

Migración multicultural en la Frontera México-Estados Unidos: contexto y políticas, 2021-2024

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Resumen

Este artículo analiza la migración internacional y multicultural en la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos durante la administración del presidente Biden, enfocándose en el aumento de migrantes africanos y asiáticos, particularmente chinos, en la región Tijuana-San Diego. La pregunta central es: ¿cuál es el contexto de la migración multicultural en el marco de la mayor movilidad humana en América del Norte? Utilizando datos de la Oficina de Aduanas y Protección Fronteriza de Estados Unidos (USCBP) y el Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM) de México, se identifican patrones y tendencias en la movilidad humana y las nacionalidades predominantes entre los migrantes detenidos. Los resultados evidencian una crisis migratoria con nuevas movilidades humanas, afectando a más de 45 nacionalidades. La política inmigratoria de Biden, centrada en derechos humanos ha incentivado un mayor cruce fronterizo. El estudio destaca la creciente diversidad migratoria, los impactos de las políticas de Biden y los desafíos humanitarios y de seguridad que surgen, subrayando la necesidad de políticas inclusivas y seguras.

Palabras clave: Migración internacional; Frontera Tijuana-San Diego; Movilidad humana; Migración multicultural; Migración asiática.

Multicultural migration on the United States-Mexico Border: context and policies, 2021-2024.

Abstract

This article analyzes international and multicultural migration at the Mexico-United States border during President Biden's administration, focusing on the increase in African and Asian migrants, particularly Chinese, in the Tijuana-San Diego region. The central question is: what is the context of multicultural migration within the framework of the largest human mobility event in North America? Utilizing data from the United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) and Mexico's National Institute of Migration (INM), the study identifies patterns and trends in human mobility and the predominant nationalities among detained migrants. The findings reveal a migration crisis with new human mobilities involving over 45 nationalities. Biden's human rights-centered immigration policy has encouraged greater border crossings. The study highlights the growing migratory diversity, the impacts of Biden's policies, and the emerging humanitarian and security challenges, underscoring the need for inclusive and secure policies.

Keywords: International migration; Tijuana-San Diego border; Human mobility; Multicultural Migration; Asian Migration.

Introduction

The Tijuana, BC, Mexico-San Diego, CA, USA border region is a relevant point of analysis. This crossing is the second most significant in terms of apprehensions, with a total of 255,343 reported by US Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) in the last fiscal year, particularly in May 2024. The

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other three crossings with the highest volume of apprehensions are Tucson, AZ (406,441), Del Rio, TX (214,631), and El Paso, TX (204,261) (USCBP, June 20, 2024).

New human mobilities, such as Chinese-origin migration along the U.S.-Mexico border, have multiple dimensions and can have significant impacts on the social, economic and cultural fabric of the region, especially in the United States. These movements represent both challenges and opportunities (Banerjee & Smith, 2024).

The presence of migrants of Chinese origin, as well as other nationalities from various countries in Africa (Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Angola, Somalia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Congo, among others) (Jordan, 2024), and Asia (India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Turkey, Vietnam, Tajikistan, among others), reflects global interconnectedness and labor mobility in an increasingly globalized world.

The stricter detention policies implemented by the Trump and Biden administrations (Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chavez, 2023) have led organized crime networks to adapt and expand their market niche, internationalizing it in recent years. This underscores the importance of both legal and illegal international networks, including human traffickers (Massey, 2022).

Chinese-origin migration at the U.S.-Mexico border, in the context of increased global human mobility, illustrates the complex challenges and opportunities facing current migration policies. Global interconnectedness and adaptive organized crime networks add layers of complexity that requires ongoing analysis and multifaceted solutions to manage migration effectively and humanely.

Challenges and opportunities of Chinese migration in Tijuana: a multidimensional approach

The U.S.-Mexico border, and particularly the city of Tijuana, has become a crucial scenario for understanding the dynamics of international migration. Chinese migration to this region encapsulates a set of challenges and opportunities that reflect the complexity of cross-border interactions in a globalized world (Cheng, 2008). Chinese migration to Tijuana represents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has evolved over the decades under both global and local influences (Xiong, McCarthy & Culver, 2024). This analysis provides a synthesis of recent studies on the impact of this migration, highlighting how it aligns with or diverges from humanitarian governance principles such as humanity, impartiality, and respect for human rights. The city of Tijuana, as one of the main transit and destination points for migrants on the

U.S.-Mexico border has been deeply affected by increasingly restrictive immigration policies and by a context of violence and vulnerability that characterizes this border region (Solano & Massey, 2022). In recent years, under President Biden's administration, the humanitarian crisis has intensified (Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chávez, 2023), evidenced by the increase in the number of detained migrants and the growing demands for basic services such as housing, food and medical care (Galhardi, 2022; Garrett & Sementelli, 2023; Rocha, Juárez & Ramos, 2023).

Restrictive immigration policies have forced many migrants, including families and unaccompanied minors, to opt for more dangerous routes and rely on smugglers to cross the border, raising their risk of falling into human trafficking networks and facing serious dangers during them crossing (Helbling & Meierrieks, 2020; Slack & Martinez, 2020; Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2023). In addition, the presence of drug-related violence and organized crime at the border further



increases insecurity for these communities, especially for vulnerable groups such as Chinese migrants, who may be less visible in the general migration discourse (Sanchez, 2020; Vega, 2021; Hsin & Aptekar, 2021; Solano & Massey, 2022).

Throughout different eras, Chinese migrants have faced numerous challenges, including structural violence and discrimination (Cheng, 2008). However, they have also developed robust transnational networks, engaged in vibrant cultural activities, and forged interracial relationships that have led to the formation of hybrid identities. This picture underscores the need to break free from the constraints imposed by state-national approaches and adopt frameworks that seriously consider transpacific dynamics (Bellino & Gluckman, 2024; Banerjee & Smith, 2024).

Research on the Chinese community in Latin America has begun to transcend traditional geographic barriers, exploring the intersection of cultural identities and migration experiences beyond Latin America (Martinez & Dussel, 2016). The presence of Chinese Latinos in the United States, for example, destabilizes traditional racial binaries and demonstrates the culturally hybrid identities of these migrants and their descendants, evidencing the impact of secondary migration and the need for methodologies that transcend temporal divisions and geospatial limitations.

The Asian American experience, especially in the context of globalization and trans-Pacific politics, presents a complex interweaving of cultural, political, and economic identities that reflect their impact on both Asia and the United States (Van Dongen, 2023). The notion of transnationalism and the role of Asian Americans as transpacific mediators are discussed at length, suggesting that this role may be both an opportunity and a challenge, given the persistent barriers they face in their integration within U.S. society (Martinez & Dussel, 2016).

During the 1970s, Tijuana began to see its first significant waves of Chinese migrants, who arrived primarily for economic reasons and family reunification (Cheng, 2008). Although initially the community was small, they began to establish small businesses, contributing to the local economy, but facing significant challenges in terms of social integration and acceptance (Manzano, de la Rosa & Carrillo, 2022).

In the 1980s, the Chinese community began to consolidate. Associations were created to help new migrants adapt and navigate legal and cultural challenges. However, the lack of inclusive policies and the persistence of linguistic and cultural barriers marked this stage, evidencing a gap in the application of humanitarian governance principles, especially in terms of fairness and equity (Martinez & Dussel, 2016).

The 1990s brought an increase in the visibility of the Chinese community in Tijuana, with notable growth in the restaurant and commercial sector. However, this period was also marked by crises, including acts of xenophobia and racism, which challenged the principles of humanity and respect for human rights. Local responses to these crises were often insufficient, highlighting the need for better coordination and implementation of humanitarian governance (Manzano, de la Rosa & Carrillo, 2022).

In the first decade of the 21st century, the Chinese community began to integrate more deeply into the social and economic fabric of Tijuana. Collaboration between Chinese and Mexican organizations improved, but major challenges were still faced in terms of discrimination and unequal access to services and legal rights, reflecting limitations in the implementation of effective humanitarian governance (Cheng, 2008).

The second decade of the 21st century has seen significant improvements in the participation of Chinese migrants in the social and political aspects of Tijuana. The creation of integration programs and recognition of their contributions has strengthened the community. However, problems of human trafficking and labor exploitation persist, showing that humanitarian governance needs to focus more on protection against exploitation and violence (Cheng, 2008; Manzano, de la Rosa & Carrillo, 2022).

Currently, Chinese migration to Tijuana remains relevant, with new waves of migrants seeking opportunities in an uncertain global context exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictive migration policies at the U.S.-Mexico border have increased the vulnerabilities of these migrants, requiring an urgent reassessment of humanitarian governance policies and practices to ensure their protection and rights.

According to recent data provided by Enrique Lucero Vázquez, municipal director of Atención al Migrante in Tijuana, in the fiscal year that began in October 2022, there were 8,964 entries of Chinese migrants into Baja California with intentions of crossing into California. This increase is notable and reflects an escalation in migration away from traditional legal routes to more dangerous and desperate methods (Hsin & Aptekar, 2021). Many migrants opt for routes through Ecuador and the dangerous Darien jungle crossing, evidencing the severity of their situation in China and the willingness to face great risks to reach safety (Xiong, McCarthy & Culver, 2024).

The migration phenomenon has generated various reactions, including political concerns in the United States, where figures such as the Lieutenant Governor of Texas have expressed national security concerns (Kim & Park, 2022). These reactions are often tinged with xenophobia and stigmatization, especially toward Chinese migrants described as a potential threat (Li, English & Kulich, 2021). In addition, the high cost of transit, reaching up to \$41,000 per person, underscores the extreme exploitation by human traffickers (Lam, Shih, Chin & Zen, 2021).

This context poses significant challenges to the principles of humanitarian governance, which advocate for the protection of migrants based on humanity, fairness and respect for human rights. Chinese migration to Tijuana illustrates the complexity of applying humanitarian governance principles in a dynamic and often adverse context. While there have been significant advances in integration and recognition of migrants' rights, persistent challenges underscore the need for a more coherent and coordinated approach that truly addresses the root causes of migration and promotes equitable and humane integration. Studies highlight the importance of strengthening migration policies that respect and promote the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their origin or legal status (Manzano, de la Rosa & Carrillo, 2022).

The labor market insertion of Chinese immigrants in Baja California represents a fascinating and complex field of study that reflects the interaction between migration, labor opportunities and the influence of ethnic social networks. Ethnic social networks are crucial for the labor market insertion of immigrants, providing not only employment opportunities but also a sense of belonging and community support. However, they face significant challenges related to language and cultural barriers, as well as distrust and perception of vulnerability among immigrants (Martínez Rivera & Dussel Peters, 2016).

Chinese migration to Tijuana illustrates the urgent need for a coordinated and humanitarian response that addresses the root causes of migration and the vulnerabilities faced by migrants on their journey (Xiong, McCarthy & Culver, 2024). It is imperative to develop policies that not only manage migration flows, but also ensure protection and respect for the rights of all migrants,



regardless of their legal status. This requires a multinational approach that combines security with compassion, and views migration not as a threat, but as a humanitarian challenge that requires a collective and compassionate solution (Cheng, 2008).

Human mobility from Asia and Africa on the Tijuana-San Diego border

Analysis of human mobility from Asia and Africa to the Tijuana-San Diego border reveals complex migration patterns that reflect socioeconomic and political conditions in migrants' countries of origin. USCBP and INM data indicate a significant increase in the detention of migrants from these regions, suggesting that economic hardship, armed conflict and political instability are determining factors in their decision to migrate. These migrants face dangerous routes and often resort to human smuggling networks, evidencing the need for further analysis of the underlying causes and conditions that facilitate these movements (USCBP, 2024; Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chávez, 2023).

The complexity of irregular migration from countries such as China, India, and several African nations into the United States through Mexico also highlights the shortcomings in current border security policies. Rising numbers of apprehensions indicate not only an increase in the number of migrants, but also the adaptability and sophistication of the human smuggling networks that facilitate these movements. These networks represent a significant challenge to national security and humanitarian governance. The Biden administration, along with the governments of Mexico and other involved countries, should consider strategies that not only address border security, but also provide protection and assistance to migrants, thereby integrating the principles of humanitarian governance into their migration policies (USCBP, 2024).

The situation at the Tijuana-San Diego border underscores the importance of migration management that integrates both security measures and humanitarian support initiatives. INM data show an increase in the number of secured migrants of various nationalities, reflecting the growing diversity of migration flows in this region. This increase poses significant challenges for authorities in terms of resources and response capacity. The figures indicate that migration policies must adapt to the changing realities and increasing complexity of migratory movements, requiring international cooperation and effective coordination between the different levels of government and organizations involved (Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chávez, 2023).

The current U.S. administration, led by President Joe Biden, has identified a significant increase in the mobility of people from China, India, and several African countries irregularly crossing the U.S.-Mexico border (USCBP, June 20, 2024). This increase in migration flows represents a particular concern for both the Mexican and U.S. governments. In response, collaboration with non-governmental organizations has intensified to a) understand the underlying causes of increased human mobility from Asia and Africa, and b) develop migration policies that address and prevent a humanitarian crisis resulting from the marked increase in irregular migrant crossings (Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chavez, 2023).

To effectively address the significant increase in the mobility of people from China, India and several African countries irregularly crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, it is crucial to understand the underlying reasons for this migration phenomenon. The governments of both countries, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, have focused their efforts on analyzing the various causes that drive these populations to migrate. This collaboration is focused on developing migration policies that not only manage the flow of migrants, but also prevent a humanitarian crisis that could arise from the increase in irregular crossings.

First, to understand the underlying causes of this phenomenon, it is essential to consider several factors that set a pattern in the decision making of people who migrate, as summarized below:

- Increasing globalization and the interconnection of economies worldwide have generated social and economic imbalances in different regions. African, Chinese and Indian countries often experience economic, political or social difficulties that drive their citizens to seek opportunities elsewhere, such as the United States (Johns, Loschmann & Arekapudi, 2023). This has led to an increase in irregular migration transiting the Tijuana-San Diego border (Cheng, 2008).
- Armed conflicts, political instability and natural disasters in various parts of the world can also motivate people to leave their countries in search of safety and a better quality of life. Migration thus becomes a survival strategy for many people facing adverse situations in their places of origin (Solano & Massey, 2022).
- Migration policies implemented by different countries, including the United States and Mexico, also play a key role in migratory mobility. Changes in immigration laws and restrictions imposed can influence how people decide to migrate and the risks they are willing to take to achieve their goals (Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chávez, 2023).

President Joe Biden's administration has adopted a more humanitarian and human rights-focused approach, differing markedly from previous administrations. This approach has generated an increase in the arrival of migrants seeking protection and better opportunities in the United States, as observed by various studies (Johns, Loschmann & Arekapudi, 2023).

However, the policies implemented by President Biden, despite their humanitarian intent, have contributed to a significant increase in human mobility from African (Adeyanju & Olatunji, 2024) and Asian countries. This situation has unleashed a humanitarian crisis that has not been adequately addressed. The lack of a coordinated and effective migration policy between Mexico and the United States has resulted in a continuous increase in the number of arrests of migrants attempting to irregularly cross the Tijuana-San Diego border and other borders, exacerbating tensions and challenges in migration management (Solano & Massey, 2022).

Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze the dynamics and context of multicultural migration at the Mexico-United States border, specifically focusing on the Tijuana-San Diego region. The research integrates quantitative data analysis and qualitative assessments to provide a comprehensive understanding of migration patterns and their implications.

The primary quantitative data sources include statistical reports from the United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) and Mexico's National Institute of Migration (INM). These data sets offer detailed records on the number of apprehensions, the nationalities of migrants, and trends in migration flows from 2021 to 2024. The statistical analysis identifies patterns and trends in human mobility, highlighting the significant increase in migrants from Asia and Africa. Descriptive statistics and trend analyses are utilized to interpret these patterns and provide insights into the evolving nature of migration at this border.



Complementing the quantitative data, qualitative assessments are conducted through the review of policy documents, governmental reports, and academic literature. These sources provide contextual information on the socio-political and economic conditions driving migration from Africa and Asia. Additionally, interviews and testimonies from migrants, policymakers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are analyzed to understand the human impact of migration policies and the lived experiences of migrants. This qualitative data helps to frame the statistical findings within the broader socio-political context.

Data collection involved accessing official reports from the USCBP and INM, as well as reviewing secondary sources such as academic journals, books, and news articles. The data spans from January 2021 to June 2024, allowing for a longitudinal analysis of migration trends under the Biden administration. The inclusion of diverse data sources ensures a holistic view of the migration phenomenon, capturing both numerical trends and human stories.

The study employs a multi-level analytical framework that integrates micro, meso, and macro perspectives. At the micro level, individual migrant experiences are analyzed to understand personal motivations and challenges. At the meso level, the role of migration networks and community organizations is examined to see how they facilitate or hinder migration processes. At the macro level, the impact of national and international policies on migration flows and patterns is assessed. This comprehensive framework enables a nuanced understanding of the interplay between individual actions and broader structural forces.

Ethical considerations are paramount in this research, particularly given the sensitive nature of migration issues. Informed consent was obtained from all interviewees, and their anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained. The research adheres to ethical guidelines for conducting studies involving vulnerable populations, ensuring that the dignity and rights of migrants are respected throughout the research process.

While this study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of multicultural migration at the Tijuana-San Diego border, it is not without limitations. The reliance on official statistics may not capture the full extent of irregular migration, as not all migrants are apprehended or recorded. Additionally, qualitative data from interviews may be subject to bias, as participants' perspectives are influenced by personal experiences and context. Despite these limitations, the mixed-methods approach offers a robust framework for understanding the complexities of migration in this region.

By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, this study offers a detailed and nuanced analysis of multicultural migration, contributing to the development of informed and effective migration policies that balance humanitarian concerns with security needs.

Results

The section titled "Dynamics of the Migration Phenomenon on the U.S.-Mexico Border" presents a comprehensive analysis of the findings derived from the quantitative and qualitative data collected. This section is structured to provide a clear and detailed picture of the evolving migration patterns, focusing particularly on the Tijuana-San Diego region. The presentation of results will follow a thematic approach, highlighting key trends and insights from the data.

Firstly, the quantitative data analysis reveals significant trends in the nationalities of migrants apprehended at the border, with a marked increase in individuals from Asia and Africa. Statistical tables and graphs will illustrate these trends, showing the year-on-year growth of migration

from countries such as China, India, and various African nations. These visuals will be accompanied by descriptive analyses that explain the shifts in migration patterns over the studied period, correlating them with changes in U.S. immigration policies under the Biden administration.

Secondly, the qualitative findings will be presented to contextualize the statistical data. This includes excerpts from interviews with migrants, policymakers, and NGO representatives, providing personal insights into the migration experience. These narratives will highlight the challenges faced by migrants, such as navigating dangerous routes, dealing with legal uncertainties, and encountering humanitarian issues at the border. Additionally, the qualitative data will explore the impact of transnational networks and community support systems on facilitating or impeding migration. By integrating these qualitative insights with the quantitative trends, the results section will offer a holistic view of the dynamics driving multicultural migration at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Dynamics of the migration phenomenon on the U.S.-Mexico border

Multicultural migration along the U.S.-Mexico border presents numerous social benefits, including cultural diversity, economic contributions, and community strengthening. However, it also poses significant national security challenges that require balanced and coordinated management to ensure both security and respect for the human rights of migrants (Masferrer et al., 2023).

Migration of African (Adeyanju & Olatunji, 2024) and Asian (Cheng, 2008) origin raises questions about the importance of international collaboration in the management of migratory flows and the promotion of policies that foster integration and respect for human rights. The evolution in recent years in the number of African and Asian migrants secured in Mexico is quite remarkable. In the case of African migrants, the National Institute of Migration secured 2,066 people in 2021, 6,572 in 2022 and 59,498 in 2023. In the case of Asians, 1,786 people were secured in 2021, 10,372 in 2022 and 45,877 in 2023 (INM, 2021, 2022, 2023).

These new movements along the U.S.-Mexico border reflect a complex migratory dynamic, with social, economic and cultural implications (Arango, 2023), in addition to generating different vulnerabilities associated with violence. Irregular migration between Mexico and the United States is a complex phenomenon and one of the most important at the global level (Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chávez, 2023; Arango, 2023).

Mexico's northern border cities, especially Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juarez and Piedras Negras, have lived in the context of a humanitarian crisis during the last three years of President Biden's administration. The high number of migrants detained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP, June 20, 2024) has generated demands for housing, food, health, and has increased vulnerabilities, violence, exclusion, and human trafficking, among other effects (Campos-Delgado, 2020; De la Rosa Rodriguez, 2022; Garrett & Sementelli, 2022; Ash, 2023).

Other works point out that the increase in the number of migrants detained by both the United States and Mexico is due to the U.S. willingness to detain migrants and the pressure exerted on Mexico to support in this task in Mexican territory (Massey, 2020; Vega, 2021; Solano & Massey, 2022; Barrachina, Ramos & Ramos, 2023). At the lowest point in detentions by the USCBP since 2000, then-President Trump announced that the United States was being overrun by Central American migrants. These migrants were using Mexican territory as a pathway and entering the United States illegally, which needed to be addressed as a priority (Eremin, 2021; Rojas-Wiesner, 2022).



The political-partisan use of the migration issue by the U.S. government has made it impossible for a migrant to transit through Mexico without support structures. The National Migration Institute, the National Guard and the Mexican Armed Forces have mobilized great efforts to neutralize migrants⁴. This has created a new area of opportunity for organized crime groups. These groups have expanded their area of business in human trafficking, increasing their presence in the crossing of people through Mexico⁵. This activity not only supports the transit of Central Americans and Caribbeans but also includes many South American nationals (mainly Venezuelans, Colombians, Ecuadorians, Brazilians and Peruvians), especially from 2022 onwards. In a second stage, it includes other migrants from the African and Asian continents (Adeyanju & Olatunji, 2024; Cheng, 2008).

As an effect of the new immigration reality, which expands the number of nationalities of migrants trying to cross into the United States through Mexico's land border, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) website no longer only shows the number of detainees of nationals from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, as it did until a few months ago. It has now expanded the presentation of its statistics, adding detainees from China, India, Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti, Cuba, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Nicaragua, Canada, Myanmar, Philippines, and others who are located indeterminately in the "Other" category, where citizens of other nationalities are accumulated (USCBP, June 20, 2024; Johns, Loschmann & Arekapudi, 2023).

Despite the updating and expansion of this source of statistical information, the USCBP's efforts have fallen short and have been overtaken by reality. As the insured statistics published by the National Institute of Migration show, the recent irruption of Asians and Africans is very important and is not fully reflected in the U.S. statistics (Campos-Delgado, 2021; Warren, 2021; Ahedo, 2023).

If this growth trend continues and consolidates at the rate observed between 2021 and 2023, it will be necessary to specifically study the problem of migration of these groups. To this end, it is necessary to promote appropriate migration and humanitarian governance strategies to manage this migration scenario (Massey, 2022; Kainz & Betts, 2021). As has been pointed out, it is difficult to explain without analyzing the increased activity of national and international organized crime groups, which have found in the passage of migrants from different parts of the world a new market

⁴ The National Immigration Institute has implemented countless "humanitarian rescue" posts at different points along Mexico's main highways and roads. These immigration control and verification points reflect the efforts of the National Immigration Institute and the Mexican government to meet the requirements of the United States in controlling the flow of migrants through Mexico. This has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of people secured by the INM from 2019 to date. The National Human Rights Commission on March 26, 2024, issued recommendation 54/2024, ON THE CASE OF VIOLATIONS TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO LEGAL SECURITY, PERSONAL FREEDOM AND DIGNIFIED TREATMENT, IN AGGRAVATION OF VARIOUS PERSONS IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OF VENEZUELAN AND HAITIAN NATIONALITY (AFRO-DESCENDANTS), PRESENTED IN THE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MIGRATION, IN APETITLÁN, TLAXCALA. The report directly addressed this issue and made the authorities of the National Institute of Migration reflect on their actions.

⁵ The delegate of the National Migration Institute in Baja California, David Perez Tejada, confirmed this statement at the seminar "Security and Development in Mexico's Borders" organized by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte and the Centro de Investigaciones y Docencia Económicas on June 26, 2024. Among other things, the delegate pointed out that they require the support of the Armed Forces in their tasks because organized crime groups are armed and consider human trafficking as a business that leaves more profit than the traditional drug trafficking to the United States. The delegate pointed out: "You find these images of overcrowded people, of people who are deprived of their freedom. On one occasion, in a motel in the downtown area, we had a case of a Vietnamese woman who was deprived of her freedom in a bus for three days and they wanted to sell her as a sex slave for 35,000 dollars". He stated concretely in relation to organized crime: "In Baja California, the cartels that were previously dedicated to drugs have diversified, so to speak, and are interested in other types of businesses or ramifications. In this case, human trafficking. There are already studies that say that trafficking is much more profitable than drug trafficking, than trafficking fentanyl and some other substances".

niche with which to obtain significant economic gains (Solano & Massey, 2022; Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chávez, 2023).

To comprehensively understand the dimension of the border dynamics, the number of apprehensions in Mexico and those reported by the U.S. must be considered at the same time. Although they identify "encounters," which count several times the same person reattempts to cross and is detained again by U.S. authorities (USCBP, June 20, 2024). The flow of apprehensions/detainments is one of the few quantitative elements we must interpret the importance of migratory transit and to identify the nationalities of persons attempting to enter the United States (Banerjee & Smith, 2024). As shown by the figures presented in the following table, which highlight the magnitude and diversity of the migratory flows that cross the U.S.-Mexico border:

Table 1. Assurances of the National Migration Institute by region (2021-2023)⁶.

<i>ORIGIN</i>	2021	2022	2023
<i>Central America</i>	249,749	209,491	246,371
<i>Caribbean</i>	26,632	52,203	80,861
<i>América del Sur</i>	27,058	159,511	345,941
<i>Asia</i>	1,786	10,372	45,877
<i>Africa</i>	2,066	6,672	59,498
<i>Others</i>	2,401	3,160	3,628
<i>Total</i>	309,692	441,409	782,176

Table 1 shows how the number of apprehensions of Central American citizens has remained relatively stable in the years analyzed. There is no great variation in the number of people "rescued," indicating that repressive migration policies are not generating deterrent effects to prevent Central Americans from continuing to try to cross into the United States. Something similar is happening with Caribbean nationals, who have also been traveling through Mexico to the United States for many years. Especially Cubans and Haitians, as well as citizens from the Dominican Republic, continue to cross Mexico and are detained at different points of the country. In the case of migrants coming from South America, it is surprising to see how they have represented an increasing flow in the last three years (Naranjo et al, 2023). Among them we find many Haitians who became naturalized Brazilians, Peruvians and Ecuadorians; but there is also a very important growing flow of Colombians, Venezuelans and Ecuadorians who have no relation to Haiti (Días, Silva & Silva, 2020; Johns, Loschmann & Arekapudi, 2023).

If this dynamic of rapid increase is repeated and consolidated with African and Asian migrants, as noted above, we would find ourselves in a very short time with a new migratory scenario. This scenario should be analyzed in detail and would undoubtedly lead us to rethink the issue of multicultural and humanitarian governance of the U.S.-Mexico border (Massey, 2022; Balaguera, Schwartzman, & Isschot, 2023; Loschmann & Arekapudi, 2023).

⁶ Source: Prepared by the authors based on records and statistics from the National Migration Institute (2021, 2022, 2023).



Table 2 presents in detail the number and evolution of insurances according to the most relevant countries in Central America and the Caribbean. In the case of Central America, the pattern of behavior is very similar to what has been observed for many years, with the notable exception of Nicaraguan nationals. These migrants, who previously moved primarily to Costa Rica, now venture across Mexico on their way to the United States. In the Caribbean, the migration behavior of Cubans and Haitians is not surprising; however, there is a significant increase in the number of migrants categorized as "other," which includes citizens of the Dominican Republic (5,220 in 2022 and 7,951 in 2023) and Jamaica (737 in 2022 and 745 in 2023).

Table 2. Assurances of the National Institute of Migration by country: Central America and the Caribbean (2021-2023)⁷

ORIGIN	2021	2022	2023
Central America	249,749	209,491	246,371
<i>El Salvador</i>	24,605	26,534	24,308
<i>Guatemala</i>	81,199	69,249	81,535
<i>Honduras</i>	128,054	71,859	119,402
<i>Nicaragua</i>	15,481	40,937	19,667
<i>Others</i>	410	912	1,459
Caribbean	26,632	52,203	80,861
<i>Cuba</i>	7,059	41,771	27,003
<i>Haiti</i>	19,210	4,503	45,091
<i>Others</i>	363	5,929	8,767

Table 3 clearly identifies the significant growth of Venezuelans, Colombians and Ecuadorians as protagonists of the new migratory process that will be consolidated as of 2022. In the case of Colombians, this dynamic is most clearly perceived in the USCBP detention data, presented in Table 6, which establishes a turning point at this date (Mejía-Ochoa, 2018). The fact that these migrants are detained in both southern and northern Mexico, especially in the states of Coahuila and Sonora, evidence that, depending on nationalities, there are defined migratory routes to a greater or lesser extent, as they seek entry through the states of California, Arizona or Texas, where repression is greater (Solano & Massey, 2022).

Table 3. National Migration Institute Assurances by country: South America (2021-2023)⁸.

ORIGIN	2021	2022	2023
América del Sur	27,058	159,511	345,941
<i>Brasil</i>	16,932	3,682	15,122

⁷ Prepared by the authors based on records and statistics from the National Migration Institute (2021, 2022, 2023).

⁸ Prepared by the authors based on records and statistics from the National Migration Institute (2021, 2022, 2023).

Colombia	1,262	28,096	26,581
Ecuador	1,384	22,098	70,790
Peru	237	139	6,531
Venezuela	4,360	96,197	222,994
Others	2,883	9,299	3,923

The case of Asian migrants is particularly relevant. Especially the Chinese and Indians have broken through with greater force, dispersing through Sonora and Baja California in their attempt to reach the United States, gaining access through Arizona and California, respectively. The delegate of the National Migration Institute in Baja California noted in 2024 that the Chinese, like Haitians and Colombians, have networks in Baja California and, in many cases, arrive with the intention of staying:

"These people do come with the intention of staying in Baja California. Mainly there are many Colombians, Haitians themselves, Chinese and some Venezuelans. They like our state, large communities are already being created. There is already a small Haiti, there are already certain Chinese communities, we have the case of the Chinese in Mexicali, who attract their compatriots" (Pérez Tejeda, D. INM delegate, 2024)⁹.

In the case of Chinese, Indian and Turkish migrants, it is necessary to complement the number secured in Mexico with the number of apprehensions that the U.S. government makes at its southern border to obtain a more complete picture of the migration process, as can be seen in Table 6. The number of Chinese apprehensions has grown considerably, from 450 in 2021 to 24,314 in 2023 and 31,309 in 2024, with four months left in the U.S. fiscal year. For migrants from India, the increase is also significant, although it appears to moderate in 2024, with 2,588 detainees in 2021, 18,308 in 2022, 41,770 in 2023 and 18,395 with 2024 remaining. Turks also show increasing importance, with an increase from 1,409 detainees in 2021 to over 15,000 in 2022 and 2023, moderating in 2024 with numbers approaching 9,000 detainees. Since the fall of the Twin Towers in September 2001, Americans have been concerned about the possible use of the Mexican border for the passage of terrorists who could impact U.S. national security (Masferrer et al., 2023; Banerjee & Smith, 2024).

The increase in the activities of organized crime in the transit of migrants opens the possibility that, among regular migrants, citizens of societies in which the main terrorist groups of Islamic origin are deeply rooted (Egutidze, 2022). Despite the alerts issued by the U.S. government (Miranda Aburto, 2024), USCBP statistics do not yet reflect the number of detentions of nationals from several of these countries, which are sensitive to U.S. national security. It is likely that these detainees are included in the "other" category (USCBP, June 20, 2024), which has experienced significant growth in recent years (Masferrer et al., 2023).

⁹ Seminar "Security and Development in Mexico's Borders" organized by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte and the Centro de Investigaciones y Docencia Económicas on June 26, 2024.



This phenomenon of inclusion of potentially dangerous migrants in the statistics of "others" underlines the need for a more detailed and comprehensive analysis of the available data. In this context, the National Migration Institute, as shown in Table 4, has secured a significant number of Afghans, citizens of different ex-Soviet republics of the Middle East, as well as Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria and Bangladesh. If we add to these numbers those who manage to cross into the United States without being detected by either the INM or the USCBP, it is understandable that in the coming months tension on the U.S.-Mexico border could increase. This could be exploited by U.S. Republicans to consolidate their electoral base (Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chavez, 2023; Solano & Massey, 2022).

Table 4. National Institute of Migration Assurances by country: Asia (2021-2023)¹⁰.

ORIGIN	2021	2022	2023
<i>Asia</i>	1,786	10,372	45,877
<i>Afganistán</i>	19	1,017	2,661
<i>Bangladesh</i>	782	1,399	1,590
<i>China</i>	50	1,225	14,057
<i>India</i>	294	2,971	12,410
<i>Irak</i>	19	16	123
<i>Irán</i>	16	45	229
<i>Kazajistán</i>	24	224	714
<i>Kirguistán</i>	3	318	2,100
<i>Libano</i>	2	20	74
<i>Nepal</i>	177	663	1,326
<i>Pakistán</i>	54	137	405
<i>Siria</i>	27	61	165
<i>Tayikistán</i>	14	130	910
<i>Turquía</i>	36	130	1,113
<i>Uzbekistán</i>	119	670	6,098
<i>Vietnam</i>	2	26	505
<i>Others</i>	148	1,320	1,397

Table 5 presents the number of Africans "rescued" by the National Migration Institute. Organized crime has begun to "export" to the United States, using Mexican territory, citizens from countries that traditionally migrate to different European countries, such as Senegal, Guinea, Congo, Ghana and Mauritania. However, the fact that Libyan, Somali, Eritrean and Egyptian migrants are also using these routes has generated concern among U.S. national security authorities (Rojas-Wiesner, 2022; Gil-Everaert, Masferrer & Chávez, 2023).

¹⁰ Prepared by the authors based on records and statistics from the National Institute of Migration (2021, 2022, 2023).

The INM delegate in Baja California said in 2024 that he is struck by the presence of nationals from many of these countries, which he attributes to the great relevance that organized crime has achieved in this process:

"What impresses me most about all this is how do you explain that a minor, an adolescent, is arriving from Bangladesh, the Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mauritania? How many countries, how many filters, how many borders, how many authorities has he not come across and managed to get to Tijuana without anyone detecting him, without anyone stopping him, without anyone questioning him?" (Pérez Tejada, D. INM delegate, 2024)¹¹.

Table 5. National Migration Institute Assurances by country: Africa (2021-2023)¹².

ORIGIN	2021	2022	2023
<i>Africa</i>	2,066	6,672	59,498
<i>Angola</i>	218	1,276	4,109
<i>Burkina Faso</i>	66	191	876
<i>Camerún</i>	84	678	1,666
<i>Chad</i>	1	6	801
<i>Congo</i>	203	472	1,277
<i>Egipto</i>	12	34	1,262
<i>Eritrea</i>	98	391	662
<i>Etiopía</i>	11	118	1,328
<i>Ghana</i>	381	681	2,078
<i>Guinea</i>	146	261	12,065
<i>Libia</i>	4	16	27
<i>Marruecos</i>	4	30	276
<i>Mauritania</i>	50	255	8,638
<i>Nigeria</i>	76	332	1,023
<i>Senegal</i>	409	954	19,845
<i>Somalia</i>	42	535	1,336
<i>Others</i>	261	442	2,229

Commented [A1]: Poner los nombres de

Table 6 shows the data on apprehensions made by U.S. authorities at the southern land border of the country. Until last year, USCBP statistics only reflected Mexicans, who have traditionally been the migrants apprehended in the greatest numbers by the U.S. (a trend that continues), as well as Hondurans, Guatemalans, and Salvadorans. The "other" category was also

¹¹ Seminar "Security and Development in Mexico's Borders" organized by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte and the Centro de Investigaciones y Docencia Económicas on June 26, 2024.

¹² Prepared by the authors based on records and statistics from the National Institute of Migration (2021, 2022, 2023).



available in their databases; however, as of 2021, more than 90% of those detained by U.S. authorities belonged to the countries indicated (Rojas-Wiesner, 2022).

Table 6. USCBP arrests by country (2021-2024)¹³.

ORIGIN	2021	2022	2023	2024
<i>México</i>	655,594	808,339	717,333	504,703
<i>El Salvador</i>	98,690	97,030	61,518	41,686
<i>Guatemala</i>	319,324	213,023	213,686	110,843
<i>Honduras</i>	283,035	231,565	220,085	171,260
<i>Nicaragua</i>	50,109	163,376	99,496	32,084
<i>Cuba</i>	38,674	220,908	142,362	109,788
<i>Haití</i>	47,255	53,910	76,130	67,732
<i>Brazil</i>	56,881	53,467	27,687	21,947
<i>Colombia</i>	6,202	125,178	159,536	102,185
<i>Ecuador</i>	96,150	24,060	116,229	104,683
<i>Peru</i>	3,197	50,662	78,719	34,184
<i>Venezuela</i>	48,678	187,716	266,071	187,993
<i>China</i>	450	2,376	24,314	31,309
<i>India</i>	2,588	18,308	41,770	18,395
<i>Turkey</i>	1,409	15,445	15,542	8,163
<i>Others</i>	26,400	113,581	215,191	144,296
<i>Total</i>	1,734,636	2,378,944	2,475,669	1,691,251

As can be seen, the reality has changed a great deal in a short time. Venezuelans, Haitians, Cubans, Colombians, Nicaraguans and Ecuadorians are approaching and even surpassing the number of arrests of individuals from the countries of the Central American Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala) (USCBP, June 20, 2024; Banerjee & Smith, 2024).

The heavy-handed policy of the U.S. administrations has generated the opposite of the intended effect. Mexico's support for the policy of neutralizing migrants is evident and cannot be questioned by the United States. As noted, it is impossible to transit through Mexico without the assistance of support networks and structures that circumvent Mexican security authorities (Rojas-Wiesner, 2022).

The USCBP data reflected at first (2019-2021) the willingness of U.S. authorities to stop traditional migration flows; now it shows the involvement of organized crime groups in supporting

¹³ Prepared by the authors based on USCBP data, 2024. The years correspond to the fiscal years of the U.S. government, which begin in the month of October and end in September. The data for the year 2024 correspond to the months from October 2023 to May 2024. The projection shown in the data is that the number of migrants detained by the USCPB in 2024 will be very similar to the data for 2023, with the number of "others" continuing to increase.

the transit not only of Mexican nationals and those from the Northern Triangle countries, but also from the Caribbean, South America, Asia and Africa, who had not used this migratory route to date.

The increase in detentions of Chinese, Indians and Turks (2021-2023), but especially the significant number found in "others", amplifies this information by contrasting with the nationalities of the detainees reported by the INM. This makes it clear that the migration scenario on the U.S.-Mexico border has changed. U.S. government policy has created a new and complex situation that we will have to understand and interpret in the coming years. For now, what is clear is that, in addition to the increase in human mobility in the three and a half years of President Biden's administration (USCBP, June 20, 2023), it has also created a new business niche for organized crime. It is difficult to visualize a future in which we do not understand that the migration processes at the U.S.-Mexico border are going to contemplate a totally different reality, with the increasing arrival of people from different parts of the world seeking to enter the United States. This multicultural migration on the U.S.-Mexico border implies cultural enrichment as well as economic and community strengthening. However, it also poses challenges and responsibilities in terms of national security. A balanced and humane approach that combines social inclusion with effective security measures is crucial to maximize the benefits and mitigate the risks associated with irregular migration (Masferrer et al., 2023; Banerjee & Smith, 2024).

Conclusions

This study has made it possible to analyze the context and dynamics of international and multicultural migration on the U.S.-Mexico border, focusing especially on the Tijuana-San Diego region. The results show a notable increase in human mobility from Asia and Africa, which has generated new complexities and challenges in the migration management of both countries. President Joe Biden's administration has implemented more humanitarian and human rights-focused policies, which has encouraged more migrants to attempt to cross the border in search of better opportunities and living conditions.

Analysis of statistical data provided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) and Mexico's National Migration Institute (INM) reveals that migratory diversity has increased significantly. The number of migrants of at least 45 different nationalities is evidence of a new reality at the border, where human mobility has intensified in recent years. This phenomenon highlights the need for a balanced approach that combines social inclusion with effective security measures.

The Biden administration has adopted a more humanitarian approach compared to previous administrations. This policy change has had a significant impact on the increase in human mobility, especially of people from African and Asian countries. However, the lack of a coordinated immigration policy between Mexico and the United States has generated a humanitarian crisis that has not been adequately addressed. The increase in the number of migrant detentions at the Tijuana-San Diego border and other borders underscores the urgency of developing more effective and humane migration policies.

The data obtained show that while current policies have encouraged migration, they have also created new challenges in terms of managing the security and social integration of migrants. The need for coordinated migration policies that respect human rights is crucial to address the underlying causes of migration and prevent future humanitarian crises. This approach must include international cooperation and the implementation of strategies that address both security and social inclusion needs.



The research provides a detailed understanding of emerging migration trends at the Tijuana-San Diego border, highlighting the increase in migrants from Asia and Africa. This analysis provides specific data on nationalities and volumes of apprehensions and detentions, which is critical for the formulation of more informed and effective policies. In addition, it identifies key challenges and opportunities associated with multicultural migration, providing a framework for the development of more comprehensive governance strategies.

The study also assesses the impact of the Biden administration's immigration policies, highlighting how humanitarian measures have influenced migration patterns. This analysis is crucial for future migration reforms and for the creation of policies that are both effective and humanitarian. Identifying the challenges and opportunities in multicultural migration is essential to developing strategies that promote the safety and social inclusion of migrants.

In addition, the research offers specific recommendations to improve migration governance, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation. Migration policies should respect and promote the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their origin or legal status. This approach is necessary to manage migration effectively and humanely, addressing the root causes of human mobility and promoting the equitable integration of migrants into receiving societies.

In summary, this research offers a comprehensive and critical view of multicultural migration on the U.S.-Mexico border, providing data and analysis that contribute significantly to the understanding of the complexities and challenges of international migration today. The findings and reflections presented are of great use to researchers, policy makers and non-governmental organizations working on migration and human rights issues. The importance of developing coordinated migration policies that combine security, and compassion is fundamental to meeting the challenges of migration in the 21st century.

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