

Summit of the Americas and the management of the Migration and Development Pact: feasible?

La Cumbre de las Américas y la gestión del Pacto de Migración y Desarrollo: ¿viable?

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the importance and contributions of the Ninth Summit of the Americas

-hereinafter Summit- held in the city of Los Angeles, CA from June 6 to 10, 2022 and its impact on an agenda for a better management of migration and development in a post-pandemic context. Also, the reflection of the work is aimed at evaluating the feasibility of the implementation of the migration pact signed at the Summit based on the public policy approach. The methodology of the article is based on an analysis of the viability of the policies, considering the governance and public policy approaches. The analysis is based on the main elements considered in the viability of a policy, especially the financial dimension, management and the central categories of governance for results, in particular, coordination, incentives, planning and policy evaluation. The effects of migratory flows during the pandemic have also been complex and varied. For example, the closure of borders and the suspension of asylum processing in the United States has helped to slow the spread of the virus and reduce the risks associated with irregular migration.

Keywords: Governance, migration, public policies, summit of the Americas.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo analiza la importancia y aportes de la Novena Cumbre de las Américas –en adelante Cumbre- efectuada en la ciudad de Los Ángeles, CA del 6 al 10 de junio 2022 y su impacto en una agenda para una mejor gestión de la migración y del desarrollo en un contexto de pos pandemia. También, la reflexión del trabajo está encaminada a evaluar la viabilidad de la implementación del pacto migratorio suscrito en la Cumbre con base en el enfoque de políticas públicas. La metodología del artículo está fundamentada con base en un análisis de la viabilidad de las políticas, considerando los enfoques de gobernanza y de políticas públicas. El análisis parte de los principales elementos que considera la viabilidad de una política, en especial la dimensión financiera, la gestión y las categorías centrales de la gobernanza para resultados, en particular, la coordinación, incentivos, planificación y evaluación de políticas. Los efectos de los flujos migratorios durante la pandemia también han sido complejos y variados. Por ejemplo, el cierre de fronteras y la suspensión de los trámites de asilo en Estados Unidos han contribuido a frenar la propagación del virus y a reducir los riesgos asociados a la migración irregular.

Palabras claves: Cumbre de las Américas, gobernanza, migración, políticas públicas.

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1. - INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on analyzing the viability of various Summit agreements, particularly the "migration compact," which depends on effective implementation based on governance for results (Falcao and Marini 2010: 83-85). The Summit was the second in 28 years to be hosted by the United States. It is the only meeting in the hemisphere that brings together leaders from North, South, and Central America, as well as the Caribbean (Díaz Barrado, 2019).

The Summit working groups' proposals for action face the following challenges: a) the viability of the agreements based on effective shared responsibility; b) the follow-up of initiatives to formulate individual and collective policies; and especially, c) the incentives that the US government will propose to build a sustainable, resilient, and equitable future for the countries of the American continent. In particular, for the countries of the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), it should be noted that the concept of coordination contrasts with that of co-responsibility, which is typical of proposals in terms of migration management, policy, and international cooperation (Pijenburg, Gammeltoft-Hansen, and Rijken, 2018).

It is important to note the contribution of multidimensional governance (Scholten, 2020) in order to manage the diversity of problems associated with migration (rights, violence, insecurity, pandemic, environment, development). This issue, in turn, implies a multi-stakeholder agenda that also needs to be managed with different actors located in various spheres of government with differentiated priorities (Dodds, 2002). This context makes it difficult to promote basic consensus among different actors, particularly on a problem as complex as migration and its various dimensions.

2.- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Global context, management and development policies.

The Summit is the only forum that brings together the leaders of the countries of North America, South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. The Summit, and its forums, aim to promote cooperation towards inclusive economic growth and prosperity throughout the region, based on a common respect for democracy, fundamental freedoms, the dignity of labor, and free enterprise (Galán, 2021).

The US government developed the theme of the Ninth Summit, "*Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future*", with governments, civil society, and the private sector in the region, as well as with the thirteen international organizations that make up the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG).

Among the central themes of the Summit were: the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on health, economic, educational, and social systems; threats to democracy; the climate crisis; and the lack of equitable access to economic, social, and political opportunities (Gratius, 2022). These problems have become more acute over the years. This reflects the fact that the Summits are not necessarily conceived as the best alternative to reduce or solve major global and regional problems (Morgenfeld and Merino, 2022). This approach is relevant because an analysis of the agenda of the first Summit held in Miami in 1994 shows that the issues remain the same but have become more complex and critical, which is why poverty levels in the region have increased over the last 28 years. The central themes of the Summit were:

- Pact for Development and Prosperity: Democracy, Free Trade and Sustainable Development in the Americas.
- Promote prosperity through economic integration and free trade.
- Eradicate poverty and discrimination in our hemisphere.
- Ensure sustainable development and preserve our environment for future generations (Moss, 1994).

It is worth mentioning that in 1994, Agenda 21 was underway, with the priority of the environmental agenda, and in the case of Mexico, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was beginning. Both agendas were relevant in the regional and trilateral context, and although they have increased trade integration processes, they have also led to greater environmental pollution and social inequalities.

The issues in general, and the migration pact agreed at the Summit, imply or are oriented towards local and regional development (Congressional Research Service, 2022). Hence the question of what it means to promote social development in contexts of asymmetry between the countries of the region. Development is a phenomenon associated with the economic, technical, social, and cultural dimensions of a particular place or region and is thus often endogenous and linked to a process of decentralization (Boisier, 2005). From this perspective, local development depends on the capacities and exogenous flows that condition it and on the endogenous capacity of local actors (Vázquez-Barquero, 2009). The challenge for policy is to encourage and manage the productive system so that it has an impact on development (Albuquerque, 2003).

A development priority according to Vázquez-Barquero (2009) is to satisfy basic needs, through job creation, income and impact on quality of life, conservation of natural resources and the environment, which is made viable on the basis of effective collaborative governance of a development agenda. The structural problem of local development is to secure and make viable better living conditions through effective utilization and management of a local resource agenda.

The nexus between development and migration has indeed garnered significant attention in recent scholarship, with a growing consensus that development may initially stimulate migration rather than curbing it (de Haas, 2010; Clemens, 2014). This counterintuitive outcome is attributed to the "migration hump" phenomenon, whereby increased development in low-income countries initially leads to higher levels of emigration, as more individuals acquire the resources and aspirations to move (Martin & Taylor, 1996). In the case of Central America, migration flows are driven by a complex interplay of factors, ranging from violence perpetrated by criminal organizations (Mainwaring & Brigida, 2016) to the pursuit of family reunification (Gonzalez-Barrera & Krogstad, 2018). The challenge for policymakers and scholars alike is to understand and address these multidimensional drivers of migration, while also considering the role of development in shaping migration patterns (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014). The study of development-migration nexus and Central American migration can be further explored through the works of the following.

This context is complex and is exacerbated by the structural factors that condition migration flows to the United States: poverty, marginalization, insecurity, violence, which over the years have worsened in the countries of the Northern Triangle and in Mexico, with the result that the generation of development has not been a priority in the countries of the region (De Haas et al., 2019). Migration thus

becomes not a right, but a necessity, especially for vulnerable groups. And to the extent that it generates remittances for the families of origin, it is an alternative to promote minimum conditions of governance and legitimacy in the expelling countries, but which have not had an impact on the promotion of development (Souza and García-Suaza, 2018).

The distinction between economic growth and development is crucial in understanding the impact of remittances on the well-being of a society. While economic growth refers to the increase in the value of goods and services produced in an economy, development encompasses broader dimensions such as income distribution, poverty reduction, access to education, and healthcare, among others (Sen, 1999). Remittances have been shown to contribute positively to economic growth by increasing household income and consumption (Adams & Page, 2005), but their effects on development are more complex and varied. Although remittances can alleviate poverty and contribute to human capital investment (Yang, 2011), they may also perpetuate systemic inequity and dependency on external financial flows (Chami et al., 2008). In countries with a history of colonialism, issues such as unequal power relations, persistent social inequalities, and a lack of institutional capacity further compound the challenges of fostering equitable development (Acemoglu et al., 2001). Thus, it is essential to critically examine the role of remittances within the broader context of historical and structural factors that shape development outcomes.

According to Albuquerque (2003), the objectives for promoting local development include: stimulating productive initiatives; providing local companies with production support services; establishing financing for the creation of new companies; and encouraging inter-company cooperation in the territory. The current challenge of these objectives is to ensure that they have effective institutional support through strategic governance that encourages a comprehensive policy to promote development (Muller, 2020). In order to fully comprehend the relationship between structural economic and political conditions and development in the Northern Triangle region, it is crucial to examine the historical context that has shaped these countries. The deeply-rooted historical legacies of conflict, inequality, and weak governance in the Northern Triangle have significantly influenced contemporary development challenges (Castillo, 2014; Rojas, 2013). In particular, the region has been characterized by a history of political instability, social exclusion, and economic dependence on external actors, which has hindered the capacity of these countries to foster inclusive and sustainable development (Cruz, 2015). As such, any analysis of development prospects in the Northern Triangle should take into account the complex historical dynamics that continue to shape the region's political economy. Scholars who have extensively studied the Northern Triangle, such as Miguel Angel Castillo and Martha Rojas, provide valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities facing the region.

The implementation of such local development strategies depends on the effective coordination of the various actors in the territory (Vázquez-Barquero, 2009), their active participation, and the incorporation of technological and entrepreneurial innovations (Albuquerque, 2003). The challenge is therefore how to incentivize such coordination and the other elements of collaborative governance that affect development, such as visioning, steering, planning, and evaluation (Schillemans and Bovens, 2019). One advantage of the Summit agreements is the interest of the US government and some international organizations – through global governance – in promoting such an agenda, especially that of migration with the aim of regulating migration flows according to the UN's institutional priorities (safe, orderly, and legal). The structural problem is whether such principles can be viable in the face of increasing migration flows in a post-pandemic context.

From the perspective of the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2021), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can promote sustainable development for migrants and their communities. It brings benefits in terms of skills, investment, and cultural diversity, and well-being through the transfer of skills and financial resources. International remittances could be integrated into this framework. The problem is that IOM's good practices in local and community development in migrant-sending countries are incipient.

The migration pact derived from the Summit could be an alternative if the reduction of emigration were a governmental priority, based on the effective co-responsibility of the countries in the region. The incentives for irregular migration are greater, in line with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. From this perspective, IOM promotes a migration governance approach that considers the role of governments and society so that migration and migrants' demands are considered in the policy and regulatory agenda.

From IOM's point of view, the relationship between migration and development is complex, considering that the political, regulatory, economic, and social processes of destination countries condition migration flows. If migration does not have adequate governance, development will not be viable. The challenges of IOM's migration governance agenda include the following: a) considering the main management elements (coordination, incentives, planning); b) promoting basic consensus among governmental and non-governmental actors, in accordance with a basic agenda; c) integrating a development agenda and according to various policies; d) integrating such an agenda with the proposed development plans for the Northern Triangle promoted by Mexico and the United States; e) promoting the viability of the development agenda, according to the management elements and the assigned governmental priority. It is considered that there are more incentives for irregular migration to continue in the countries of the region, based on the international remittances generated, than promoting development plans, which are complex, have not been a government priority, and are difficult to generate value in the short term.

Policy proposals and the Summit, 2022-2024.

The *Summit* agreed on a range of agreements based on the problems that characterise the Central American region and in particular the Northern Triangle countries and that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Congressional Research Service, 2022). Without effective country interventions and greater shared responsibility, the problems will continue to become more complex over the years. This will make the goal of promoting development a long-term and elusive goal in terms of well-being and competitiveness. The main proposals of the *Summit* and associated with the objective of this article are the following:

1) The COVID-19 pandemic and the improvement of health systems and health security in the Americas.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a human cost in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a loss of about 2.7 million people in the continent, representing more than 40% of the deaths reported globally (IHME, 2022). This context generates enormous vulnerability for the present and future of migrant populations and will condition the improvement of health systems, according to new institutional priorities (Blofield et al, 2022).

One of the problems in the context of the pandemic was the adoption of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) national security criterion of immediate expulsion of irregular migrants to avoid health risks to Americans. However, there are different cross-border health mechanisms in place. It is contradictory that thousands of irregular migrants were expelled, without health protocols and without the possibility of seeking asylum, under Title 42 of the national security law established by the CDC (Jurado-Graham, 2022).

This order has been reviewed and renewed every 90 days. In the current fiscal year (October 2021 to June 2022), 1,634,104 migrants were detained (USCBP, 25 June 2022). Of

which 828, 832 have been detained and removed under Title 42, the rest (805, 702) under Title 8 (USCBP, 18 July 2022).

2) *Vaccination in the Americas.*

In support of the global effort to vaccinate 70% of the population in all countries, the US government has donated more than 65 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and has invested more than \$94 million in complementary assistance to expand access to COVID-19 vaccines and ensure the safe delivery, distribution and administration of these vaccines (Mejia, Hotez and Bottazzi, 2020). What is contradictory about these actions is that they did not apply in the case of irregular migrants detained and immediately expelled by US border authorities under *Title 42* in the context of the pandemic (March 2020 to November 2021). In this period, 2,067,205 migrants were removed by US border authorities (USCBP, 18 July 2022), most of them based on *Title 42*.

3) *Saving lives.*

COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc in Latin America and the Caribbean. The region has been one of the hardest hits by the virus, accounting for more than 40 per cent of all COVID-19 deaths worldwide, despite constituting only 8 per cent of the world's population (The White House, 8 June 2022). The mortality rate is associated with the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable populations and limited health systems, which have generally failed to develop a comprehensive health agenda, according to priorities for improving health, well-being, and productive competitiveness (Morea, 2020). It is possible to propose the importance of *governance for health*, which envisages a more collaborative model of institutional change, with the participation of different actors, both governmental and non-governmental, in order to preserve people's health, through a primary care policy that considers health promotion and disease prevention.

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic - March 2020 to November 2021 - could have been the juncture to reactivate the High-Level Economic Dialogue (HLED) in March 2020, as an option to promote cross-border health protocols and thereby maintain the streamlining of border crossings. However, it is contradictory that the Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is not part of the HLED and furthermore, based on Orders under Sections 362 and 365 of the Public Health Service Act (USDHHS, 2021), rejected cross-border health

collaboration and thus deported thousands of irregular migrants, regardless of their contagious status.

A recurring theme in the first year of President Joe Biden's administration was the growing irregular migration flow of Central Americans from the Northern Triangle (44%) and Mexicans (28%). In the fiscal year from October 2020 to 30 September 2021, according to the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP), a total of 1.72 million apprehensions of migrants and asylum seekers were recorded, the highest number on record to date. This figure includes 146,054 'encounters' with unaccompanied children, an increase of 73% compared to 2019, 478,492 with individuals in family units and 1,098,500 with adults travelling alone (USCBP, 2 January 2022).

The implementation of the "Remain in Mexico" policy, formally known as the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), has had significant implications for the humanitarian situation at the U.S. southern border. Introduced by the U.S. government in 2019, the policy required asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico for their U.S. immigration court hearings, which led to the creation of makeshift camps and overcrowded shelters in border cities (Meyer & Seelke, 2020). These conditions have exposed migrants to increased risks of violence, exploitation, and health hazards, exacerbating the already precarious situation for vulnerable populations (Slack et al., 2020). Critics of the MPP argue that it undermines the right to seek asylum, erodes the international refugee protection system, and exacerbates the humanitarian crisis in the region (Siskin & Kandel, 2021). Thus, understanding the implications of the "Remain in Mexico" policy and the broader dynamics of the humanitarian crisis at the U.S. southern border is crucial for informing policy responses and addressing the underlying drivers of forced migration in the region.

It is for these reasons that this is a contradictory policy, because the economic agenda and progress towards a *secure border* will depend on effective sanitary collaboration and thus maintaining economic competitiveness, as was the experience of the North American Plan for Animals and Pandemic Influenza (NAPAPI, 2012), which proposed strengthening sanitary protocols in the context of the H1N1(2009) pandemic to maintain the competitiveness of value chains and in the framework of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPPAN) created in 2005.

4) *Strengthening global health security in the Americas.*

Another *Summit* agreement is to expand the number of US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) experts on the ground at CDC's Regional Office for South America and through a new CDC Regional Office for Central America and the Caribbean in Panama, and to increase engagement with regional organizations, including staffing the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA). Also, expand USAID's global health security programs and staff to seven countries in South and Central America and the Caribbean. And finally, diversify public health supply chains through bilateral and regional engagements and support regulatory capacity for a faster and more agile response to future biological threats (The White House, 9 June 2022).

Such agreements are relevant considering that variations of the virus persist and that both Mexico and the United States have unvaccinated populations. In the case of the United States, 67.7% of the population is fully vaccinated and in Mexico 62% as of 23 July 2022 (Our World in Data, 23 July 2022).

In 2021, the HLED's priorities were focused on four central axes: 1) rebuilding together; 2) promoting sustainable economic and social development in southern Mexico and Central America; 3)

ensuring prosperity into the future; 4) investing in society (The White House, 2021). The HLED complements and reinforces the broad spectrum of issues important to the bilateral relationship, including recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, building resilience to climate change, addressing the root causes of migration, and cooperating on security issues. Lessons from the role of the North American Plan for Animals and Pandemic Influenza (NAPAPI, 2012) compared to the management of the HLED in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic include the following:

- A. There was governance for results with all the management elements that the model implies (vision, strategies, coordination, planning, evaluation, etc.); presidential political will and its corresponding institutionalization; a conception of a North American regional community to reduce the effects on competitiveness, trade relations and regional welfare; articulation with the dimensions of security, health, agriculture, environment, highlighting the relationship with the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPPF) and its trilateral involvement, in terms of managing common problems to guarantee shared security in the face of threats.
- B. A comprehensive cross-sectoral regional health security framework involving health, agriculture, security and foreign affairs to protect, control and provide a public health and pandemic response and a trilateral vision for the future, in which the presidents of the North American countries already envisioned in 2012 a pandemic in the wake of the emergence and spread of the influenza virus (NAPAPI, 2012). As can be seen, the background and potential of NAPAPI is an effective example of multilevel and regional governance to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection at the Summit of the Americas: context and proposals.

The context of the Declaration is embedded in a scenario permeated by the policies and implications of immigration management in President Joe Biden's administration:

- a) A new migration response to the problem of unaccompanied minors - 113,576,000 detainees - in fiscal year October 2021 to June 2022 (USCBP, 18 July 2022);
- b) a development proposal towards Central America with little progress and promoting an anti-corruption policy with the Northern Triangle countries, which does not enjoy a regional consensus; immigration control at the US border is maintained in the face of the increase in irregular migrants detained: 1,634,104 from October 2021 to June 2022 (USCBP, 18 July 2022) (USCBP, 18 July 2022). The largest increase in migrant apprehensions in the history of US-Mexico border relations, surpassing 405,036 migrants apprehended in FY2020 (USCBP, 18 July 2022).

Another permanent tension in the migration issue is associated with the fact that the state of Texas has been the crossing point for nearly 70 % of irregular migrants to the United States for the last two years. In the current fiscal year (October 2021 to June 2022), 1,227,492 irregular migrants out of a total of 1,634,104 migrants were apprehended at the state's borders (USCBP, 18 July 2022). In this context, Texas Governor Greg Abbott has politicized the migration problem at the regional and federal level by demanding greater intervention from the US federal government to contain irregular migration flows through the state. This context prompted Governor Abbott to pressure the governments of Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León and Coahuila to increase immigration controls on the border with

Texas, otherwise he would increase inspections of commercial transport from Mexico (Beauregard and Lambertucci, 2022). Governor Abbott also signed an executive order authorizing and empowering the Texas National Guard and the Texas Department of Public Safety to take undocumented migrants they detain to ports of entry.

This polarization reached a turning point with the tragedy in San Antonio Texas on 27 June 2022, in which 67 migrants were transported in the box of a trailer, 46 of whom were dead and seven of the 16 migrants found alive later died, making a total of 53 migrants dead (Rodríguez, Zamudio, Guevara and Abad, 2022). Of these migrants, 14 were from Honduras, seven from Guatemala, two from El Salvador and the rest were of Mexican origin. This tragedy is the most important in the history of irregular migration in the United States. As a result of the tragedy, governments in the region reiterated the need to stop migrant smugglers. It is a priority problem and is part of the Migration Pact signed at the *Summit of 10 June 2022* and has been part of other bilateral or regional initiatives.

The *Summit* proposed to mobilize the region to transform the approach to migration management in the Americas. The Declaration is based on four pillars:

1. *Stability and assistance for communities.* it is proposed to rethink the perspective of multilateral financing to promote development and better management of economies.
 - a) *Belize* will implement a program to regularize migrants from Central America and CARICOM.
 - b) *Colombia* proposes the recognition of temporary protection status for Venezuelan migrants and refugees.
 - c) *Costa Rica* proposes the renewal of the temporary special category of complementary protection for migrants from Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba.
 - d) *Ecuador* issued a decree for regular migration status for Venezuelan persons.
 - e) *The United States*, in collaboration with Congress, will provide USD 25 million to the World Bank's Global Concessional Financing Facility, aimed at prioritizing migration from Ecuador and Costa Rica.
 - f) *The United States* will announce new funding for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) of USD 314 million for stabilization efforts in the Americas.

The challenge is whether the resources allocated will be sufficient in the face of the problems of the countries in the region, which have become more complex in the *post-pandemic* context, for example: the increase in social inequalities, which have increased poverty and which will limit growth and therefore influence the humanitarian exodus from the Northern Triangle countries to the United States in the coming years (Vázquez Godina, 2019).

The allocation and distribution of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding, particularly in the context of Central America, has been a topic of considerable interest among scholars and policymakers. Examining the trends in aid allocation, its effectiveness, and its impact on development outcomes in the region can provide valuable insights into the role of external assistance in addressing the root causes of migration, poverty, and inequality (Oglesby et al., 2020). While USAID funding has remained relatively constant, fluctuations in the amounts and distribution patterns can be influenced by various factors, including political considerations, changes in administration, and evolving priorities (Meyer, 2021). Evaluating the effectiveness of USAID's funding and its alignment with

development priorities is essential for designing evidence-based policies and ensuring that resources are used efficiently to promote sustainable development and address the structural challenges in Central America.

2. *Expanding legal avenues for refugee and work visas*: it is proposed to change the way people migrate based on institutionalized priority programs: jobs, protection, and family reunification. Among the proposals put forward by the participating countries, the following stand out:

- a) *Canada* will provide additional funding of USD 26.9 million.
- b) *Canada* will grant work visas to 50,000 agricultural workers from Mexico, Guatemala, and the Caribbean by 2022.
- c) *Guatemala* proposes new legislation for legal labor migration programs.
- d) *Mexico* will expand the Border Worker Visitor Card program to include between 10,000 and 20,000 more beneficiaries.
- e) *Mexico* will implement a new temporary work program that will provide 15,000 to 20,000 workers from Guatemala each year.
- f) The *United States* will propose a pilot program worth USD 65 million from the

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) H-2A program.

- g) *US* to provide 11,500 H-2B visas for seasonal workers from Northern Triangle and Haiti
- h) *United States*, proposes a Guide on Fair Recruitment Practices for Temporary Migrant Workers (The White House, 10 June 2022).

The challenge is whether the various alternatives for increasing the number of refugee proposals put forward will be sufficient in the face of the increase in applications from Latin America and the rest of the world.

3. *Human migration management*. this proposal is at the heart of the Pact and the following strategies are proposed:

- a) Human border control.
- b) Return of migrants who do not have protection needs.
- c) Facilitating returns to countries of most recent residence or origin.
- d) Support for assisted voluntary returns.
- e) Increased bilateral and regional information sharing and cooperation on migrant smuggling and human trafficking (The White House, 10 June 2022).

The question is whether this new approach to migration management in the US and the countries of the region will have the institutional capacity to reduce the central role of migrant smugglers and their logic of corruption, and whether countries will engage with effective co-responsibility to manage the different strategies proposed (Correa-Cabrera, 2022).

The tragedy of the 53 migrants who died in a trailer in San Antonio Texas on 27 June 2022 reflects the impact of human smugglers.² This tragedy - migrants killed in trailers - is the most important in the US-Mexico border relationship and the fourth most relevant internationally, after the cases in Austria

(71), Dover, England (58) and Thailand (54) respectively (Strohecker, 2015).

The humanitarian crisis along the Central American migration routes and at the US-Mexico border has garnered significant attention from scholars and policymakers in recent years. While statistical data may provide an insight into the scale of the crisis, the human suffering behind these numbers remains immeasurable. Forced family separations, unaccompanied minors detained by the state, and the tragic loss of lives in deserts and during transit journeys are just a few examples of the harrowing experiences that migrants endure (Menjívar et al., 2018; Slack et al., 2016). It is essential to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of this crisis, which encompasses not only legal and policy challenges but also profound human rights and ethical concerns. A comprehensive understanding of the crisis requires a focus on the lived experiences of migrants, as well as an analysis of the structural factors and policy decisions that contribute to their vulnerability (Humphries, 2021; Mainwaring & Brigden, 2016)

4. *A coordinated response to emergencies.* It was agreed to promote safe, orderly and regular migration and the security of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the region, particularly in situations of mass migration and refugee displacement. This strategy reflects the existing institutional framework. The issue is whether the recent wave of migration in the current US fiscal year (2022) - October 2021 to June 2022 - a total of 1,634,104 irregular migrants detained by the US government (USCBP, 18 July 2022) compared to 405,036 migrants - fiscal year 2020 - is not a reflection of a humanitarian crisis in the Central American region.

Another structural problem is whether the Northern Triangle countries and Mexico have sufficient incentives to reduce or control irregular migration to the United States, considering that maintaining or increasing migration flows allows them to receive significant resources via remittances from the United States. A fundamental condition for realizing the various *Summit* initiatives is to promote effective co-responsibility of the countries of the region with the US government and effective multi-level management, governance, and policies for development. Otherwise, the proposals put forward at the *Summit* will not be viable.

4.-METHODOLOGY, SAMPLE PERIOD AND DATA USED.

Design.

This paper is a qualitative analysis of public policy proposals in the Americas to stem the flow of Central American migration. The analysis of these public policies serves to better understand the factors that trigger migration from Mesoamerican countries. To contain the effects of Central American migration flows since 2017, the policy recommendations include proposals for increased economic aid and investment to Mesoamerican countries. In addition, measures such as promoting job creation and economic development; improving security and justice systems; and investing in education and vocational training programs.

Other public policy proposals propose to include expanding legal avenues for migration, such as increasing the number of visas or providing temporary protected status to people fleeing violence or persecution. Strengthening border security and improving cooperation among countries in the region to address human trafficking and smuggling can also be effective measures.

In addition, collaboration with civil society organizations and local communities in the region can help build trust and identify solutions that address the needs of the most vulnerable populations, such as women, children and indigenous communities. Collaborating with civil society organizations (CSOs) and local communities is crucial for identifying and implementing effective, context-specific solutions that cater to the unique needs of vulnerable populations, such as women, children, and indigenous communities (Grabska & Piper, 2015; Winters, 2018). These local actors possess valuable on-the-ground knowledge and resources that can inform policy development and enhance the efficacy of interventions. Furthermore, by involving these stakeholders in decision-making processes, trust can be fostered between communities and external actors, leading to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes (Mansuri & Rao, 2013; Biekart & Fowler, 2013). Encouraging such collaboration also promotes the empowerment of marginalized groups, thereby contributing to the realization of their rights and enhancing their resilience to various challenges.

In conclusion, a comprehensive methodology that incorporates cultural, economic, political and social factors can help identify the root causes of migration flows from Mesoamerican countries and propose effective measures to contain their effects. Such an approach requires a multidisciplinary perspective and a collaborative effort between governments, civil society organizations and other stakeholders in the region. For this reason, the public policy analysis in this text is intended as a preliminary approach to ground-level initiatives.

Feasibility and impact of the Summit's migration pact.

The viability of the different initiatives proposed at the *Summit* will depend on the existence of political will and an effective articulation between management, governance for results and their impact on the viability of the respective policies, as well as effective regional co-responsibility. The main management elements of the governance for results model that are considered to strengthen the viability of the *Summit* agreements are the following:

1. *Vision* articulated to promote sectoral growth, where the management model guides the different policies that make up the Pact.
2. *Strategic direction*, based on an assessment of the context, actors and policy background.
3. *Definition of priorities for targeted actions and strategies*, according to the relevance of the programs and their transversal articulation of the Pact's policies.
4. *Strategic agenda*, definition of targeted priorities, according to the relevance of the proposed objectives of the Pact.
5. *Cross-cutting management model* articulated to growth; the management model that impacts on different dimensions of the policies considered in the Pact.
6. *Strategic leadership* and its impact on growth, so that in the context there is governmental strategic orientation in different areas.
7. *Intra-organizational and inter-institutional coordination*, under an effective process of governmental coordination of the different strategies of the Pact.
8. *Coordination with civil society groups* under a shared social vision and consensual targeted actions.
9. *Cross-cutting strategies* for the promotion of growth, various strategies are implemented in different dimensions (social, cultural, environmental, employment, social, gender) and in particular

the actions envisaged in the Pact in the area of migration.

10. *Cross-cutting policy implementation*, implementation of various policies and oriented towards the regulation of migration flows.

11. *Monitoring of cross-cutting policies*, comprehensive follow-up of policies verifying achievements and results, which have an impact on sectoral growth and especially on the priorities of the Pact.

12. *Evaluation of the impacts of the cross-cutting model*, identification of social outcomes and impacts of policies.

13. *Management indicators*, determination of the concrete achievements of the implementation of a comprehensive policy for growth (based on Falcao and Marini, 2010).

These management elements are fundamental to implementation and the creation of public value. The conceptual and advocacy challenge is to integrate such elements with the formulation, agenda and implementation phases of the policies considered in the Pact. The structural problem is that such management elements are not present in the Northern Triangle countries. Their challenge is to strengthen governance and institutional conditions to design an economic growth policy that reduces incentives to migrate. This is difficult in the short term, given the governance problems that characterize them. This makes emigration an escape valve and a means of generating resources through remittances.

Impacts of the Summit Agenda on Mexico's borders.

The *Summit* held in Los Angeles from 6 to 10 June generated achievements, opportunities and challenges to promote the five central themes that impact on Mexico's northern and southern borders: the regional migration pact, health and resilience, jobs and the digital economy, climate change and clean energy, and democratic governance.

These issues are in turn associated with three dimensions of the *Summit*: first, a geopolitical dimension, according to the priorities of promoting governance and democracy in the countries of the region. And the implicit questioning of countries considered non-democratic due to restrictions on freedom of expression of the press and free expression of ideas (Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua). A second dimension is the various policy proposals put forward in the framework of the *Summit*: a regional migration pact; an initiative to empower women in a digital economy; resilience of the economy and health ecosystems in the hemisphere; preventing abuse and harassment on the *internet*; climate change and the creation of jobs with clean energy and food security (Sarquis and Serrallonga, 2022).

These issues, as well as border port infrastructure - **the third** border port at the Tijuana border with San Ysidro, CA - environment, energy and job options for recent graduates, are pertinent to the US-Mexico border. Such issues also impact the southern border with Guatemala, in particular the need for better management of the various problems: migration, rights, pandemic, unemployment, insecurity, violence, and drug trafficking (Santos, 2022).

The third dimension is critical and central but complex: making the various *Summit* proposals viable through effective management, governance and policy-making that is resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and equitable. That is, with governments and administrations responsible for creating social value and basic agreements with civil society and the private sector with criteria of transparency and accountability. These conditions are critical in the Northern Triangle countries (De Bolle, 2022).

In terms of migration management on the southern border, it is essential to articulate the different initiatives of the *Summit* with a development approach, as proposed by the current Mexican federal government and ECLAC:

- a) Prioritization of the human rights of migrants and refugees at the center throughout the migration cycle of origin, transit, destination, and return.
- b) Incorporate the principle of non-discrimination in the migration cycle.
- c) Integrating people displaced by violence and disasters.
- d) Comprehensive actions in precarious neighborhoods of departure, transit, arrival and return, as well as in intermediate cities receiving migrants.
- e) Programs to overcome hunger and rural poverty in territories with a high propensity to migrate.
- f) It urges the inclusion of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and returnees in education systems.
- g) Building portability of rights and social security agreements.

This government proposal aims to:

- Promote development at the place of origin so that migration is a choice and not an obligation.
- Building a development space between El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico.
- Integrating human mobility into development with equality and sustainability/Marrakech Pact.
- It adopts the human security approach as employment, income, education, social protection and livelihood security (ECLAC, 2019).

The challenge for this initiative is whether it will be integrated as part of the *Summit* agreements. It was not part of the migration pact, which will make the strategies less effective. A disconnection of the two agendas will condition the reduction of problems in the Northern Triangle countries and will have an impact on the increase in migratory flows towards Mexico and the United States in a post-pandemic context.

The US-Mexico relationship is going through a period of progress and challenges. One of the most relevant advances is the achievements in terms of border infrastructure growth in the context of the implementation of the *21st Century Border* initiative, in line with the agenda of the US-Mexico Bilateral Executive Committee for 21st Century Border Management. This is in line with the agenda of the U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Executive Committee for 21st Century Border Management. In this context, the recent visit -12 May 2022- of Ambassador Ken Salazar and Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard to the city of Tijuana to participate in the *Strategic Border Infrastructure Forum* (Mexico Institute, 2022) is noteworthy. The objective was to present projects to modernize existing infrastructure and build new ports of entry (SRE, 2022). The US ambassador presented the progress in the growth of border infrastructure for the present and immediate future. He highlighted the presentation of 13 border infrastructure projects between Mexico and the United States.

Also present at the Forum were the Governor of Baja California, Marina del Pilar Ávila Olmeda and Todd Robinson, Under Secretary of State for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. In particular, the third Otay Mesa II-Otay Mesa East International Crossing project was highlighted, which will be a new high-tech port that will benefit air quality and speed up border

crossings with the United States (Azcarate, 2022).

What is the importance of the visit of Ambassador Ken Salazar and Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard to the city of Tijuana last May and within the framework of the *Summit*? The bilateral agenda is very broad and there are opportunities to strengthen cross-border cooperation on strategic economic and social issues, especially in the area of border crossings, whose inter-institutional mechanism is one of the best cross-border governance processes at the international level (Ramos, 2022).

The US-Mexico border is a strategic space, where the intensity of the relationship can be seen in terms of the amount of legal and illegal crossings and drug trafficking, especially methamphetamines and fentanyl. The new Otay Mesa II-Otay Mesa East International Crossing is intended to further strengthen the *21st Century Border* initiative: increasing security controls to reduce drug trafficking, weapons and money laundering, through effective technology, without affecting the agility of border crossings. Managing this complex diversity of border problems, which has become more acute with the increase in cross-border crossings, implies a more effective use of technology to reduce and control cross-border porosities (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2022).

This economic growth agenda contrasts with the polarization promoted by Texas Governor Greg Abbott in demanding a greater commitment to immigration enforcement from Mexican border state governments and having signed three *Memoranda of Understanding*, which reflects Governor Abbott's growing political role in the face of the likely suspension of *Title 42*, in his re-election process as governor and in the context of the November 8, 2022 mid-term elections (Barragan and Svitek, 2022).

The *Summit* can be a space to strengthen an agenda of border infrastructure growth, green economy projects, entrepreneurship and digital innovation for young people, and increase labor and educational visas to increase human resources training, according to the demands of the creative economy, culture and the green agenda. These initiatives can be contextualized according to the High Level Economic Dialogue (HLED) initiative, which is conceived as a priority agenda in the North American region, but which has implications for the migration agenda and for local and regional development.

In the *Summit's* agenda, it was feasible to propose as a priority for the Mexican government the proposal of policies to reduce asymmetries with the United States, reducing social inequalities, based on a social agenda: control of corruption in the private sector; investments in the energy sector promoting clean energy, with public interest and greater energy self-sufficiency; greater incentives for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises with a perspective of equality; and insisting on immigration reform with a social and economic sense (Préstamo, 2022).

The possible suspension of *Title 42* by the US federal government could lead to a greater influx of irregular migrants. This will generate greater migration control, based on the new strategy implemented by the federal government. With or without *Title 42*, Mexican and Central American migration to the US will continue to increase. The challenge is *better governance* of the different labor and migration flows with a cross-cutting agenda (asylum, jobs, due process, work visas, family reunification and better institutionally), in order to have an impact on development.

The bilateral agenda, both border and bi-national, is a space for managing divergence and cooperation. Mexico's priority is to insist on a less unequal interdependence where greater equality, innovation and social impact predominate. Hence the benefits of increased remittances for Mexican and

Central American communities, increased investments to make value chains sustainable, increased border crossings and thus cross-border tourism dynamics.

5.-CONCLUSION

Among the contributions of the *Summit* was the interest in promoting an Alliance for Economic Prosperity in the Americas, a new agreement to boost the recovery and growth of the hemisphere's economy. The Western Hemisphere, which accounts for 31.9% of global GDP, is one of the most dynamic economic regions in the world, but with enormous social inequalities.

The migration pact proposed at the *Summit* aims to promote development in the countries of the region and thereby address the root causes of irregular migration flows to the United States. Local development depends essentially on the potential for development and, in particular, on the ability to influence the endogenous capacity of local actors under a multidimensional agenda.

The article argued that the migration of Central Americans to the United States will not be halted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of the socio-economic crisis in Central American countries - especially those of the Northern Triangle - and the weakness of national social and labor policies and health systems. In this context, it is essential to promote a development proposal towards Central America, and particularly towards the Northern Triangle countries.

Northern Triangle countries, articulated with the *Summit's* migration pact, as a bi-national and international cooperation initiative to promote competitiveness and well-being. The limited implementation of such a policy makes it necessary to analyze the viability of the migration pact agreed at the Ninth Summit of the Americas, held in Los Angeles, CA. in June 2022.

Central American migration flows have been a significant issue since 1980's, and various authors have proposed different approaches to address this challenge (Alvarez, 2018; González, 2018). Some authors have argued for increased development aid to Central American countries to address the root causes of migration (Pike, 2021). They have suggested that investing in education, healthcare, and infrastructure could create economic opportunities and reduce poverty, which would, in turn, decrease the incentives for people to migrate (Tobar, 2021). Others have proposed a regional approach to address migration flows, where countries in the Americas would work together to develop a coordinated response (Pike, 2021). This approach could include sharing information and resources, establishing joint border management, and promoting economic integration. Additionally, some authors have suggested that the United States should adopt a more compassionate approach to migration. They have proposed policies such as expanding access to asylum and providing temporary protected status to migrants who are fleeing violence and persecution (Bhatia & Cortés, 2020).

The relationship with the United States is strategic, considering its role in defining a variety of policies that generate social and political impacts at the borders. The viability of the Migration Pact initiatives implies considering the following strategies:

- a) Promote the viability of the various *Summit* agreements, which depends on encouraging effective implementation based on effective management, governance and policy. Encourage

an effective articulation between the different proposals, in particular those associated with the generation of jobs for vulnerable groups and especially those regulating labor mobility in the region.

- b) Promote viable proposals for recovery and resilience after the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby promoting employment, inclusion and social cohesion and having an impact on competitiveness and well-being in border regions. Articulate a comprehensive migration pact policy with a view to addressing the causes of migratory flows, according to regional co-responsibility, job creation, migration control, humanitarian visas, asylum and family reunification, in accordance with UN priorities.
- c) Enhancing the viability of the implementation of initiatives towards women and their impact on greater inclusion, cohesion and gender-sensitive employment options, which will depend on the following factors:
 1. Effective articulation between diagnosis, policy options and effective multi-level management.
 2. The articulation of the *Summit's* proposals with the various local, state and federal policies.
 3. A proactive, transparent and effective role for the private sector through partnership management with government actors.
 4. The promotion of effective leadership with mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and redesign of proposed policies.
 5. Promoting effective shared responsibility of the countries of the region with the US government to make the *Summit's* main initiatives feasible.

In conclusion, the Ninth Summit of the Americas could provide an opportunity for leaders in the Americas to discuss issues related to trade, development, and migration. Central American migration flows have been a significant challenge in recent years, and various authors have proposed different approaches to address this issue. A coordinated regional approach that addresses the root causes of migration and promotes economic development could be a promising way forward.

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