives Immigration From Central America", *The Brookings Institute*, 2018.

¹⁷⁴ Bermeo, "Violence Drives Immigration From Central America".

¹⁷⁵ "Factsheet On Human Trafficking", *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, 2009.

¹⁷⁶ S. Dudley, "Trump'S Border Policies Strengthen Organized Crime. Here'S How.", *InSight Crime*, 2018.

¹⁷⁷ Dudley, "Trump'S Border Policies...".

¹⁷⁸ Dudley, "Trump'S Border Policies...".

¹⁷⁹ T. Gammeltoft-Hansen and N. Tan, "The End Of The Deterrence Paradigm?...", 2017, p. 43.

According to Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, a political science professor at the George Washington University, stricter borders will only help criminal groups like “Los Zetas” intensifying the problem of violence and aggravating the vulnerable condition of migrants¹⁸⁰. She argues that groups like “Los Zetas” have a clear understanding that for most illegal migrants resorting to the authorities is not an option. Therefore, it is very easy for such organizations to use, and even force, migrants as workforce for their illegal activities. “From the street vender who is extorted by gangs...to the day laborer who thought he was going to do some landscaping only to find himself offloading marijuana on the coast” migrants are deluded by gangsters due to their enforced anonymity¹⁸¹.

In response to the deterrence paradigm, the United Nations, Doctors Without Borders, and the International Crisis Group have advocated for a more protective and humanitarian approach rather than dissuasion and repatriation¹⁸². This kind of approach would keep migrants out of the shadows, help migrants to stay away from traffickers, and help receiving countries to manage refugee flows and make better assessments¹⁸³.

To conclude, the emergence of caravans was a consequence of previous deterrence policies that forced migrants to look for new innovative and safer ways to travel through an ever more difficult and dangerous route to the US. Deterrence policies and harder control on migration rules might disband the formation of caravans and decrease migration flows in the short term, but as my findings suggest, it is just a matter of time for new trends and migration methods to show up and start the cycle again. With more deterrence policies that force migrants to be more creative, perhaps the next method of migration will not be a caravan, but something new and completely different.

In conclusion, deterrence policies mean, as my findings have shown, that human traffickers and gangs will profit. This means increased power for criminal gangs, and thus increased violence in the countries where these gangs are from, i.e. Central America. In addition, increased violence means that more people from Central America will try to flee. As I showed in the beginning of this section, most of the migrants in the caravan were escaping from violence and with an increase on it, migrant numbers will only further increase.

Summarizing, the US was able to influence Mexico’s handling of the migrant caravans through economic pressure, which lead to stricter political policies on immigration by Mexico to deter

¹⁸⁰ Dudley, "Trump'S Border Policies ...".

¹⁸¹ Dudley, "Trump'S Border Policies ...".

¹⁸² Bermeo, "Violence Drives Immigration From Central America".

¹⁸³ Bermeo, "Violence Drives Immigration From Central America".

the caravans. Nevertheless, as I have shown here, while that may deter migrant caravans in the short term, it will only create more migrants in the long term who may travel not through the migrant caravan method, but something completely new.

8. Discussion

8.1 Wallerstein's Theory as a Way to Understand the Migrant Caravan

When analyzing how the US was able to influence Mexico's handling of the migrant caravan both politically and economically, the US-Mexico relationship began to echo the relationships that Immanuel Wallerstein outlines in his book *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* from 2004 where he summarizes the ideas that make up "world-systems analysis" that he has built upon since 1974.

In his book Wallerstein outlines the unequal relationships between powerful core countries and peripheral countries. This relationship greatly resembles the unequal relationship between Mexico and the US analyzed in this essay so far. As previously explained in the Theoretical Framework section of this paper, core and peripheral countries are distinguished mainly by their production processes. Core countries have monopoly processes and thus have an advantage on the international market, whereas peripheral countries have free-market processes and hence, more competition on the international market. Monopoly processes mean that core countries have an advantage over peripheral ones, and therefore they have power over peripheral countries in matters ranging from politics, economics and the control of borders.

Where does Mexico and the US stand in this theory then? The answer revolves around Wallerstein outlining the characteristics of the "semi-peripheral" countries. These countries have a mixture of "core-like and peripheral products"¹⁸⁴. Mexico, it is argued here, constitutes a semi-peripheral country. Even though Wallerstein puts Latin America in the peripheral category,¹⁸⁵ the more we look at the case study of the migrant caravan, one can argue that the US represents the core country, Mexico the semi-peripheral and Central America as the peripheral. Mexico does have both peripheral and core-like production processes being its agriculture industry, manufacturing of automobiles and textiles its peripheral industries¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸⁴ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 29.

¹⁸⁵ el-Ojeili, "Reflections On Wallerstein...", p. 682.

¹⁸⁶ J. Chepkemoi, "What Are The Biggest Industries In Mexico?", *Worldatlas*, 2019.

On the other hand, Mexico's core-like processes include the creation and production of modern technology. Its financial technology (fintech) industry has 238 startups, which is 50% more than 2016¹⁸⁷. Also areas like the Creative Digital City in Guadalajara covers over 100,000 square feet and was built to foster tech startup companies¹⁸⁸. This complex produces tech products that are worth more than \$21 billion around the world¹⁸⁹. Wallerstein argues that monopolies in core countries come about because of government protections¹⁹⁰. In 2018 Mexico's government put a bill in place to regulate the fintech market which would prevent money laundering and corruption¹⁹¹. Production processes and the support of start-ups in the tech field mean that Mexico focuses a lot on their core-like production processes where competition is less fierce and innovation give products a competitive advantage on the international market. This is why I argue in this essay that Mexico has the attributes of a semi-peripheral countries, since they have both core and peripheral-like production processes.

As we have seen, semi-peripheral countries are in constant competition with other peripheral countries, and aspire to rise in the ranks to become a core country¹⁹². Mexico can also be seen to have this urge as it focuses more on its core neighbors to the north rather than their peripheral neighbors to the south. In regards to trade, Mexico focuses cooperation northwards through trade deals like NAFTA rather than southwards. In Wallerstein's framework, this can be explained as Mexico trying to rise in the ranks to go from a semi-peripheral country to a core country.

So how does Wallerstein relate to the case study of the migrant caravan? Interestingly, Wallerstein's relationship between the strong and weak states, outlined in world-systems analysis, is relevant to our case developed in this essay.

Firstly, Wallerstein argues that "strong", core states have an upper hand in trade and can control the trade and tariffs, similar to the US's influence over trade with Mexico. Wallerstein states that "Strong states relate to weak states by pressurizing them to keep their frontiers open to those flows of factors of production that are useful and profitable to firms located in the strong states..."¹⁹³. We can see this exact relationship in the case of the US and Mexico. The US, a strong state, was able to pressurize Mexico, a "weak" semi-peripheral state, through threats to end trade deals like NAFTA and threats to implement 5% trade tariffs. Here, the US was able to use its upper hand in trade and Mexico's dependence on it to influence its southern neighbor. Thus, Wallerstein's definition of a strong state applies to the US in this case.

¹⁸⁷ "13 Facts About Mexico'S Growing Technology Scene", *Launchway Media*, 2019.

¹⁸⁸ R. Lowery Contreras, "High Tech Industry In Guadalajara: Is This Mexico's Future?", *Mexico News Daily*, 2018.

¹⁸⁹ Lowery Contreras, "High Tech Industry...".

¹⁹⁰ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 26.

¹⁹¹ "13 Facts About Mexico'S Growing Technology Scene", 2019.

¹⁹² Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 57.

¹⁹³ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 55.

Furthermore, Wallerstein explains that strong states have influence over weaker states on who gets to cross their borders. This is relevant in the case of the migrant caravan too. Wallerstein argues that the stronger state has “larger bureaucratic machinery” and it is therefore better able to enforce “transboundary transactions” which include the movement of people across its borders.¹⁹⁴ This is similar to the way that the US is able to pressure Mexico into curbing trans-boundary influxes of migrants including the migrant caravan. The US’ “bureaucratic machinery” is larger than Mexico’s as it has 19,000 border patrol officers and a budget of \$3.8 billion according to Douglas S. Massey, a professor of public policy and sociology at Princeton University¹⁹⁵. In contrast, Mexico’s budget is a mere \$ 1.2 million¹⁹⁶. Using Wallerstein’s framework, the US is able to use its upper hand as a strong state and its superior bureaucratic immigration machinery in order to decide “...the movement of goods, capital, and of persons...”¹⁹⁷. In the situation with the migrant caravan, the US used its upper-hand in trade and economic pressure to control “trans-boundary transaction”, namely, the caravan. Wallerstein warns in his book that the result of the unequal core-peripheral relationship is that the stronger state has control over the flow of people. In consequence, Wallerstein’s theory can be applied to the migrant caravan case.

Interestingly, in this essay it was discussed that the US was able to influence Mexico’s political decisions through economic pressure. Wallerstein also explains that strong, core states are going to have control over the politics of the weaker semi-peripheral state. He writes, “Strong states relate to weak states by pressuring them to install and keep in power persons whom the strong states find acceptable, and to join the strong states in placing pressure on other weak states to get them to conform to the policy needs of the strong states”¹⁹⁸. We could say that, through the threat of renegotiating USMCA and increasing trade tariffs, the US was able to influence the political immigration policy of Mexico. Similar to how Wallerstein describes the strong state, the US was able to influence Mexico in adopting the immigration policies that they wanted.

In conclusion, we can use Wallerstein as a framework to understand the relationship between the US and Mexico. From his perspective, this relationship stems predominantly from their economic relation, and their status in the world economy as core countries with strict monopolies over their production processes, such as the US, or as semi-peripheral countries in the case of Mexico, that have half monopolies and have free-market. This economic relationship informs all other relationships. The US’ economic advantage allows it to have control over trade, and its control over trade allows it to have a say over Mexico’s immigration and political policy.

¹⁹⁴ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 46.

¹⁹⁵ L. Jacobson, "Donald Trump Off-Base In Comparison Of U.S., Mexico Border Laws", *PolitiFact*, 2018.

¹⁹⁶ J. Fredrick, "How Mexico Beefs Up Immigration Enforcement To Meet Trump's Terms", *NPR*, 2019.

¹⁹⁷ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 46.

¹⁹⁸ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, p. 57.

Wallerstein outlines this idea on his book *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, allowing us to see a surprising similarity between it and the analysis made earlier on in this essay. Thus, Wallerstein may be a useful lens from which to understand the US and Mexico's relationship in regards to migration and the migrant caravan.

8.2 Post-Colonialism's Place in the Discussion

As I explained in the "Theoretical Framework" section of the essay, Wallerstein has been critiqued heavily by post-colonial theorists. They argue that his three categories of core, periphery and semi-periphery are simplifying and feed into "third worldism" and a "center-margin binarism of imperial discourse"¹⁹⁹. Moretti explains that these categories are simplifications²⁰⁰ and Hopkins argues that all too often, the categories become the main focus of Wallerstein's theory, rather than the unequal relationship²⁰¹. Instead of simplified categories, post-colonialists are interested in the "significance of subjectivities and experience"²⁰². Rather than an organized system like the world-system developed by Wallerstein, post-colonialists believe that the world is composed of "disorganized tangle of multiple processes" and unpredictability²⁰³.

Thus, using the findings from this study, is Wallerstein still the correct way to view the issue of the migrant caravan?

I argue yes and no. One could say that Wallerstein is a suitable theoretical framework in order to understand Mexico and the US' "unequal relationship" on the macro-political level. The relationship between the governments and the economic aspects at play, can be seen in a "core and semi-peripheral" perspective, as explained by Wallerstein. This unequal relationship stems first and foremost from Mexico's economic disadvantage in comparison to the US and their reliance on trade with the US. This unequal relationship gives the US immense power over Mexico, including the power to decide what Mexico does in response to a migrant caravan. Wallerstein's conception of this unequal exchange between the core and semi-peripheral was important in order to understand the relationship between the US and Mexico. By understanding the relationship between these two countries through Wallerstein's framework, it becomes easier to answer the first part of the original research question, "How did the US influence Mexico's handling of the Central American caravans from 2018 to 2019...". The answer is that the US did have an influence on Mexico predominantly through economic pressure that allowed the US, a

¹⁹⁹ Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions...", p. 398.

²⁰⁰ el-Ojeili, "Reflections On Wallerstein...", p. 685.

²⁰¹ Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions...", p. 357.

²⁰² Feldman, "Intersecting And Contesting Positions...", p. 358.

²⁰³ el-Ojeili, "Reflections On Wallerstein...", p. 692.

“strong state” in Wallerstein’s terms, to influence Mexican trade, immigration flows, and politics.

However, when it comes to the micro-perspective and the second part of the research question, “...how did this affect the migrants themselves?”, which looks at how the US-Mexican relationship and immigration policy affects the people of the caravan themselves, there are a lot more aspects at play. Wallerstein’s explanation of the unequal relationship between the US and Mexico no longer suffices. Instead, human-trafficking, violence, poverty, the experience of migrants and the nature of migration patterns all come into play. On this micro-level, I argue that the post-colonialist perspective is more appropriate. For the people of the caravan themselves, there are socio-cultural, economic issues and more at play. To understand the people of the caravans we need a more nuanced post-colonial perspective rather than a broad sweeping perspective like Wallerstein’s. Thus, in my analysis about how the Mexican policies against the caravans affected the people of the caravans themselves, I have looked at a large range of sources, ranging from reports by NGOs about the caravans and why people are fleeing, to interviews with the migrants about their experience on the way. To answer the second part of the research question, “...how did this affect the migrants themselves?”, a post-colonialist perspective is needed to understand the complex nature of the people of the caravans and how policy affects them. In consequence, in my analysis section I strayed away from a Wallerstein-centric approach and instead used a more nuanced approach to understanding how deterrence policies affect the individuals of the caravan.

9. Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper I sought to answer the research question: “How did the US influence Mexico’s handling of the Central American caravans from 2018 to 2019, and how did this affect the migrants themselves?”. This question is composed of two parts. Firstly, how the US was able to influence the way Mexico handled the migrant caravans. Secondly, how these policy decisions – implemented by Mexico, but caused by US pressure – affected the people of the caravans themselves. The first part of the research question used Wallerstein’s theory of world-systems analysis to understand the relationship between Mexico and the US. The second part analyzed the deterrence doctrine to understand how the response to deter the migrant caravan affected these migrants. This effect was different for the migrants in the short term and long term. In this second part, it was clear that Wallerstein’s framework was insufficient, as explained by post-colonialist literature, and instead a broad range of different sources were used to analyze the effect on migrants themselves.

In regards to the first part of the research question, we have seen that the US was able to influence Mexico's response to the caravans politically. Though the Central American caravans started off as a legal demonstration in Mexico, US pressure through economic threats and harsh rhetoric by Trump influenced them to change their stance on the migrant caravans. As I outlined, Mexico relies heavily on the US for trade. By threatening to end NAFTA, which has benefited Mexico's economy greatly, Mexico submitted to the pressure and began to enforce the US' harsh policies against the migrant caravan. This included sending the federal police and immigration officials to the southern Mexican border. In 2019, the US threatened to increase trade tariffs by 5%, and in response Mexico sent 6,000 members of the National Guard to their southern border, which hindered any new caravans in 2019 that tried to form. Therefore, we can see that the US was able to use economic pressure both in 2018 and 2019 to get Mexico to enforce political policies of deterrence. Consequently, my answer to the first part of the research question "How did the US influence Mexico's handling of the Central American caravans from 2018 to 2019", is that the US influenced Mexico's handling of the caravans by exerting economic pressure, that resulted in a harsher political stance by Mexico in an attempt to deter the caravans.

To further understand the US' influence on Mexico's handling of the migrant caravan, Wallerstein's world-systems analysis was a useful theoretical framework to use. Wallerstein outlines that core countries (such as the US) have control over weaker, semi-peripheral countries (like Mexico). Core countries have monopoly and thus their production processes are less competitive and they have an advantage on the international market, whereas semi-peripheral countries have many peripheral production processes which are highly competitive and less advantageous on the international market. Therefore, these core countries have an advantage over the peripheral and semi-peripheral ones. Wallerstein outlines that, as a result of the advantageous production processes, "strong" core countries are able to influence trade with weaker countries, as well as influence the transboundary flows of people across its borders with them, and even their politics. This, as I have explained in the discussion section, is precisely what happened in the case of the US' influence on Mexico's reaction to the migrant caravans.

For the second part of the research question "...how did this affect the migrants themselves?" I was able to show how the deterrence policies implemented in Mexico, by pressure from the US, affected the people of the caravans. Firstly, in the short term I showed that deterrence policies such as the mobilization of the National Guard has been able to disband the caravans from 2018 and reduce the amount of new caravans that were even able to form in 2019. Thus, in the short term we can say that the deterrence policies have reduced migrant caravans. However, in the long-term, previous data and reports show that making the migration path more difficult through deterrence policies in fact increases the reliance on traffickers. This increases the prosperity of the traffickers and the gangs affiliated with them. Prosperous gangs means more violence in Central America, which is exactly what causes migrants to leave Central America in the first

place. Hence, deterrence policies only increases the amount of migrants in the long term, and means that migrants will have to be more creative about the new methods they use to try to flee their countries. Rather than a migrant caravan, the new form of migration will be something totally new. Therefore, my answer to the second part of the research question “how did this affect the migrants themselves?” is that in the short term these deterrence policies stopped the people of the caravans, but in the long-term they will only create more migrants and make their path more dangerous.

To answer the second part of the research question I no longer relied on the theoretical framework of Wallerstein. Instead, I used testimony of the subjective experiences of these migrants, data about their reasons for fleeing, and data about the experience of migrants during their journey. I relied on reports by MSF and the UN who were on the ground at migrant shelters talking to migrants gathering data in order to understand the complex situation. A complicated situation such as the migration patterns of Central Americans and the reasons why they flee require a complex theoretical framework. Wallerstein does not suffice here, rather, one could say that a post-colonialist perspective is more suitable since it takes into consideration the complex nature of society, values subjective experience, and does not see the world in terms of a simplistic structure. I suggest that future research into the effects of policies on migrants should follow more of a post-colonialist lens. The situation is a complex one that requires putting those on the margins – the migrants – on the front and the center.

In conclusion, this case study on migrant caravans was not only an in-depth look at the migrant caravans from Central America, but also a look at the political influence of the US over Mexico, and the implications that this influence has over the people of the caravans. While the relationships between nations may seem to exist only on the international stage, they affect the lives of vulnerable migrants who already are facing violence both at home and on the route to safety. This case study does not attempt to make wider generalizations about all migration, however it hopes to be one of many studies which can add depth to the knowledge of migration, deterrence and the impact that international relations have on individual people. As Yin explains, case studies hope to “expand theories” and through my analysis of the migrant caravans I have expanded on the theory of world-systems analysis by Immanuel Wallerstein. Hopefully further field research or case studies can be conducted to add to the findings of this essay.

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