

From a Borderless World To a Fortress World? The Two U.S. Borders after 9/11¹

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Globalization is a journey. But it is a journey toward an unreachable destination, "the globalized world." A "globalized" economy could be defined as one in which neither distance nor national borders impede economic transactions. This would be a world where the costs of transport and communications were zero and the barriers created by differing national jurisdictions had vanished. Needless to say, we do not live in anything even close to such a world. And since many of the things we transport (including ourselves) are physical, we never will.²

The ability of the state to patrol its boundaries, in a sociological as well as a political sense, is critical because if the state fails to do so, if "strangers" can enter a country at will, the ability of the state to shape and define a nation is compromised.³

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TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS?

For the last 20 years, people have been saying that globalization was leading to a world without borders. The expression "borderless world" became popular, nourished by different positions that involved, among other spheres, the economy and finance, culture and institutions. The book *The Borderless World* became a reference point and its content was frequently accepted as an act of faith.⁴ However, this popular or light version did not entirely jibe with the fortification that could already be

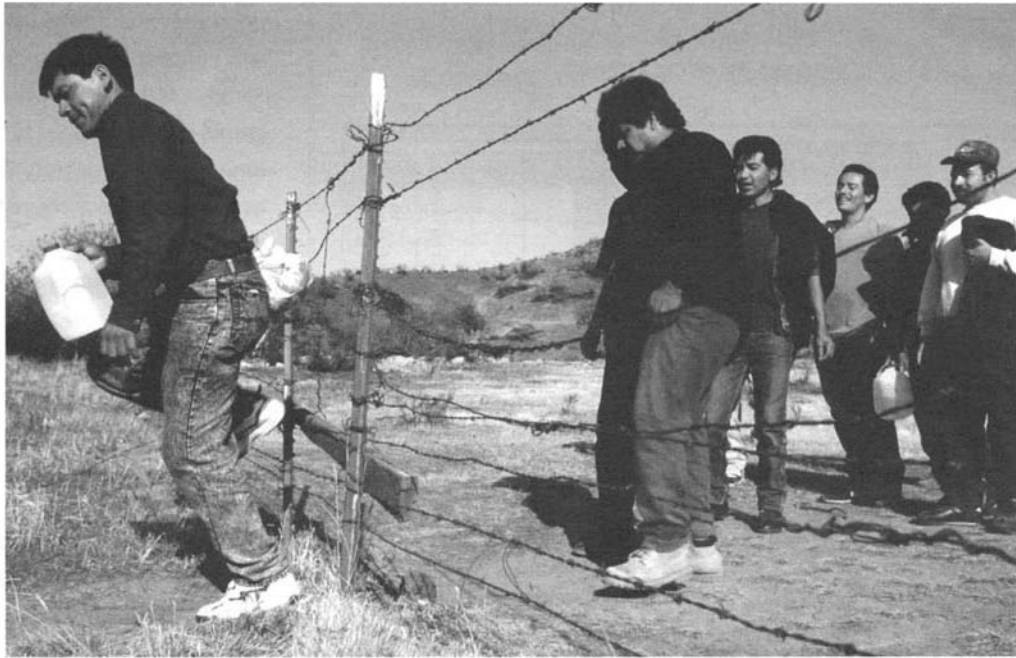
observed and which was dramatically accentuated by the events of September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington, D.C.

In the framework of the phobia that 9/11 left in its wake, the impression is created that we have moved from open to closed borders. In any case, the obligatory question is whether borders were totally open. And, the answer is that they certainly were not. One conclusion about this is that, by definition, complete economic integration happens with a system of totally open borders. Way before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, analysts were already saying there were economic and political reasons to defend the importance of international borders and to say that the transnationalization of the economy did not mean a world without borders.⁵

This is clearly shown in the case of international migration, generally excluded from the process of globalization.⁶ According to Tapinos and De-launay, this exclusion is the biggest single difference that distinguishes the world economy's new tendencies from previous stages of globalization in which the work force not only accompanied the mobility of capital, but represented a key factor in the globalization of the economies. Migration is the missing link in globalization.⁷

Because of the 9/11 attacks, old and new dichotomies, such as freedom versus security, have been reconsidered. T.F. Powers considers that this particular case is a false debate because security implies freedom, and freedom presupposes security. Every threat, regardless of its origin, is an attack on

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freedom and against security.⁸ This forces us to hone in on the deeper question: taking real threats to national security carefully under consideration but not allowing this to lead to a regime of terror and abuse that would restrict basic freedoms in the name of security.

Despite the efforts to clarify the discussion, it is a fact that concern over security after the 9/11 attacks has radically altered the U.S. agenda vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Castañeda illustrates this very well for Latin America and Mexico in particular, a country whose negotiations for a migratory accord with the U.S. collapsed along with the Twin Towers.⁹

Borders are multi-porous, multi-dimensional, multi-functional and multi-selective (see figure 1). If globalization comes through different avenues, each of them has its own borders, its own velocities and results.¹⁰ Just as large legal and illegal financial transactions can be electronically transferred, so can large sums of money associated with globalization's illegitimate aspects

—especially terrorism—physically move across international borders. At the same moment that a tie-wearing, legal immigrant arrives at a port of entry of an industrialized country, one of his countrymen risks his life crossing a river or a desert to arrive in the same country. Probably the legal immigrant is bothered by increased border controls, but it makes no sense in the second case to speak of open borders. This leads us to the discussion of the relevance of borders from the perspective of liberalism.

ECONOMIC-POLITICAL LIBERALISM AND BORDERS

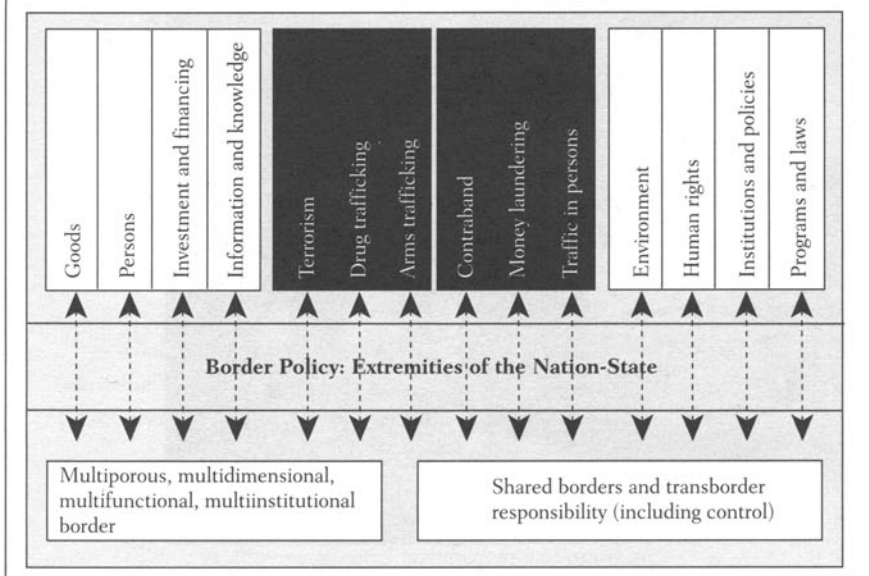
The notion of liberalism is central to analyzing the economic role of the border, and immediately creates a contradiction. Globalization is rooted in freedom because it means freer movement of goods, services, ideas and people around the world.¹¹ In that sense, it is very difficult to harmonize the basic points of economic liberalism (with its

emphasis on the free functioning of fully competitive markets) and political liberalism (with its emphasis on the rights of all citizens, including, of course, their mobility) (see figure 2). This is the origin of the expression “open market-closed border.”

Trade and investment flows spur processes of “de-borderization,” while illegal migration and matters of national security create processes of “re-borderization.”¹² That is, if we are really going to talk about liberalism, then free markets coexist with the free circulation of individuals.¹³ This is the origin of what is known as “the great liberal paradox of migration.”¹⁴ Related to this is the selective nature of migratory controls themselves, so that, as brutal as it may seem, the expression “computer engineers yes, huddled masses, no” is very valid.¹⁵

What is more, on the borders it is proved that if the globalized economy is defined as one in which neither distance nor national borders impede economic transactions, with free circulation

FIGURE 1
INTERNATIONAL BORDER FLOWS



of goods, services, capital and individuals, then there will never be complete integration. This would imply a world in which transportation and communications costs were zero and in which there were no barriers created by different national jurisdictions. It is clear that we are a long way from a world of this kind.¹⁶

Simple textbook knowledge clearly shows that international borders delimit different spheres of economic activity.¹⁷ Among other things, borders mark off areas of currency, restrict imports and immigration, control international capital flows and limit the ownership of assets. In these contact zones, non-tariff barriers to trade also become very visible, as does the juxtaposition of historic and cultural dimensions. This can be seen even in very integrated economies, such as on the Canadian-U.S. border.¹⁸ There is, then, a fundamental difference between free trade, which is impossible to achieve, and freer trade, which is more feasi-

ble¹⁹ and coincides very well with the aforementioned definition by Micklethwait and Wooldridge.

Despite the restrictions cited, the relative freedom with which the market in goods and services functions has no parallel when looking at migration. It is no surprise that migration puts liberalism to the test. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, governments have been increasing immigration controls (see table 1). The table shows that in 1976, only six percent of governments had policies to decrease immigration, while by the end of the 1980s, this number rose to 32 percent. It reached a peak in 1993 (35 percent), remaining at 33 percent in 1995. In the specific case of Mexican migration to the United States, it was very clear in those years that for some circles, this "foreign invasion" represented a serious threat to national security, thus justifying the use of the police given that, according to those circles, it was causing criminal behavior domestically.²⁰ In recent

years, several countries have made it more difficult to become citizens. "In some countries, the children of immigrants who have lived in the country as long as three generations do not necessarily acquire citizenship automatically."²¹ In this framework, the distinction between who is a citizen and who is a foreigner is crucial, particularly because the criteria for membership determine the human fabric of the modern nation-state.²²

THE UNITED STATES AND ITS BORDERS WITH MEXICO AND CANADA AFTER 9/11

It is unnecessary to underline that while the events of 9/11 may be more associated with limiting the mobility of individuals, they also affected the free movement of goods and damaged the United States' economic relations with the world. This is particularly applicable to Mexico, and to a lesser extent—though increasingly—to Canada. The recently passed Bioterrorism Act, stipulating meticulous checking of food imports, is a very good example of this.

Another example, in this case of the transborder economy between Mexico and the U.S. is the U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology Program (U.S. Visit Program). This program aims to implement a biometric check system in 2004 whereby visitors and tourists along the U.S. border will not be able to stay more than three days, under threat of losing both their visas and passports. Going 25 miles beyond the border would require a special permit. In contrast with today's practice, all exits from the country will be checked to verify that the duration of stay is

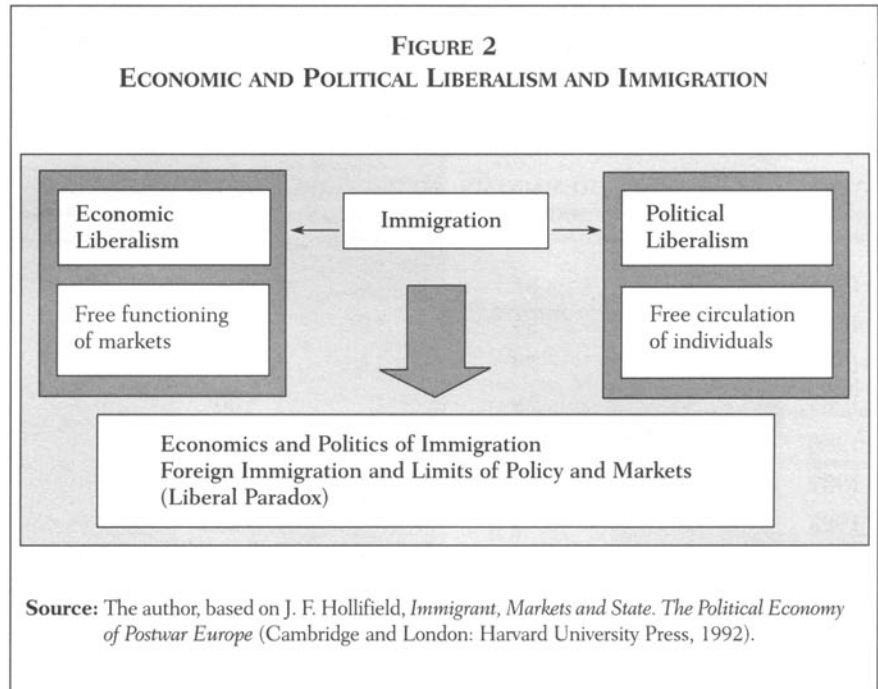
being complied with. Given its greater economic dependence on Mexico, the Texas border area will be severely affected by this. Therefore, it is no surprise that organized merchants are demanding a relaxation of controls at Mexican-U.S. border crossings.²³

In the case of its southern border, at the same time that free trade policies are intensifying, the United States is also toughening its migratory controls, including militarization. Different analysts have questioned this U.S. position vis-à-vis Mexico, which though it has been made more precise or been put into context by the events of 9/11, continues to be in force with regard to long-term relations between the two nations.²⁴

Among other considerations, it is doubtful that, in the long run, police and/or militarized control is the best option to deal with such an extremely complex border.²⁵ It is a fact that more stringent controls could not put a brake on previous waves of migration, but, above all it has sent a very ambiguous message, making it difficult to see whether Mexico-U.S. relations are a threat or a partnership.²⁶

Perceptions about the Canadian-U.S. border also changed after 9/11. It has been called "the forgotten border" or the new weak point, and it is also uncomfortably seen as a matter of national security.²⁷ After all, before the attacks there had already been incidents indicating that terrorists had crossed that border into the United States.²⁸ This author doubts that increased personnel will do what has not been done in the south with many more officers.

The economic costs of border security are common to both U.S. borders. This is an issue that manifests itself in different ways and needs a



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multidimensional perspective to be understood. Before September 11, analysts argued that border control costs could be very high,²⁹ which served to markedly underline the economic importance of the borders. In a post-9/11 context, the argument goes that security costs function as a barrier or self-imposed trade embargo.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Globalization is a real process with many implications and contradictions. It gives rise to the co-existence of integration and disintegration, prosperity with backwardness, and creates its own borders. There is no perfect integration of markets and, in that sense, borders limit or paralyze integration. Even in

these globalized times, borders are porous to differing degrees. It is paradoxical that, in many senses, we have advanced not toward a borderless world, but toward a fortress world, full of complexities, choices, paradoxes, in which there is no space for a simplistic reading of phenomena and the policies that accompany them.

This is shown very clearly in the case of the Canadian-U.S. border, which delimits the two most liberalized economies in the world. It is also proof that the evidence of greater economic integration demonstrates that national borders do not matter for the production and world distribution of goods and services. When delimiting more asymmetrical neighbors, the border—understood as a wall—is much more visible and supports the hypothesis that

TABLE I
GOVERNMENT POLICY ON MIGRATION LEVELS (1976-1995)
(% OF COUNTRIES)

| YEAR | TO INCREASE MIGRATION | TO MAINTAIN MIGRATION | TO DECREASE MIGRATION | TOTAL % | NUMBER OF COUNTRIES |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 1976 | 7 | 87 | 6 | 100 | 156 |
| 1978 | 6 | 84 | 10 | 100 | 158 |
| 1980 | 6 | 79 | 15 | 100 | 165 |
| 1983 | 5 | 78 | 17 | 100 | 168 |
| 1986 | 4 | 77 | 19 | 100 | 170 |
| 1989 | 5 | 64 | 32 | 100 | 170 |
| 1993 | 4 | 61 | 35 | 100 | 190 |
| 1995 | 5 | 61 | 33 | 100 | 190 |

Source: United Nations, *Políticas Migratorias Internacionales* (New York: UN, 1998), p. 3.

Trade and investment flows spur processes of “de-borderization,” while illegal migration and matters of national security create processes of “re-borderization.”

complete integration would imply markets of products without borders. Just as with Mexico, post-9/11 conditions have changed the way in which the United States conceives of its economic relations with Canada, materialized in greater control over the mobility of goods and individuals, whose underlying condition is the phantom—real or imaginary—of security.

On the other hand, if—as is commonly understood—the political border is the separation of two different sovereign nations,³⁰ the role of the state in keeping the borders safe is just as imperative as always.³¹ What is more, if globalization facilitates illicit activities like terrorism or running contraband, then the disappearance of borders could be disastrous for the economy and development.³² In this sense,

deciding what, how and who enters their territory is a legitimate function of nation-states. Care will have to be taken, however, to keep the world economic system open since it functions by means of the different flows across international borders. This is one of the great dilemmas brought about by the 9/11 terrorist attacks: how long will concern about security affect the legal transit of goods, individuals and of the economy?

Of the different paradoxes between migration and globalization, one is particularly useful for understanding the new role of borders. The same market mechanisms that feed globalization can also increase (rather than diminish) migratory flows.³³ This would make Bhagwati right when he says, paradoxically, that “the capabili-

ty of controlling immigration weakened to the extent that the intention of controlling it increased.”³⁴ As a result, a focus beyond border control has been proposed (in the form of punishment for countries of origin, stricter border control measures, and sanctions to employers and undocumented immigrants themselves) to manage migration in such a way that everybody wins.

The Mexico-U.S. border clearly shows the need to create a more comprehensive vision on the part of both countries so that the broad variety of issues involved can be properly attended to. While this multi-dimensionality is not exclusive to this border, few of the world’s borders display the juxtaposition of demographic, environmental, political and economic factors, including some of the illegitimate results of globalization (traffic in persons, money, goods, arms and drugs).

Dealing with the border question implies great challenges for twenty-first-century diplomacy. Cooperation will play an indispensable role. But that cooperation, based on political will, requires a fundamental input: the comprehensive understanding of complex inter-dependencies, including respect for profound, voluntary negotiation. It is in the best self-interest of nations for their border agendas to be dealt with jointly and not unilaterally. Despite this need, the range of this new border arrangement must also be recognized since, as De Villepin says, the real border is that of the relationship, that of Man.³⁵ The last border is inside each person, in the relationship and contact with others.³⁶ It is based on these considerations that the notion of a borderless world—sometimes treated lightly—should be reexamined. ■■■

NOTES

- ¹ This is a new version of a paper presented at the international colloquium "Globalization and Its Effects: New Debates, New Approaches" held in the ESCP-EAP in Paris, June 24 and 25, 2003. The study was sponsored by the "Economic Agenda on Mexico's Northern Border" Chair of the Monterrey Technological Institute of Higher Learning (ITESM), Monterrey campus. The author also wishes to thank the ITESM Monterrey campus Administration and Finance Division for its financial support and the help of the ESCP-EAP Organizing Committee. I also thank the colloquium participants for their comments. As usual, the author bears exclusive responsibility for errors or omissions.
- ² M. Wolf, "Will the Nation-State Survive Globalization?" *Foreign Affairs* 80 (1) (New York), 2001, pp. 178-179.
- ³ D. Jacobson, *Rights Across Borders. Immigration and the Decline of Citizenship* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University, 1997), pp. 5-6.
- ⁴ K. Ohmae, *The Borderless World. Power and Strategy in the Interlinked World* (New York: Harper Business, 1990).
- ⁵ See S. Collinson, *Beyond Borders. West European Migration Policy Towards the 21st Century* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1993); J. Ceglowski, "Has Globalization Created a Borderless World?" *Business Review* (Washington), March-April 1998, pp. 7-27; and M. Mann, "La globalización y el 11 de septiembre," *New Left Review* (New York) 2002, pp. 5-26.
- ⁶ G. Tapinos and D. Delaunay, "Can One Really Talk of the Globalisation of Migration Flows?" OECD, comp., *Globalisation, Migration and Development* (Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2000), pp. 35-58.
- ⁷ See D. Coyle, *Sex, Drugs & Economics. An Unconventional Introduction to Economics* (New York and London: Texere, 2002).
- ⁸ T.F. Powers, "Can We Be Secure and Free?" *The Public Interest* 151 (Washington, D.C.), 2003, pp. 3-24.
- ⁹ J. Castañeda, "La relación olvidada," *Foreign Affairs en español* vol. 3, no. 2 (Mexico City), pp. 138-153.
- ¹⁰ Different typologies show the faces of globalization. For Mann (op. cit.), globalization consists of the interactive expansion of economic, military, political and ideological networks. In his "International Economics: Unlocking the Mysteries of Globalization" (*Foreign Policy* [Washington, D.C.] spring, special edition, pp. 97-111), J. Sachs presents four avenues (trade, production, finance and regulatory/institutional) and four types of impact (on economic growth, on the distribution of income, on macroeconomic stability and on government institutions. In his "Clash of Globalizations" (*Foreign Affairs* 81 [4], [New York], 2002, pp. 104-115), S. Hoffmann refers to several dimensions of the globalization process (economic, political, institutional, cultural and terrorism). C. Ruiz Durán, in his "Perspectivas y opciones globales ante el cambio mundial" (J. Basave et al., comps., *Globalización y alternativas incluyentes para el siglo XXI* [Mexico City: UNAM, UAM and Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2002]), points to the heterogeneous nature of this process. L. De Sebastián, in his *Neoliberalismo. Apuntes críticos de economía internacional* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1997), underlines its impact on the most vulnerable groups and the attention these groups should therefore be paid. However, in "Globalization without a Net" (*Foreign Policy* [Washington, D.C.] July-August 2001, pp. 78-79), V. Tanzi shows the enormous difficulties for integrating the world economy and protecting the poor at the same time, forcing a rethinking of the role of the state with regard to supporting the most needy groups. Finally, M. Jovanovic, in *European Economic Integration. Limits and Prospects* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), suggests the need to respect diversity in strategies for economic integration.
- ¹¹ J. Micklethwait and A. Wooldridge, *A Future Perfect. The Challenge and Promise of Globalization* (New York: Random House, 2003), p. xix.
- ¹² J. Blatter and N. Clement, "Cross-Border Cooperation in Europe: Historical Development, Institutionalization, and Contrasts with North America," *Journal of Borderland Studies* 15 (1) (San Diego), 2000, pp. 15-53.
- ¹³ J. Seabrook, "A Global Market for All," *New Statesman* (London), 26 June 1998, pp. 25-26.
- ¹⁴ J.F. Hollifield, *Immigrants, Markets and States. The Political Economy of Postwar Europe* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992).
- ¹⁵ J. Bhagwati, "Más allá del control fronterizo," *Foreign Affairs en español* 3 (2) (Mexico City), 2002, pp. 165-175.
- ¹⁶ M. Wolf, op. cit.
- ¹⁷ P.R. Krugman and M. Obstfeld, *International Economics* (New York: Addison Wesley, 2003) and B.V. and R.M. Yarbrough, "The World Economy," *Trade and Finance* (Mason, Ohio: Thomson South Western, 2003).
- ¹⁸ Ceglowski, op. cit.
- ¹⁹ D.A. Irwin, *Free Trade under Fire* (Princeton, New Jersey and Woodstock: University of Princeton, 2002).
- ²⁰ L. Herrera-Lasso, "The Impact of U.S. Immigration Policy on U.S.-Mexican Relations," *Voices of Mexico* 46 (Mexico City), January-March 1999, pp. 47-52.
- ²¹ United Nations, *Políticas Migratorias Internacionales* (New York: United Nations, 1998), p. 6.
- ²² Jacobson, op. cit.
- ²³ "Merchants from southern Texas and Matamoros, Mexico, asked the director of the U.S. Visitors' Program to relax inspections of tourists trying to enter the border area." *El Norte* (Monterrey, Nuevo León), 20 November 2003.
- ²⁴ P. Martin, "Mexican-U.S. Migration Policies and Economic Impacts," *Challenge* (Armonk, New York), March-April 1995, pp. 56-62; J. G. Castañeda, *The Estados Unidos Affair. Cinco ensayos sobre un amor oblicuo* (Mexico City: Aguilar, 1996); P.M. Orrenius, "Illegal Immigration and Enforcement Along the U.S.-Mexico Border: An Overview," *Economic and Financial Review* (Dallas, Texas), first quarter, 2001, pp. 2-11.
- ²⁵ S.E. Flynn, "Beyond Border Control," *Foreign Affairs* 79 (6) (New York), 2000, pp. 57-68; Orrenius, op. cit.; and P. Andreas, "La redefinición de las fronteras estadounidenses después del 11 de septiembre," *Foreign Affairs en español* 2 (1) (Mexico City), 2002, pp. 165-175.
- ²⁶ Herrera-Lasso, op. cit.
- ²⁷ Andreas, op. cit.
- ²⁸ See Flynn, op. cit. The author talks about the suspicions of an immigration official that led to the arrest of an individual, allegedly associated with Bin Laden, who was trying to take explosives into the United States across the Canadian border.
- ²⁹ Flynn, op. cit. and Tapinos, op. cit.
- ³⁰ J.B. Duroselle, *Todo imperio perecerá. Teoría sobre las relaciones internacionales* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998).
- ³¹ Flynn, op. cit.
- ³² Andreas, op. cit.
- ³³ Tapinos, op. cit.
- ³⁴ Bhagwati, op. cit., p. 164.
- ³⁵ D. De Villepin, "El nuevo espíritu de la frontera," *Foreign Affairs en español* 3 (4) (Mexico City), 2003, pp. 22-35.
- ³⁶ Wolf, op. cit.