



# The World Through Borders: The Difficult Journey of Migrants in Transit

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## Index

Introduction <i>Rafael Alonso Hernández López</i>	9
Notes on the Free Movement of Persons <i>Juan Artola</i>	19
Flow Crisis and Permanency in Cuban Emigration in the Light of Restored Relations between Cuba and the United States <i>María Eugenia Anguiano Téllez and Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez</i>	45
Mexico's Southern Border: Concept and Realities in the 21st Century <i>Daniel Villafuerte Solís</i>	81
The Pacific Railroad Route, a Look into Migration in Transit through Western Mexico <i>Rafael Alonso Hernández López</i>	107
European Border Control Policies: The Case of Poland <i>Stefan Alscher</i>	131
Final Considerations <i>Rafael Alonso Hernández López</i>	159
About the Authors	163

# Mexico's Southern Border: Concept and Realities in the 21st Century

Daniel Villafuerte Solís

## Introduction

Understanding the recent geopolitical relevance of Mexico's southern border requires us to analyze three key events. First, the Guatemalan armed conflict, which reached its peak during the early 80s, and displaced thousands of people; second, the revolt of the EZLN on 1 January 1994; and third, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. An additional element, the 2014 migratory crisis, will also be addressed in this essay.

The armed conflict in Guatemala brought together a myriad of civil society and Catholic Church's groups to support refugees. It also mobilized international organizations, such as the UNHCR, and national entities, such as the COMAR, created in 1980. The Mexican Federal Government implemented an array of measures to protect the border against the waves of displaced Guatemalans due to the civil war, making the state of Chiapas fundamental for border security. The political significance of this space grew with the outbreak of the EZLN revolt.

Within this context, and amid the sustained upsurge of migratory flows from Central America, in 1998, the Federal Government decided to implement the so-called "Sealing the Southern Border" plan. In 2001, weeks before the September 11 terrorist attacks, the "South Plan" was unveiled with the objective of securing the border. The Twin Towers and Pentagon's attacks increased the White House's interest