**THE US SHOULD NOT CONTINUE BUILDING THE BORDER WALL**

(Watch the following video titled, Undeterred migrants: A final journey?)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPuGw2PS8hk>

(Watch the following video titled, Drugs, and endless fight)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QjuZWZANmU>

Borders and Walls: Do Barriers Deter Unauthorized Migration?

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FEATURE

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**Do Walls Work? Examining the Evidence**

The evidence is clear that the construction of border fortifications is a new phenomenon that has rapidly emerged on a global scale in the 21st century. As movement of civilians across borders has increased, a number of countries have turned to walls and other security infrastructure to control access to their territory. What is less clear is whether such walls are effective, the answer to which depends on what they are meant to do. Walls are not effective at stopping a modern military because planes and missiles go over them and tanks can smash right through. Nor is a border barrier necessary to mark the territorial extent of the country. Walls are expensive and maps, boundary stones, and GPS data work just as well for this purpose.

But what about their use as a way to keep out unauthorized migrants? While advanced as a popular solution, the evidence is mixed on whether walls are effective at preventing large movements of people across borders. Of course, there is little doubt that walls short in length and heavily guarded with troops or law enforcement officers can be very effective at stopping movement. This is the logic behind medieval city walls and prisons today. Indeed, short sections of walls have also proved effective at decreasing movement across international borders. This was demonstrated in the 1990s on the U.S.-Mexico border when the first sections of fencing were built in El Paso and near San Diego, supported by large deployments of Border Patrol agents. In the weeks that followed, crossings in those sectors dropped to almost zero. Similarly, the construction of Hungary’s border fence in 2015 was backed up with border guards, and consequently, crossings dropped substantially.

However, in both cases fortified walls did not prevent crossings into the United States and European Union entirely, but instead shifted flows to other locations that were more remote or less fortified. In the U.S. case, as high-traffic urban routes were closed, migrants and smugglers began to cross in the remote and dangerous deserts of western Arizona. Child migration from Central America to the United States, which surged in 2014, has also been undeterred by enforcement (in fact most unaccompanied minors turn themselves in to border agents), as tens of thousands of children from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala spontaneously arrive at the U.S. border with Mexico to claim asylum, many knowing they would be admitted into the U.S. pending removal hearings. In the European migration crisis in 2016, once land routes through the Balkans were closed, migrants adjusted by shifting their routes to board boats across the Mediterranean, frequently from Libya.

The funneling of migrants to alternative routes points to one statistic that correlates closely with the construction of more walls: an increase in the number of deaths. As easier routes are closed, migrants choose ever more dangerous paths to reach their destination. At the U.S.-Mexico border this was evident in the decline in deaths in California which coincided with a rapid rise in Arizona. The Tucson, Arizona coroner’s office saw a substantial increase in the number of migrant deaths in the years after the hardening of the border, as migration routes shifted to the more dangerous deserts. The Tucson morgue recorded an average of 18 migration-related deaths per year in the 1990s, while in the 2000s it saw almost 200 per year. In 2010 the Border Patrol found more than 250 bodies in the Tucson sector, despite a decline in the total number of border apprehensions. Similarly, when the European Union and Member States fortified borders in 2015, there were a record 3,771 reported deaths at the edges of the European Union. In 2016, with the easier land route through the Balkans and Eastern Europe closed, the rate of deaths has increased further, with more than 3,000 deaths recorded through July—a 50 percent increase from the previous year. By comparison, there were just a handful of deaths recorded annually at the edges of Europe in the 1990s, and never more than 800 deaths prior to 2006.

Despite these clear material impacts on the lives of migrants, millions of people globally continue to cross borders without authorization—meaning walls are relatively ineffective. The first reason is that on longer borders, it is extremely difficult to fence the entire length and adequately guard it. Building fencing or a wall also entails acquiring the necessary land, building and maintaining roads, and supplying the necessary manpower to guard the barrier. The U.S.-Mexico border only has fencing over one-third of its 1,969-mile length. Even the heavily fortified Israeli wall in the West Bank is only two-thirds finished. A second reason that walls are not effective is that many unauthorized movements, particularly those of terrorists or smugglers, do not happen between crossing points. A significant share of unauthorized immigrants in the United States entered with a valid visa and then simply never left, overstaying the terms of their visa. Additionally, many smuggled goods come through ports of entry or through tunnels built under the walls. The United States has found 150 tunnels under the U.S.-Mexico border since the 1990s, some of which are quite sophisticated with ventilation systems and even rails to quickly move carts. Israel has begun construction on a subterranean wall on its border with Gaza in order to address the dozens of tunnels it has discovered.

***A Powerful But Expensive Symbol***

If walls did not work in the past and today only work to divert, not prevent, migrant flows—while simultaneously having a grave human cost—why have so many gone up in the past 30 years? They are effective as symbols that demonstrate that politicians are doing something to address the perceived threats brought by unauthorized movement. These perceived threats can be economic in the form of smugglers or workers taking revenue and jobs from citizens. They can be cultural in the sense that migrants bring different traditions, languages, and ways of life that might not match with the local culture.

While these underlying issues are complex and very rarely solved by whether or not a border is secured, “build a wall” is an evocative slogan and the barrier itself is a powerful visual symbol of action. Consequently, despite the expense and questionable effectiveness, it seems likely that in the short term there will be many more walls going up around the world. What remains to be seen, however, is how long they will stay up.