Migration and (de)colonization in the Mexican government migration policies, 2018-19

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Abstract

This essay reviews the context of the Mexican 2018 election; with a special consideration to migration to Mexico and the country's role in the then Caravans Crisis. It features the significance of the Caravans Crisis in the 2018 presidential campaign and debates, and the steps the new government seemed to be willing to take to address the issue. Later, it discusses the implications of actual decisions made when appointing the head of the Mexican migration authority and how they are related with the promises made by current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on decolonization of Mexican migration policy and the respect for the human rights of foreign migrants in Mexico.

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Introduction

On June 14, 2019, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, then speaker of the Mexican House of Representatives, made this statement in a radio interview:

> Where is our ambassador in China? Where is our ambassador in Moscow? Where is our ambassador in Berlin? We must inform other countries. They are turning us back into a colonial state, because we cannot talk to others and others cannot come in if they are not approved by the US. Which is what the Spanish crown used to do here. We are going back into a colonial status and we are accepting it (*Aristegui Noticias*, 2019).

The day after Muñoz Ledo raised his indictment of the changes to Mexican migration law and policy, Tonatiuh Guillén López, a professor at the El Colegio de la Frontera Norte college in Tijuana and the then recently appointed head of the National Institute of Migration (INAMI), resigned his post. Almost immediately, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), the current Mexican president, appointed Francisco Garduño Yáñez as the new head of INAMI, the authority dealing with migrants coming to Mexico. Garduño, a former manager of prisons in Mexico City (Anonymous 2019), embodied the 180 degree change in Mexican migration policy, criticized by Muñoz Ledo and tailored to appease Donald Trump. A few weeks before, Trump had issued a threat to impose a progressive 5% tariff on goods traded with Mexico. In the eyes of people like Muñoz Ledo, this change, tantamount to Mexico agreeing to become a Safe Third Country, was a betrayal of the hopes AMLO raised during his third run for the presidency. Far from decolonizing domestic and foreign policies, and also far from the idea of Mexico as a sovereign and free nation, Mexico has turned, as Central Americans frequently put it, into "The Wall". The process of Mexico turning into "The Wall" began over 20 years ago. It started with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As a consequence of the 2018 election, there is no foreseeable chance of change.

The 2018 Mexican presidential election was charged with hope for reasonable change on key issues. One such area was migration. Mexico has been, since the second half of the 20th century, in a difficult position that has been described as a "labor frontier country", that is to say a country that is considered upper-lower income with mass migration, falling birth rates, and a deeply rooted emigration tradition (Kimball, 2007: 2-3). It is a country sending large groups of its population to the US; so much, that little more than eight percent (12 million) of the total population of Mexicans, roughly 139 million in the late 2010s, lives in the US (Canales and Rojas, 2018: 15; Pew Research Center, 2018). As a "labor frontier country", Mexico is a country of transit; a country where many individuals seeking entrance into the US go to prepare their trip, whether as documented (as in the case of people seeking refugee status) or undocumented foreign nationals. On its own, Mexico is a country of destination for at least 120 thousand nationals from Central America (CA) and Haiti (Pew Research Center, 2018).[34]

Even if reform of the migration and refugee laws was not a major issue of the election (and there was no social appetite for such changes), the four candidates made plenty of promises to address the issue. Such promises appeared to be closer to fruition when Guillén López was appointed. His replacement, an expert in jail management, proved instead how far Mexico's current leaders are from addressing the issue. It also proved the fragility of the new

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[34] Thirty thousand from Guatemala; 20,000 from Honduras; 10,000 from El Salvador, and similar figures from Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Haiti (Pew Research Center, 2018).

government's narrative about Mexico becoming a more sovereign and independent nation after the 2018 election, and the lack of a vigorous civil society able to drive change on issues like migration. AMLO's narrative about change on migration had been built over the residues of Mexican anti-US sentiment that, even if weakened by 20 years of economic integration through the original 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), resurface every now and then when the right mix of bilateral issues surface. In AMLO's case his call for a new approach on migration, trade, and development had been laid down in a book originally published in Spanish as *Oye, Trump* (Hear this out, Trump), published in English as *A new hope for Mexico. Saying no to corruption, violence, and Trump's wall*. The book contains 38 references in 30 different positions in its e-pub edition to migration (López Obrador 2018).[35] Even if the Spanish title could be misleading, its framework comes straight out of John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, and the late 1980s approach behind NAFTA (Gutiérrez Haces, 1990: 38). AMLO's book raises some critique of the original NAFTA, but with no real or veiled attempt at putting an end to it. Its aim was to convince Trump of investing in development in Mexico and CA, to inoculate migration and it places the bulk of responsibility on corruption when explaining Mexico's plight, migration included, than it does on criticizing US neocolonial practices, interventionism or neoliberal policies.

In the coming pages, I will first review the context of the 2018 election; with a special consideration to migration to Mexico and the country's role in the then Caravans Crisis. I will feature the significance of the Caravans Crisis role in the 2018 presidential campaign and debates, and the steps the new government seemed to be willing to take to address the issue. Later I will discuss the implications of actual decisions made when appointing Garduño Yáñez as head of the migration authority.

1. The socio-economic and political context in the region

As Donato et.al. (2010) put it "Mexico-US migration represents the largest sustained migratory flow between two nations worldwide". This happens despite the pressure to enforce the ever-restricting US migration laws. Such pressure has forced Mexico to enforce its very anti-immigrant legislation (Hawley, 2010; Meyer and Isaacson, 2019). One consequence of such double enforcement of ill-designed migration policies has been the pushing of people trying to cross Mexico from all over the world to secondary roads. Ultimately, this has incentivized the operation of so-called Coyotes, relatively small and informal "firms", dedicated to smuggling people. This already perverse setting got worse when then president Felipe Calderón Hinojosa decided, in 2007, to launch the "war on organized crime" (Calderón, 2007; Espino, 2019; Ramírez, 2019).

The worsening was a function of the ties these "firms" have with drug trafficking bands and groups kidnapping people either unable or unwilling to pay the Coyotes' smuggling fees, while "sharing knowledge" with the lower ranks of Mexican law enforcement agencies, whose agents face impossible choices. They must decide whether to enforce an arcane, brutal legislation while making no additional profit from it or helping the Coyotes/drug lords syndicate for additional income (Langner, 2016; Reyez, 2017; Rodríguez, 2018; Vera, 2018), while keeping down the number of undocumented foreign nationals. In both cases, the undocumented migrants

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[35] *A new hope for Mexico*, merges two of AMLO's books in Spanish: *La salida* (The Getaway, 2017) and *Oye, Trump* (2018). The epub edition of the book has a total of 246 positions.

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face a bleak outlook, while the drug lords and Coyotes keep a tight grip on smuggling routes, maximizing the returns on their knowledge of the Mexican geography (Reina, 2019).[36]

On top of it, the US law incentivizes going to the Mexican border to seek refuge (Bier, 2019; WSJ Editorial Board, 2019). It used to do it with the US-Canada border, until Canada accepted, in 2004, to become a "Third Safe Country" (Government of Canada, 2016). Had the people seeking refuge been able to follow the procedures in their country of origin, through the US consulates, there would be no need to be at the points of entry in the US borders. Additionally, there is a problem of a backlog in asylum applications, totaling 320,000 cases by the end of June 2018 (Meissner and colleagues; 2018: 2).

The decision of the Mexican government to launch a "war on organized crime" also created perverse incentives for undocumented migration, since it followed many of Richard M. Nixon's hypothesis and mistakes when he originally launched in the 1970s the "war on drugs". Something is deeply out of balance with the high rates of incarceration, costs of incarceration, and highest rates worldwide of drug abuse. The mistake is not exclusive of the US. Overall, the most egregious mistake is the inability of the US, Mexico, and other countries committed to this war to avoid learning from failure (Ferreira, 2015: 266-9) and the rather blind adherence of them all to the so-called "punitive paradigm" (Plume, 2012).

The Mexican government's decision to launch the "war on organized crime" along the lines of the Nixonian "war on drugs", lost sight of the side effects of such policy. The almost immediate effect in Mexico has been, for the last 14 years, a spike in violent assassinations, massacres and the massive "disappearing" of persons. In Mexico alone, from 2006 through 2019, 61,000 persons have disappeared (López, 2020). In the same period, 252,538 persons have been murdered[37] or died in drug-related activities (Domínguez, 2019). The impact of the policy is more relevant since violence is a key driver of forced migration, (Arceo, 2012; Semple, 2019). Those with relatives in Mexico City or other large cities, could try to settle in those places, but many lack such contacts or see such attempts as a waste of time, since cities have sustained, over the last two decades, ever increasing levels of violence, so they seek refuge in the US (Maydeu-Olivares, 2016; Cheatham, 2019).

Over the last 30 years, CA has been facing a similar relationship between the global "war on drugs" and migration of people seeking refuge. Violence has been rampant in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras since the late 1990s (Demombynes, 2011; Leggett, 2012; Metaal and Velde, 2014). This has been happening due to a combination of factors. First, there are ill-performing markets and the concentration of wealth and income (Hammill, 2005 26; Gindling and Trejos, 2013; Amarante et. al., 2016: 29). Then, the ever-growing pressure to "get tough on crime", the so-called "punitive populism", as if longer sentences or the death penalty were enough to eradicate crime.

Other drivers of migration include the effects of large-scale ecological devastation, mostly in the form of massive deforestation (Canales and Rojas, 2018 39) and open pit mining (Working Group, 2014; Tetrault, 2015). Such effects rage from threats to human and animal health (Birn et. al., 2018) to damages to the environment (Bastidas-Orrego and Colleagues, 2017: 51),

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[36] This story from the Spanish Newspaper *El País* explains how coyotes and drug dealers benefited from the increased surveillance in both Mexican borders in the earlier months of the Trump administration, but the patterns have existed, at least, since the mid-aughts.

[37] See Vilalta et. al. (2016) for homicide rates at the city level.

gentrification (Loayza and Rigolini, 2016), and drought (Báez and Colleagues, 2016). All these factors increase the pressure to migrate from rural areas of CA to the US as a way to find relief. Ecological devastation in Latin America is also coupled with violence, a major driver of migration. In Honduras, violence against environmental activists was the cause of Berta Cáceres's homicide (Malkin, 2017; Lakhani, 2020), as it has been in many countries in the region (Fonseca, 2016; Sierra Praeli, 2019; Angelo, 2020). Moreover, Haiti, a major contributor to the now existing refugee camps in both Mexico and the US, has faced over 30 years or so of crisis, both political and economic, and natural disasters (Canales and Rojas, 2018: 39). People fleeing Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Haiti, and Mexico itself are not just looking to earn more money in the US, as it was before. They are fleeing a variety of effects of violence and ecological devastation, lack of basic social services (schools and health care), among other pressing issues, closely associated with the prevailing ideas of markets with little or no regulation, and other features frequently associated with neoliberalism. It was in this context that the so-called Caravans emerged by the end of 2017 as an unsettling phenomenon.

1.1. Impact of racism on migration policies in Mexico

Mexico has a mixed history when it comes to issues of race, ethnicity, and discrimination. Racism is historically tied to migration policies in Mexico. There is a deep disconnect between the reality of Mexico, as one of the world's largest beneficiaries from both documented and undocumented migration, and the daily attitudes of Mexicans towards migrants from other countries living in Mexico, almost always tainted by racism. Back in the 19th century, Mexico did its best, as other Latin American countries did, to lure Europeans with mixed results. Such efforts fall squarely in the colonial mindset that was still craving for European virtues, while dismissing the locals' attitudes towards work. As Katz notices, Mexican attitudes towards migrants have oscillated over time and at different points have been impregnated with many of the same racial prejudices that existed in Europe and the US. He quotes a report from the Mexican Interior ministry labeling Eastern Europeans and Middle-Easterners as "undesirable", with Jews singled out "for special discrimination" (Katz, 2000: 2). Once again, a reflection of a colonial mindset in the minds of the Mexican legislators and policymakers.

During the Porfirio Díaz regime (1877-1911), Mexico actively sought to benefit from Japanese migration. Japanese nationals willing to come to Mexico received assistance and guarantees, as part of an agreement between both countries. From 1890 through 1910, little more than ten thousand Japanese nationals arrived in Mexico (Ota, 1983: 35-62). However, there was not such good will when dealing with Chinese nationals. Quite the opposite. While Europeans and Japanese migrants enjoyed a good reputation in Mexican media, a reflection of attitudes in the US and Europe, Chinese nationals have been the target of racist campaigns (Rabadán, 1997; Treviño Rangel, 2005; Velázquez Morales, 2010) up until the early 21st century.[38] To do so, Mexican media have used stereotypes and tropes, feeding narratives interlacing at least five features: frequent metaphors associating Chinese nationals to animals (locust, ants, drone flies, octopus), and biased generalizations regarding their morals, physical appearance, hygiene, and attitudes towards sexuality (Rabadán, 1997: 83-9).

In the 19th century, Mexican media mirrored the animosity behind the US Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. When that law was passed, China sought an agreement with Mexico to secure

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[38] Zhenli Ye Gon is a Chinese national naturalized Mexican. In 2007, 207 million dollars were seized at one of his properties. He was extradited to the US, found guilty and, in 2016, extradited back to Mexico to be trialed again here. His accent became the source of frequent mockery of him and Chinese people at large.

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refuge for its nationals already living in the US. The subsequent passing of the Geary Act (1892) made this need more pressing and since Mexico was already looking for labor to build railroad lines, a deal was reached. Mexico agreed to pay 35 silver pesos for each Chinese worker, while paying 65 silver pesos for each European worker (Ham, 2013: 21-2).

Mexico has been unwilling to address the most negative aspects of such history, while highlighting episodes of solidarity, such as the arrival of Spanish refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), (Ojeda-Revah, 2002: 280) and its support for Jewish people in Western Europe in the early days of the second World War (Bloomekatz, 2008). Later, in the 1970s, Mexico received political dissidents leaving Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and other South American countries. However, growing up in the 1970s, I have vivid memories of friends of my parents, all of them employed in relatively stable jobs, lamenting their arrival. They did it despite the fact that such wave of migration was rather small, short-lived, and many of the refugees were brilliant academics who improved the quality of Mexican universities. Later, during the 1980s, Mexico received refugees from CA fleeing the civil wars there. Unlike the 1970s wave, the Central American refugees were members of displaced rural and indigenous communities who settled in Southeast Mexico, in difficult circumstances, with little support to settle or relocate.

1.2.   The church

On top of the Mexican government and elites' colonial mindset and their unwillingness to cope with racism, despite episodes of true solidarity with refugees, one must notice the lack of Mexican advocacy groups to support migrants. They exist when dealing with Mexicans living abroad, especially in the US (Gurza and Macías, 1986; Ortiz, 1990), but when it comes to immigrants living in Mexico, there is a clear lack of non-profit organizations willing to help migrants in transit or trying to settle in Mexico. The Roman Catholic Church, the largest religious denomination in the country, also has had a mixed record on the issue. During the 1980s, when Guatemalan peasants settled in Southern Mexico, Caritas, the local equivalent of US Catholic Relief Services, played a role in helping them (Sesín, 1985). Since then, there was an effort to build a network of refuges to assist in-transit migrants, with the support of the US bishops (Anonymous, 1986). Such a network was already in place when the war on drugs victimized migrants in transit. However, during the late 1990s and up until the election of Pope Francis in 2013, the Mexican bishops lost interest in advocating for undocumented migrants. Mexico saw such advocacy increasingly falling in the hands of one single priest who was willing to denounce the abuses migrants were facing on their way to the US.

Father Alejandro Solalinde Guerra was doing so, however, without support from the bishops, and often times he ended up in media brawls, denouncing the unwillingness of said bishops to assist the migrants. At different points in the last two decades, Solalinde was barred from using Catholic churches in Mexico, and during a much storied tour of the US, in 2013, advocating for migration reform in both Mexico and the US, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta barred him from using the churches under their care.[39]

Sadly, when the 2018 election was over, Fr. Solalinde decided to stop criticizing Mexico's mistreatment of migrants in transit, even after Garduño Yáñez's appointment. In a 2019 interview with Salvadoran Newspaper *El Faro* Solalinde said: "migrants are very important,

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[39] It did so on a memorandum from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, dated May 4, 2013. Can provide copy on request.

but Mexico comes first" (Martínez, 2020). That interview marked the end of a 15-year career as an activist to promote the defense of foreign migrants in Mexico. The abandonment of such advocacy by the bishops in Mexico during the Calderón and Peña Nieto administrations, meant that after Solalinde's decision to accept Mexican current policy, undocumented foreign nationals in Mexico have lost their only voice supporting them at the national level. Other priests develop their own advocacy, but Solalinde came to be the voice of undocumented migrants. The Mexican bishops' abandonment of advocacy efforts by the late 1990s, came after they opted to privilege their relationship with the then-current governments. Their priority was to promote an anti-abortion agenda. In the state of Veracruz, a key point in undocumented migration in Mexico, the church closed some of its refugee houses since the early aughts (Carrera, 2004; Lira, 2017), while crackdowns on undocumented migrants were on the rise. Later, amid the silence of the bishops of Veracruz on migration, an anti-abortion bill was passed in the state congress and was signed into law at a ceremony in a Catholic elementary school (Ordaz, 2016).

In that respect, both the bishops and Solalinde have followed a similar pattern: when confronted with a choice between supporting the undocumented migrants and their ties with the Mexican government, their political preferences eclipsed their religious duties. In the bishops' case, the change to a renewed concern with the migrants' plight in Mexico, came after Pope Francis's election and was stressed by a 500,000 USD grant from the pontiff, to support the Mexican church relief efforts (Redacción, 2019).

1.3.   Mexican public opinion on migrants

The final point in the socio-economic and political context in Mexico must include the fact that attitudes towards migrants have been, for the most part, unsupportive of major changes in Mexican migration law. A 2015 national poll by the National University (UNAM) found that 22.8% of Mexicans over 15-years-old supported the idea of building a wall in the Mexican Southern border; 37.9% supported deportations of undocumented foreign nationals; and 55.6% supported enhanced controls in the Southern border. (See Table 1.) Even if there was no candidate in the 2018 election adopting a xenophobic discourse, there are groups and newspapers who, from time to time, voice proposals echoing Trump's discourse regarding the construction of walls (*El Mañana*, 2016). And even if there is no clear support for migration reform in Mexico—and there is no advocacy in the Mexican government to do so—one can find complaints about alleged benefits for migrants when talking with people living in the proximity of migrants' refuges. So much, that in 2012, as it happened before in Veracruz, the Catholic Church shut down one of its refuges in Lechería, near the Mexico City cargo train station (Chávez González, 2012).

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Table 1. As far as the undocumented migrants coming to Mexico, do you think the Mexican government should or should not…?

	Should	**It depends**	**Should not**	**Do not know**	**Do not answer**
Enhance border controls	56.6	28.6	11.2	2.8	0.8
Have a program of temporary workers	45.8	35.3	15	3.1	0.8
Deport them to their country of origin	37.9	38.6	20.01	2.2	1.2
Allow them to come through without obstacles	25.7	32.3	38.4	2.8	0.8
Build a wall in the Southern border	22.8	24.2	49.1	2.8	1.1

Source: National Migration Poll, UNAM (Caicedo and Morales Mena, 2015: 62).

A 2018 report by the International Crisis Group found similar attitudes. The section "Local Resentment" of the report stresses how:

> Resentment of efforts to protect Central Americans is also spreading in districts along the southern border that are home to such shelters. Poor neighbors of the Albergue Belén shelter in Tapachula have repeatedly requested its relocation, arguing that the shelter exposes them to the predations of Central American gangs (ICG, 2018: 16).

Even if the resentment is not representative of the overall attitudes of Mexicans towards undocumented foreign nationals, one can notice a major change in attitudes towards them. An October 2018 national poll showed overall support (51.4%) to allow migrants free pass to the US-Mexico border, and support (50.7%) for AMLO's propositions of giving them work permits (Consulta Mitofsky, 2018). However, a July 2019 poll found that 57% of Mexicans supported AMLO's decision to use the newly created National Guard to arrest migrants (Moreno, 2019). A January 2020 poll raised similar questions and confirmed the shift in attitudes. (See Table 2.) Moreover, it found similar levels of support in Mexico for the very restrictive migration policy enforced by the Trump administration.

Table 2. What are your feelings when you see…

	Anger	Sadness	Joy	Approval	Indifference	Other/DK
…Central Americans arrested by the Mexican National Guard?	4.4	25.7	1.4	46.4	6.5	15.6
…Mexicans arrested by the US Border Patrol?	13.8	28.2	3.1	33.6	7.5	13.8

Source: Consulta Mitofsky 2020.

If one wants to explain this shift, one needs to look at the data from the same poll where 61% of the interviewees supported AMLO's decision to change Mexican migration policy to avoid Trump's threat of tariffs (Consulta Mitofsky, 2020). These paradoxes of Mexican public life are more striking in the case of the Mexican entrepreneurial elite. In mid-July 2020, Mexican media reported media mogul Ricardo Salinas Pliego's political contributions of more than half a million dollars to Trump's reelection campaign and the Republican Party since January 2016. Salinas is the owner of TV Azteca, the second largest TV network in Mexico, and a close ally of AMLO (Tourliere, 2020).

2. Framing the rhetoric of the 2018 campaign

Even without the migration crisis that exploded by the end of 2017, the 2018 Mexican election was axial. It was in the sense that it was perceived as a chance for a major redefinition of what was acceptable and what was not in Mexican politics. Such redefinition touched the issue of migration but, it did, as it has been stated already, from an approach copied from the Alliance for Progress, that only issued every now and then de-colonization tones when AMLO wanted to rally support from his base. That was the case back in November, 2016 when, as a leader of his party, he said, within the context of the defense of Mexican undocumented nationals in the US that he would defend them (López Obrador, 2016), and then later that year on December 10, when he said:

> We do not address social issues with walls, crackdowns, the militarization of the border, or deportations. We are going to convince them that if there are jobs in Mexico, if there are jobs we address the migration issue, because people who are crossing the border do it out of need, not because they want to do so… If it is required, we will come to the border to protect the migrants, to defend the Mexicans, but we must not overstate our fears, we must remember that it is because our forefathers, your forefathers, here at the border, that Mexico is a free sovereign, independent country. We are not the colony of any foreign country (Redacción, 2016).

He also did so when addressing the corruption of his predecessor. At a rally on April 7, 2017, AMLO said in Xalapa, Veracruz: "I am going to defend the people of Mexico and I am going to make Mexico's independence meaningful; we are not the colony of any foreign country, Mexico is a free and sovereign country". Later, in Catemaco, he raised his tone. After bringing back the issue of the disastrous invitation issued back in 2016 to Trump as candidate to visit

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Mexico, AMLO said: "since then the government assumed a servile position, Peña never talked again about defending migrants, he does not talk about that. That is why Mexico was unwilling to go to the United Nations to denunciate the US government for the two (executive) orders issued by Trump, to build the wall and to persecute our fellow countrymen" (Zavaleta, 2017).

AMLO had been already a candidate back in 2006 and 2012, after an eventful run as mayor of Mexico City (2000-5). The 2006 election was marred with allegations of fraud, stemming from the way a coalition of business tycoons, journalists, and politicians, launched a fear-mongering campaign calling him "a danger to Mexico" (Anonymous, 2010; Gutiérrez Vidrios, 2007). That phrase was the centerpiece of a massive, US-styled, mudslinging, fear-mongering campaign that never offered evidence to prove its point. One of the ads, still available at YouTube, shows footage of one of AMLO's aides filling a portfolio with money. By the end, a male voice says: "López Obrador allowed these crimes to happen. We cannot trust him. López Obrador is a danger to Mexico"[40].

The campaign fell squarely with a controversial essay entitled "El mesías tropical", The tropical messiah, written by Enrique Krauze, a historian and public intellectual, who published the piece in his own magazine (*Letras Libres*). Even if Mexico is located near the tropic of Cancer so it is all "tropical", its use is rather derogatory; either in the sense of something that has been poorly adapted to local circumstances, or as something wild, exotic, primeval. The *Diccionario del español usual en México*, (Dictionary of the Spanish in use in Mexico) defines "Tropical" as related to the Tropics, but also, as something that is "warm, exuberant, alive, joyful and prone to fantasy: tropical character, tropical ideas, tropical rhythms" (Lara 2009).

Even if there was no reference in dictionaries to tropical, Krauze did his best to render tropical as something less than suitable for democratic rule. Out of eight times he uses the word tropical in the Spanish version of the essay (Krauze, 2006a), only one is positive; when he says AMLO lived a "tropical, free, and happy childhood". That reference is not included in the English version of the essay. The opposite to a reference of AMLO's days playing baseball. In the English version of the essay, Krauze says:

> "He used to fight someone, beat them, and wind up with that teasing little 'I-beat-you' smile," says one. He was very good at baseball, although, according to another, "when his team lost, he would get furious." According to some reports, he once threw a ball at a fellow player's head in anger, causing permanent damage" (Krauze, 2006b).[41]

In the Spanish version of the piece, there is no reference to the alleged accusation of "causing permanent damage" to another player. The next reference to tropical is neutral: when talks about AMLO's native state of Tabasco as "the most tropical" region in Mexico. The other six are less than positive even if one of them was provided by AMLO himself during a conversation they had in 2003. In that one, AMLO quotes Carlos Pellicer, a Mexican poet who wrote: "the Tabascan should control his passions". The fourth reference is about Tabasco as "the land of 'tropical power'". Later, Krauze quotes Graham Greene saying "Tabasco 'was like Africa seeing itself in a mirror all across the Atlantic Ocean'", and then Andrés Iduarte, a Tabascan essayist who killed a male after becoming "hostage to 'tropical passion'" and then decided to self-exile in New York City. The English version of the piece makes no reference to such "tropical passions", when writing about Iduarte, even if both versions talk about "tropical

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[40] AMLO actually prosecuted his aide. The video is available at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZnrM8GeIKA.
[41] The English version of this essay was first published in *The New Republic*, June 19, 2006.

passion" when dealing with the death of AMLO's brother José Ramón. The last reference to tropical in the Spanish version of the piece, again expunged from the English one, is a quote of Gustavo Rosario Torres, a Tabascan politician who has been tied to drug dealers since 2008 (Méndez y Ramón, 2008; Redacción, 2011). Krauze identified Rosario Torres "a perceptive Tabascan, a psychologist of the Tabascan people". On that last reference Rosario Torres drives the idea of AMLO being hostage to "tropical passion". Krauze has published several books including this essay and has published variations on the theme of AMLO as a messianic populist threat, both in Spanish and English. The most recent iteration of this series on AMLO as a messiah was published in early July by *The New York Review of Books* (Krauze 2020).

The 2006 mudslinging campaign had little or no effect when one considers that Felipe Calderón Hinojosa won with less than one percent of the total vote. Additionally, the way the election was managed by the authority prompted massive mobilizations and protests seeking a recount that was not legally possible under the then existing laws.

After a second unsuccessful attempt (2012), AMLO won the presidency in 2018 with a comfortable margin. He won with a campaign centered on criticizing the corruption of then ruling party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) and its predecessor, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). He heralded a vague call for major reforms in Mexican politics. Even if migration was not a major component of the presidential campaign and of López Obrador's proposals, the issue was a part of the conversation, along the lines sketched in his book already referenced. However, as the appointment of Garduño Yáñez proved, migration reform was not a priority.

Little less than a year before the beginning of the presidential campaigns, in March 2017, AMLO, at the time the leader of his party, the Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (Morena), toured New York and Washington, DC. In New York, he met with Mexican migrants. In an interview in *The Spokesman-Review*, AMLO chastised Trump's "'campaign of hatred' against Mexican immigrants, accused him of violating human rights laws, called his border wall a 'propaganda' tool and said he couldn't wait to handle the renegotiation of NAFTA himself. Peña is too quiet. And Donald Trump speaks very loudly. One doesn't beg for liberty; one seizes it". AMLO added Trump's "campaign of hatred has no justification. It is not only inhumane, it's irresponsible". Not surprisingly, the story warned:

> "It could be a foretaste of clashes to come. Mexico and the US have enjoyed a cooperative relationship for decades. Trump has changed the dynamic. He's gotten Mexicans so mad that, if the polls are right, they're ready to elect a fiery nationalist of their own, a politician who's spent years denouncing the way the economy is run in the interests of foreigners—in some ways, a Mexican anti-Trump" (Cattan and Rodríguez, 2017).

AMLO's blitzkrieg continued the next day in Washington, DC, where he filed a complaint with the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) regarding two of Trump's usual attacks on Mexico and Mexican immigrants.

AMLO's fiery rhetoric in the US was pretty much the same as it had been in Mexico since 2016, when Trump's attacks had become a staple of his presidential campaign and remained unchanged during the Mexican presidential campaign. During that process, AMLO's criticism of Trump and his complaint at the IACHR were the source of criticism towards him, since it

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was assumed that he was putting the US-Mexico trade relation at risk.[42] This perception of risk associated with a possible win of AMLO was a frequent topic in news stories in both Mexican and US media before, during, and after the presidential election of July 1, 2018, up until June 2019.

2.1.   The language of the political parties' manifestos

Throughout the campaign neither the rights of Mexicans living abroad or foreign nationals living in Mexico were a major source of debate or concern. In the manifestos of the major political parties there are few references to migrants and migration. None of the references address the issue of the challenges Mexico confronts as a "labor frontier country". It is as if for the main political parties in Mexico back in 2018, transit migration from other countries was not an issue. Both PAN's and PRI's manifestos acknowledge the need to address the plight of Mexicans abroad, but none of the manifestos address the plight of foreign nationals living in Mexico or trying to reach the US-Mexico border. This, despite the media stories about such plight, especially after the 2010 San Fernando massacre[43].

The San Fernando massacre is key to understand how much migration came to be defined by illegitimate violence against undocumented migrants in Mexico. In the tenth anniversary of it, Pope Francis issued a stern condemnation of the massacre and the implicit unwillingness or inability of the Mexican government to address repeated pleas by the families of the victims to verify the identity of the remains delivered by the Mexican authorities to the victims' relatives (Fundación 2020). After the Angelus prayers in Rome, Pope Francis said, on Sunday August 23 2020:

> Tomorrow, 24 August, is the tenth anniversary of the massacre of 72 migrants in San Fernando, in Tamaulipas, Mexico. They were people from various countries who were looking for a better life. I express my solidarity with the families of the victims who today are still asking for truth and justice regarding the events. The Lord will hold us to account for all of the migrants who have fallen on their journey of Hope. They were victims of the throwaway culture (Pope Francis 2020).

In AMLO's party (Morena) 2018 election Manifesto, there is one single reference to migration. Under the "Combat on Poverty" heading it says:

> There is an undeniable causal relation between the scarcity of material resources affecting the vast majority of the population, and the growth in insecurity, violence, forced migration due to circumstances, political and institutional decomposition and the mediocrity of the overall economic performance (Morena, 2018 5).[44]

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[42] The US is, by far, the most important trading partner for Mexico. US goods and services trade with Mexico totaled an estimated $610.2 billion in 2018. Exports were $265.9 billion. Imports were $344.2 billion (US Census Bureau, 2020).

[43] The San Fernando massacre (22 -23 August, 2010) involved the assassination of at least 72 persons, later buried in clandestine digs at rural areas of the San Fernando municipality, less than 150 km (90 miles) from the US-Mexico border. (Pérez Salazar 2015). Mexican officials have blamed a faction of the Los Zetas (Redacción 2020) cartel, but nobody has faced charges for the massacre (Granados 2011). San Fernando is the "largest single mass execution in the history of modern North America" (Moore 2011). After the massacre, Mexican authorities located the remains of somewhere between 193 and up to 600 additional corpses, disposed in clandestine graves, only in that municipality.

[44] Mexican Spanish used in political speech, often called "burocrañol", a portmanteau of the Spanish words for Bureaucratic and Spanish, is notoriously verbose. I have done my best to retain the verbose, obscure, bureaucratic nature of their original Spanish writing.

The right-of-center PAN party 2018 Manifesto made nine mentions to migration related issues in seven paragraphs. Under the "Economic Development" heading it proposes "to enact policies to protect the rights of returning migrants" (p. 44). Under the "Strengthening the position of Mexico in the World" heading calls to "include in the free trade agreements (…), especially those with the US, clauses dealing with the migratory flux, workers' rights, and environmental issues" (p. 54). It talks about lobbying "the US congress to promote the Mexican national interest on sensitive topics such as migration policy, security and free trade" (p. 54). On page 55 it advocates "to strengthen the defense of the human and labor rights of migrants of Mexican origin (…) based upon the World Pact on Migration". It also talks about empowering "Mexican communities in the US, supporting their agendas and strengthening their contribution to Mexican interests and to promote actions to support the legalization of the so-called dreamers", and it talks about assessing and designing "new programs to support Mexican migrants as to identify uncovered areas, with special consideration to legal support and advice". Finally, it talks about developing "policy to benefit the return migration as to facilitate a wholesome social, economic, and labor re-insertion and to help them access social programs, especially those aimed at improving their economic capacities; and in order to acknowledge migrants as a 'group in a vulnerable situation'" (p. 55).

The then ruling PRI party included in its 2018 Manifesto eight references to migration over five paragraphs. Under the heading "Axis 4: Inclusive and Solidary Mexico", it proposes promoting "conditions for the legalization of individuals and to facilitate access to social programs allowing them a successful participation in the communities where they live and (help) their employability, and an overall improvement of the quality of their lives" (p. 42). Under the heading "Axis 5: Mexico open to the world" the manifesto says: "when protecting Mexicans abroad, the directive will remain to bring their rights closer to those of the citizens where they live (p. 44). Later it says: "With the Mexican community abroad (…) we must continue reinforcing the means of legal defense to guarantee the respect of their human rights and those of their families. Likewise, we must promote conditions to secure the legalization of their migration status at the personal level" (p. 46).

When talking about multilateral bodies it says: "Mexico must participate in decisions made in multilateral organisms, since it is there where we have a chance to balance out the most radical positions against integration. Some spaces where it is possible to boost the national interests are: the implementation of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Agenda, (…) the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, (…) peacekeeping operations, a new paradigm in fighting the World Drug Problem, (…) a new governance of international migration through the Global Pact on Migration, and the active participation in decisions taken at the G-20" (p. 46-7). Finally, under the "Transversal Cause no. 3: A Bet on Young People", PRI talks about migrants as one of many groups with whom "we commit to protect their rights and to seek their permanent participation in the national life" (p. 60).

Morena's manifesto makes no reference to CA or the Caribbean or to the relation of Mexico with the countries in those regions. There are two references to Guatemala and one to Honduras as part of broader comparisons. The PAN's manifesto makes no reference at all to CA, to the Caribbean, or to any country in those two regions. PRI dedicated half of one paragraph to CA, and the other half to the Caribbean, but no specific mention of any country in those regions (p. 42).

2.2.   Presidential debates

This silence of the main political parties was reflected before and throughout the formal period of political campaign (90 days, March 30 through May 27, 2018). Foreign migrants were, for the most part, treated as ghosts, while there was a clear interest in the candidates in rendering themselves as allies of the Mexican migrants in the US. There was no similar acknowledgment of the plight of foreign nationals in Mexico. The most noticeable exception to the silence of the Mexican political establishment regarding foreign nationals in Mexico, happened during the second of three national presidential debates.

The debate was set for May 20, 2018, at Tijuana, the largest Mexican city in the US-Mexico border. AMLO's and his rivals', José Antonio Meade Kuribreña (PRI), Ricardo Anaya Cortés (PAN), and Jaime Rodríguez Calderón (the independent governor of Nuevo León), remarks on the duties of the Mexican government towards Mexicans living in the US were all positive. As far as the foreign nationals living in Mexico, there was a question. Local resident Teresa Mercado raised it at minute 75 of the 91-minute debate:

> It is outrageous how migrants crossing Mexico are treated. Going back to the San Fernando massacre in Tamaulipas, the treatment they get from the migration authority. Their plight traveling in La Bestia[45] and, more recently, the kidnapping at the hands of the organized crime. My question is: How are you going to help the migrants crossing Mexico, African, Haitian, Central American, alike, so we can have the moral standing to ask for a dignified treatment for the Mexicans living in the US?

Mrs. Mercado's question was followed by context provided by León Krauze, the son of already cited Enrique Krauze, one of the two hosts of the debate:

> I would like to add some data to provide some context to understand the caliber of the humanitarian crisis Teresa is talking about. Mexico deports more Central Americans than the US, according to Amnesty International. 84% of them said they do not want to go back to their country out of fear of being killed. Two thirds of the Central Americans crossing through Mexico had been victims of some kind of violence. A third of the females had been sexually assaulted on their way in our country. A third…

Krauze's data was debunked in February, 2019, when Trump himself used the same data to justify the changes to US migration and refugee policies on January 19, 2019. Glenn Kessler of *The Washington Post* gave Trump's data regarding sexual attacks on migrant females a "Four Pinocchios" in The Fact Checker scale of that newspaper since the one third of females being sexually assaulted turned out to be "a bad case of academic telephone… (since the actual) percentage of women who reported rape is about 10%, similar to the Mexican National Institute of Health study (Kessler 2019).

Krauze's use of that quotation in the Mexican Presidential debate is relevant because, on top of his role as host of the debate, he is the anchor of one of Univisión's major Spanish-language newscasts in the US. Moreover, even if Krauze was concerned about the plight of the

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[45] *La Bestia* (The Beast) is the colloquial name given to a series of freight trains running from Tapachula, the Southernmost city in Mexico, to the US border towns of Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Matamoros. It is not a single route.

undocumented foreign nationals, he did it at the expense of fueling the same racist narrative Trump has been pushing forward since 2015.

In answering this question, none of the candidates played an openly nationalistic card. But none of them were willing to go deeper into the issues that, one year after the 2018 election, were behind the radical enforcement of Mexican migration law at Trump's request. On a follow up question, Ricardo Anaya went as far as to say that migrants must be received with "open arms" and he said he would be willing to reform the extremely rigid Mexican laws and procedures to help them achieve refugee status here. Only José Antonio Meade tied the presence of foreign nationals to the risk of increased activities of organized criminals (min. 85:30):

> Lots of this migration has implicit (ties) also to organized crime. Lots of this migration implies the laundering of funds, implies human trafficking, implies abuses, implies also attacking our own security. That is why, we must find a good equilibrium between the migrant coming here in good faith, with good will, seeking hope and opportunity and the migrant coming here violating our own security, the migrant who entices criminal gangs, that make them the victims of human trafficking.

None of the other candidates nor any of the two moderators, questioned the validity of Meade's assertions, despite the fact he never offered evidence to support them. After this, the debate moved into other issues.

2.3. Morning pressers: The significance of the framing to the political outcomes for foreign migrants in Mexico

One of AMLO's contribution to the Mexican political lexicon and praxis is the so-called "Mañanera", a morning (mañana) press conference hosted by the president himself. This daily routine usually starts at 7 am and it can run for two or three hours. AMLO uses the time to share his thoughts on issues, but also to share the dais with key members of his cabinet. As far as migration is concerned, during the first weeks of his administration, AMLO seemed to be invested in changing the approach. Hence the appointment of Guillén as head of the National Institute of Migration, and the promises made at that time. So many, that up until May 2019, foreign media was talking about "AMLO's risky bet on migrants". The Spanish language BBC service summarized such bet on two issues. On the one hand, the commitment to respect the human rights of the undocumented migrants going through Mexico, as compared to the practice of the previous two presidential administrations, that pretty much left migrants at the mercy of the Coyotes/drug lords syndicate (Nájar, 2019). On the other hand, AMLO's original idea of offering them working permits to let them get jobs in infrastructure projects. The idea was contentious because, even if unemployment in pre-pandemic Mexico had been officially low, around 4%, there are questions regarding the methods to calculate that figure. On top of such questions, there are issues such as the stagnated and low wages, and the size of the informal economy, reaching—in September 2019—around 57% of the workforce (García, 2019). In that respect, the very idea of Central Americans getting jobs from the government, even if temporary, became unbearable, and the source of criticism. Things got worse when Trump issued his tariffs ultimatum (Wagner and Ries, 2019). The threat implied a monthly 5% increase on all goods shipped by Mexico to the US. If by April 2018, Mexicans were still willing to help the migrants' caravans (Reuters 2018), by May 30, 2019, the good will had turn into anxiety and anger after Trump issued his threat (Paletta et.al., 2019).

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Consequently, during the third week of June, 2019, after the negotiation with the Trump administration was over (Rascoe, 2019), the Mañaneras were dedicated to different aspects of the deal and its impact on migration. On June 12, AMLO announced Mexico and the US had reached a deal to avoid tariffs. He did so insisting that this was his choice, not an imposition from Trump; that it was a "Mexican way (…) to prove that we can address migration if there is development, if there is wellbeing and that peace and tranquility are the fruits of justice" (min. 4:26 AMLO, June 12, 2019). He went on to explain the details of the deal (Ballhaus et.al., 2019).

The next day, AMLO had as guests at his daily conference representatives of the government of Spain, and some members of the Spanish families that came to Mexico in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. The Mexican foreign affairs minister, Marcelo Ebrard Casaubón, and AMLO did their best to render the migration deal with the US as the outcome of a long standing Mexican tradition of offering refuge to people facing difficulties. Irene Lozano, the secretary for global affairs of the Spanish government, said, when talking about the welcoming of the Spanish refuges, that it was "an example of solidarity, coherence and bravery, at a dramatic moment for freedoms, not only in Spain but in all Europe, and for democracy in the world" (min. 13:14, AMLO, June 13, 2019).

The next day, June 14, AMLO and Ebrard shared the dais with the governors of the Southern states of Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz (ruled by Morena), and Campeche and Oaxaca (ruled by the PRI party). These states have been the most affected by the Caravans and all of them with very high levels of poverty. All the governors, praised the agreement as a way to prevent a tariffs war with the US.

Despite the celebratory tone of the president's Mañaneras, the previous day, the then speaker of Mexican House of representatives, elected as a member of AMLO's party, expressed displeasure at the deal with the US. Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, as it has been established already, explicitly framing the issue in colonial terms.

A journalist attending the June 14 press conference, raised Muñoz Ledo's assertion as a question to Ebrard (min 42:42, AMLO, June 14, 2019). The Mexican foreign minister dismissed Muñoz Ledo's critique by raising, as it was the standard answer of the Mexican government to any criticism of the agreement, the issue of tariffs:

> I will be talking with him later. We must think first what would have happened had Mexico entered a trade war dynamic with the US. We have not finished this negotiation yet but, at least, there is no more threat of tariffs upon us (…) and we have not accepted what they wanted, so I do not understand (Muñoz Ledo's) take.

When Ebrard said "we have not accepted what they wanted", he was talking about Mexico accepting to become a Safe Third Country, as Canada did back in 2004, and as it was actually forced down on El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras in the context of this crisis (Narea, 2019; Ibe, 2020). The degree to which Mexico is, after June 2019, a de facto Safe Third Country is still up for debate. Additionally, experts do not share the Trump administration's enthusiasm on the effects of these deals on migration (Fratzke, 2019; Gzesh, 2019). Finally, the next day, Tonatiuh Guillén resigned his position as commissioner of the National Institute of Migration with a two-paragraph letter.

3.   Decolonizing migration

The general election offered a chance, as AMLO himself said at different points during his campaign, to change the nature of the US-Mexico relation by affirming its sovereignty and, more specifically, to change the way Mexico deals with foreign nationals trying to reach the US. Even if López Obrador never explicitly claimed that his was a decolonizing approach, he adheres to a nationalist discourse, emphasizing the idea of Mexico being a "sovereign nation" and—in that respect—being a nation free to set its own course, to make its own decisions, in the pursue of its own interests. It is, in that respect, a discourse with elective affinities with the decolonization approach, especially when we see it as an attempt to replace Western interpretations with local, non-Western approaches to the issues, in ways that dismantle structures perpetuating the status quo and address unbalanced power dynamics (Cull et. al., 2018: 8).

A decolonial approach regarding migration between Mexico and CA is more relevant when one considers the ties that existed before the arrival of Hernán Cortés between areas of contemporary Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. That is not to say that there were no relations of subordination. Those existed and the Mexica (Aztec) empire was especially aggressive in pursuing its own interests, with little or no regard towards other nations. The Mexica-Tlaxcalteca relation in pre-Columbian Mexico is the best example of such dynamics. Sadly, those power dynamics remain as features of the contemporary Mexico-CA relation in ways that mirror and amplify the US-Mexico relation. To put it simply, "colonial relationships continue to condition social relations in the Americas" (Taylor, 2012: 389).

The post-9/11 world gave new legitimacy to very intrusive approaches of US national security. Such approaches were legitimized during the Bush and Obama administrations and radicalized after Trump's election in 2016. More so after the unfolding of the Caravans' Crisis in the Northern and Southern Mexican borders, allowing for an increased centrality in Mexico of US concerns, with little or no respect for other nations' needs. Mexico and Canada have to bear the brunt of such increased centrality. Such process has disturbed the US-Mexico relation over the last 20 years. During this period, Mexico has been forced to adopt a more restrictive approach toward its relation and border exchanges with Belize and Guatemala. Mexico, as many Central Americans say, has turned into "The Wall". Up until June 2019, the Mexico-Guatemala border had a very loose enforcement policy. That world of relative equality ended when, in order to avoid the threat of tariffs, Mexico adopted a very rigid approach when dealing with foreign nationals, Guatemalans and Belizeans included, while keeping a very generous approach when dealing with US, Canadians, and Western European tourists and visitors. It has happened with the criteria for issuing visas and for dealing with foreign nationals. In some cases, Mexico has forfeited the Mexican visas for foreign nationals already holding a US visa (Secretaría de Turismo, 2014). In some other cases, even before the Caravans' and Coronavirus crises, Mexico adopted more stringent migration policies than the US.

The unofficial explanation has been to render it as a process to avoid potential conflicts with the US government in case a terrorist attack happens. This narrative fits squarely with the very frequent trope of Mexican politics that says "We Mexicans (unlike *gringos*) are not a racist folk". The implication is that, even if the policies are race-based, ultimately, it is not up to Mexico to decide them. They are a mechanism of sorts to prevent a potential conflict with the US. However, there is plenty of evidence about how deep racism runs in Mexico (Van Dijk, 2003; Moreno Figueroa, 2010; Sue, 2013; Navarrete, 2016; Pérez López, 2017; Ortiz et. al., 2018, among others). It would be naïve, to say the least, to assume that the shifts in Mexican public opinion and the very attitude of policy makers towards those shifts are free from racism. Also, it is necessary to acknowledge that the consequences of such racism are not limited to the

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relations between Mexicans; they inform relations between Mexicans and foreign nationals, especially those in disadvantage.

The 2018 general election offered a chance to decolonize Mexican foreign, migration, and law enforcement policies; it was axial in the sense of freeing such policies from undue influence from the US, especially on how Mexico deals with undocumented migration. It was also a chance to decolonize in the sense of freeing Mexico from colonial, racialized and racist discourses that still inform debates on domestic and foreign policies. Those discourses emerged during the Caravans' Crisis in 2017 and 2018, and even more during the current coronavirus Covid—19 global pandemic. Instead, what has happened is the opposite. Mexico, if one accepts Muñoz Ledo rationale, is going back into a colonial state. Even if Muñoz Ledo's was nothing but fiery rhetoric, there is evidence of a large scale alignment of Mexican migration policy, that is hard to believe will fall back to what existed in October 2016, regardless of the outcome of the US 2020 general election.

Central American governments need to address issues of their own, but it is hard to believe that will happen when one considers the quashing of efforts to address deep, structural, corruption in Guatemala and Honduras in the last couple of years. There is an abundance of evidence of the benefits of having international bodies as the now disappeared CICIG (International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, Witte 2019) driving the anti-corruption reforms in that country. The Trump administration has been implicated in the elimination of CICIG (Blitzer, 2019).

As far as Mexico is concerned, the Morena coalition was too loose. It incorporated people from PAN, PRI, and other parties from the left. As such, they lacked the necessary cohesion to drive major change to migration law and policy. Also, Mexico lacks a civil society vigorous enough to raise awareness of the migrants' plight in Mexico and way too eager to align itself with the priorities of the government, as Solalinde's shift suggests. Instead of the kind of changes that AMLO sketched in his books, his campaign and in the first six months of his six-year term, Mexico turned into the enforcer of US foreign and migration policies in CA. Meanwhile, social media informs on an almost daily basis of new murders or deportations of Haitian and Central American refuge seekers, as the Twitter account of professor Wilner Metelus (https://twitter.com/wilnermetelus), chair of the Citizens' Committee in Defense of Naturalized and Afro Mexicans, attests. The situation indicates the short the gaze of the new Mexican government and its inability to seize opportunities to infuse politics, both in Mexico and North America, with a dosage of ethics and coherence based on Mexican sovereignty. In this sense, the statement made by Muñoz Ledo about Mexican sovereignty still applies: We are going back into a colonial status and we are accepting it (*Aristegui Noticias*, 2019).

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