

WALL OF SHAME: ON MEXICO BORDER WALL

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

It began as a populist campaign promise that brought President Donald Trump's supporters cheering to their feet and paved the way for his election. Now, the border wall with Mexico has become a morass of partisan bickering that has stalemated the U.S. federal government into a three-week-long shutdown, leaving nearly 800,000 public sector workers furloughed without pay. At the heart of this political crisis is the increasingly bitter polarisation of public opinion over immigration. On the one hand, Mr. Trump has steadily contributed to the strident and crude anti-migrant rhetoric, characterising prospective migrants from Latin America as drug-dealers, rapists and violent criminals and shutting down the U.S. border to travellers from certain Muslim-majority countries. On the other, his insistence that he will not sign any appropriations bill to break the funding logjam in Congress and end what could soon become the longest shutdown in U.S. history, unless that bill includes \$5.7 billion in financing for a border wall, has gone down badly with Democrats, who control the House. Matters took a darker turn as Mr. Trump doubled down on his refusal to negotiate over funding for the wall and said he [may declare a state of national emergency](#) over this uncomfortable *status quo*.

There are disquieting questions about the veracity of some of Mr. Trump's claims: migrant border crossings have been in decline for the best part of two decades; it is through legal ports of entry and not unauthorised crossing points that hard drugs such as heroin enter the U.S.; and even the State Department has admitted that no terror operatives have entered the U.S. through Mexico. Then there is the more blatantly flawed reasoning touted by the President that "Mexico will pay" for the wall. Now it appears that even Mr. Trump is backing down on his claim, arguing that Mexico would only "indirectly" fund it through trade deals. It is well-known that only corporations pay tariffs under these deals, not governments, and hence no such payment will come from Mexico. Even as the acerbic back-and-forth between Mr. Trump and Congressional Democrats continues, the deeper malaise is a profound disagreement among Americans on what their nation's very soul stands for. Is the U.S. truly a melting pot, a country built on the prowess of entrepreneurship and technology, in large part driven by immigrants seeking the "American dream"? Or is it a declining world power that has squandered too much to other nations and peoples and is readying itself for an uncompromising battle to claw back what it reckons it has lost? If it is the latter, then we could expect Mr. Trump's vision to succeed, but if not, a course correction is in order.

As India takes over operations in the Iranian port, the possibilities and challenges are huge

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