

**CONSTRUCTING AND DECONSTRUCTING
THE FEAR-OF-THE-OTHER: A THEORETICAL
APPROACH TO IMMIGRATION**

BRENNAN A. RAMSEY

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

HONORS THESIS

MAY 2022

THESIS ADVISOR: DR. SABINE HIRSCHAUER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Title Page</u>	1
<u>Table of Contents</u>	2
<u>Abstract</u>	3
<u>Introduction</u>	4
<u>Historical Context</u>	5
<u>Literature Review</u>	11
<u>Methodology</u>	17
<u>Analysis Realism</u>	21
<u>Analysis Liberalism</u>	34
<u>Conclusion</u>	42
<u>Appendix I</u>	44
<u>Appendix II</u>	45
<u>Appendix III</u>	46
<u>Resources</u>	47

ABSTRACT

In the U.S., the realm of immigration policy has remained a heated, national debate with much of the conversation removed from the actual communities and local areas most affected by it. After spending the better part of two years in the U.S.-Mexico border policy arena and a lifetime living in these communities, it became apparent to the thesis author that the national conversation was heavily based in realist assumptions of security, violence, safety, and state identity. These discussions and framing of the ‘immigration issue’ as a ‘frontline warzone’ environment—which then also almost naturally transcending into local communities—are based not in fact but are rather the result of decades of the construction of discourse, including the securitization of the border region, its peoples, and global mobility more generally.

This thesis attempts to use major international relations theories to frame and dissect how the fear-of-the-other discourse is constructed, how the construct applies to the larger policy landscape, and how it can be deconstructed and result in more effective, humane policy choices. This work is important as it informs current discussions of immigration reform and projects into growing global migration and mobility challenges of the 21st century. Tensions between migration, the state, and institutions will only increase in the future in light of rising environmental pressures such as climate change, a more interdependent global economy, and increasingly complex political ties, etc.

KEYWORDS: Migration, International Relations Theory, Security, Borders, Deconstruction.

INTRODUCTION

In coming years, the discussion about immigration reform—and a reformed global mobility regime more generally—is not only very timely, but it will become even more critically important in the future. Throughout the 21st century, global migration and global mobility will only increase with rising environmental pressures (climate migrants) and more globally interdependent economic and political ties. Scholarship about migration and its challenges to societies are, therefore, a critically important component of future peace research and conflict resolution agendas. In 2020, the author was part of New Mexico State University's National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Site Program on Immigration Policy and Border Communities. In summer 2020, REU team members worked with Advocate Visitors with Immigrants in Detention (AVID) and New Mexico State University's (NMSU) government department's head Dr. Neil Harvey to digitize and analyze notes from phone call interviews with persons in immigration detention. The partnership continued into the summer 2021 where the team worked again with AVID and the NSF REU program.

In 2021, the research team compiled a media data library from newspapers such as the Las Cruces Sun News, The Albuquerque Journal, and The Roswell Daily Record, specifically examining how immigration was rhetorically framed as a discourse between 1995 and 2020 by local and regional media outlets. The REU project was designed to provide AVID with these data points. The database also included records during the times of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), the predecessor of today's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE). Eventually, several patterns and overarching themes emerged. The perspective presented to the public was predominately based on the identified, rhetorical concept

of *security*: *secure* the border, *secure* our community, *secure* our homes, linked to *increased* funding for ICE, *increased* detention, and *increased* criminalization.

Collaborating with community groups such as AVID gave the researcher the perspective outside of the binary ‘security dilemma:’ how immigration and migrants are solely seen through the negative security lens—and solely seen as a threat. ‘*One has to be made insecure for others to feel secure.*’ The question at the forefront then became why the immigration discourse in the U.S. seemed to center around the debate about security, which then only produced and reproduced negative sentiments such as fear. In combination with the researcher’s concentration in International Relations (IR) and International Affairs, this observation caught the researcher’s attention and became the focal point of this thesis. The thesis is organized as follows: First, it will outline the broad context that explains the history behind the U.S.-Mexico border region; second, a literature review will situate and contextualize the thesis’ argument within the existing discourse; third, the methodology section will explain its research design, data collection and analysis methodologies; fourth, the analysis sections will divide the arguments into two major schools of thought; and fifth, the conclusion will summarize again this thesis’ understanding of the fear-of-the-other as a rhetorical construct. Please note, when discussing global mobility actors, this thesis will refer to these actors as migrants. When discussing actors in the U.S. domestic context, it will refer to these actors as immigrants since this is the terminology most prominently used.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The concepts of borders and territories are not unique to the human species. In fact, many non-human primates practice social organization through territories and territorial displays. However, the strict maintenance of these boundaries today is unique to humanity in the last two

or three thousand years. Even more specifically, borders—as they are understood now as part of a larger trend of eurocentrism—has swept the world in the last millennia. The most glaring legacy of this trend can be found in the fact that the entire African continent, for one, is carved into countries with without accounting for cultural or ethnic groups, but they were rather based on the arbitrary, historic boundaries set by European colonizers. The same happened in the Americas. The colonial legacies of where America’s borders are set cannot be discounted. As time passed and the modern state system was established, boundaries have become a controlled access passage and protected as such. Before human society was organized primarily into states as they are understood contemporarily, although they were there, borders did not have the same meaning. Now, the border represents a literal boundary of a state’s authority and supremacy. Therefore, its unauthorized permeation is seen as a violation of that authority.

Although evidence suggests that the Norse people first populated the Americas as early as the 10th century—the continent were widely colonized by Europeans, starting in the early 15th century. At the time the land was populated by extensive and thriving indigenous civilizations whose populations numbered in the millions. European colonizers would reduce these civilizations to shells of their former selves and over the next 600 years would enslave, abuse them, and steal their lands (Wilkins & Stark, 2018, p.152). Towards the end of the 18th century, the original territory of the United States (U.S.) consisted of the thirteen colonies on the eastern seaboard (F. K. Van Zandt, 1976, p.1). After the American Revolution from 1775-1783—in which the Americans of European descent gained independence from the English Crown—the same groups continued their expansion west (F. K. Van Zandt, 1976, graphic). Throughout the 19th century, the U.S. acquired millions of acres of land from France in the Louisiana Purchase, the Oregon Territory, Gadsden Purchase, as well as other states from the

American Frontier, joining the Union (F. K. Van Zandt, 1976, p.51). After the country's civil war ended in 1865, the U.S. continued its expansion into the western regions of North America (F. K. Van Zandt, 1976, pp.29-40).

Mexico has a similar colonial history in that Europeans also colonized the country, in this case the Spanish. The Spanish in a similar fashion brutally massacred, enslaved, and robbed the indigenous civilizations of the area in their quest to dominate and extract resources from the land (Edmonds-Poli & Shirk, 2016, p.7). This colonial domination lasted for several hundred years until the colony gained independence from Spain in an eleven-year long war, ending in 1821. After an initial failed try at democracy, Mexico had a Revolution ninety years later from 1910 to 1911 (Edmonds-Poli & Shirk, 2016, p.31). Between the wars in Mexico—and while the U.S. was expanding West—Mexico and the U.S. went to war over disputes of territory. The territory in question was the U.S. annexation of Texas and the borderland regions extending West of Texas to the Pacific Ocean (Edmonds-Poli & Shirk, 2016, pp.21-22). Specifically, the dispute centered on where the Texas southern border ended at either the Nuecos river or the Rio Grande, the latter being farther south. The war lasted from April 1846 to February 1848 with the U.S. victory over Mexico. This provided the U.S. with more than 500,000 square miles of land. The Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty of 1848, which ended the Mexican-American war and concluded in the Gadsden Purchase in 1854, set the modern border along the southern U.S. (F. K. Van Zandt, 1976, pp.28-29) Although small disputes continued in the area—mostly concerning small islands—until The Boundary Treaty of 1970 that ended all boundary disputes along the U.S.-Mexico border (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021).

From this time forward, the border landscape changed due to different policies implemented on both sides but were not caused by conflict over the boundaries itself. For most

of its history, crossing the border between the U.S. and Mexico had been relatively easy. There was no physical barrier outside obelisks marking the boundary along the border built by the Mexican-United States Boundary Commission in 1855. Later the International Boundary Committee added 206 more miles from 1891 to 1894 to the border (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021). During this time, in 1882 The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed and was one of the first formalized policies that excluded a population from citizenship and termed their migration into the U.S. illegal (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021). Chinese immigrants often crossed at the southern border into the U.S. This would eventually become more difficult with the passing of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1917, which established a crossing fee of \$8 per person and required literacy tests (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021). Seven years later, the U.S. established the Border Patrol in 1924, which enforced crossing restrictions much more strictly.

Over the next 30 years, especially during the unemployment crises of the Great Depression, millions of Mexican nationals and U.S. citizens of Mexican heritage were ‘repatriated’ to Mexico under the guise of illegal crossing (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021). Also, during this time, the U.S. set up several programs, including the Bracero Program that allowed Mexican nationals to cross legally into the U.S. and work in the agricultural industry (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021). During this time, illegal immigration skyrocketed as Mexicans—who did not qualify for the program—crossed anyways and worked for employers, who wanted to keep their labor costs low. This program set the precedent and dependence of the U.S. agriculture industry on the labor of often undocumented workers. While this program generally was able to communicate a more positive attitude towards migrants, this was, however, not always the case since extreme negativity remained widely directed towards migrants and their families. In 1954

‘Operation Wetback’—a term today considered a slur—was used to deport more than one million Mexican and Mexican-American nationals (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021).

The contemporary landscape at the U.S.- Mexico border can be traced back to the passing of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act that set a quota of immigrants allowed into the U.S. per country of origin as well as set preferences for immigrants who had certain skills and families in the U.S. (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021). One major policy that changed the border landscape was the U.S. War on Drugs Policy, established by the Nixon administration in the early 1970s and ramped up by the Reagan administration in the 1980s. It criminalized all drug use and sought to stop its smuggling into and production inside the U.S. (Correa-Cabrera, 2013, p.67). It then became the job of the U.S. Border Patrol—in collaboration with the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)—to stop the smuggling of huge amounts of illegal substances, entering the U.S. across the southern border. This policy—in conjunction with Mexico’s own War on Drugs and organized crime—had wide reaching consequences. It not only increased the demand for illegal substances, but it also most importantly militarized the border even further (Correa-Cabrera, 2013, p.71). In the 1980s, as Mexico experienced severe economic crises including peso devaluation, high unemployment, and inflation, thousands were motivated to illegally migrate to the U.S. as a means for economic survival (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021). The main driver of border militarization came from the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986 that established the goal of increased border security and heavier penalties for crossing illegally (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021).

The securitization and militarization of the border continued into the 1990s with the implementation of Operations Hold-the-Line, Gatekeeper, and Safeguard. These operations were directed at keeping people from physically crossing the border rather than focusing entirely on

deporting them when they were apprehended on U.S. soil (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021). Funding for securing the southern border increased tremendously over the next twenty years including the Secure Fence Act that authorized the construction of several hundred miles of border fencing (Texas-Mexico Center, 2021). Today, the border is a heavily militarized zone that is guarded 24/7. Crossing is a tedious task, and the environment can only be described as hostile. The main takeaway is that borders have become a physical and symbolic representation of the state and its authority.

It is not a secret that the politics of the United States have been shaped by racist ideas about peoples from other places. Whiteness is a founding part of who is considered welcome and who is considered a threat. This thread can be traced through every single event regarding migration forced or otherwise in U.S. history from the north-Atlantic slave trade, indigenous resettlement, discrimination against Irish, Jewish, Chinese, and Mexican immigrants, immigrants from the African continent, and anyone else that was deemed not white enough to received access and equal status. However, something that is unique in the U.S. handling of the southern border, as well as borders around the world over time, is that the crossing of that boundary has developed into a highly threatening act and has been criminalized as such.

Globally, states have developed their borders in a similar fashion to the U.S. and the movements of people have become heavily restricted and regulated. The theme that reveals itself repeatedly can be found in the motivation behind this restriction of settlement and crossing of borders. This thesis research questions then center on who is a threat to the state, who is not, how the threat is constructed, why, and why more generally borders have increasingly become hardline, militarized boundaries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this section is to review the literature that is relevant to the study of the movement of peoples. This is a significant field of study because the movement of peoples is a major point of focus and policy area in the modern world. Historically, individuals and groups moving is a behavior that predates our species. However, unique to landscape and geography, for example, people move for any number of reasons. As human society has become more socially, economically, and politically complex in the modern state system, our understanding of borders and the movement of people across these boundaries has changed in kind. The term modern state system refers to the current international environment in which states not only posit that they are sovereign entities, but that they recognize and respect that same quality in other states (Jackson et al., 2019, pp.11-13). This new way of understanding state-to-state relationships can be traced back to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia that ended Europe's 30-Year-War and set the precedent that individual states had the right to make decisions and act independently from one another (Jackson et al., 2019, pp.18-19). This concept and major facet of international relations thus is referred to as sovereignty. State sovereignty then forms the basic relational structure, which international relations scholars then study.

From these circles, several schools of thought emerge that are meant to help us distinguish and understand different ways of framing state-to-state interactions. They also assist us in understanding this specific policy environment. This literature review will cover two major schools of thought, their theories, and their links to world view and state interaction. Additionally, it will cover several other subsections of immigration studies, and briefly elaborate on their connections to the broader study of international relations. This literature review is meant to provide a contextual point of departure for this thesis as a whole.

The idea that theoretical frameworks, including international relations theory are unhelpful in explaining the real world is misguided. In 2005, prominent international relations (IR) neo-realist scholar Stephan Walt analyzed the relationship between political theory and actual policy. Walt argues that policy makers pay little attention to the role of IR theory while scholars in academia equally find little incentive to produce policy-relevant work (2005). This disconnect needs to be resolved, Walt claims. Additionally, Walt contends that the academic community bears responsibility to place more value on policy-relevant theoretical work. In not doing so, both groups suffer because “theory is an essential tool of statecraft (Walt, 2005, p. 23)” as theory “remains essential for diagnosing events, explaining their causes, prescribing responses, and evaluating the impact of different policies (Walt, 2005, p.23).” Walt’s scholarship underscores the key role of theory in creating meaningful policy. Moving forward, the next step will be to identify and define theoretical frameworks applicable to migration.

One of the major theoretical frameworks in IR study is Liberalism. Liberalists can be described as understanding the world as a place where strength and security come from maintaining cooperative relationships with each other. A precursor to modern Liberalism, Immanuel Kant describes a concept of what he called Perpetual Peace, which is today known as the Democratic Peace. Kant envisioned the world as a place known to operate as *Rechtsstaat*, or “rule of law,” which contrasts the former *Machtstaat*, or ‘power state’ (Jackson et al., 2019, p.53). In this world, power by an authority would be constrained by a constitution or a body of laws to protect against its arbitrary exercise against the people. He envisioned a society that maintains peace with others long term because of the shared values of civil rights, cooperation, and hospitality (Jackson et al., 2019 pp.122-125). Democratic Peace Theory today argues that democratic societies will not vote to go to war with one another because they perceive each other

as trustworthy and find war outdated (Navari, 2018). This trust is based on the perceived shared values of democratic governance such as transparency, accountability, and peaceful resolutions (Navari, 2018; Jackson et al., 2019, pp.122-125). Democratic Peace—and its assumptions of the potential for human rationality and progress—asserts itself opposite to Thomas Hobbes’ ‘dog-eat-dog’ world of Classical Realism where one’s strength is always determined by its relativity to one’s neighbor. Cooperation and shared values form the bedrock of progress and represent a positive sum-game in which every actor can achieve absolute gains (Jackson et al., 2019, p.132). Absolute gains are defined as gains in their own right, not in competition with another (Jackson et al., 2019, p.132). In a Kantian world, individuals and groups do not have to fear and compete with one another. Today, these ideals are then often compiled into what are known as institutions: rules, norms, and sets of behaviors. Scholars under the Liberalism umbrella—such as Joseph Nye, Ernst B. Haas, Robert Keohane, and Lisa Martin—argue that developing these institutions (rules and norms) in all realms of interaction, including social, political, and economic interdependency, then govern actors’ actions and mitigate conflict for the sake of cooperation, progress, and strengthened relationships (Jackson et al., 2019, pp.49, 110, 117-118). These relationships are important because states gain mutually through constant and reiterated cooperation with each other. Strength and security come from the relationship and interaction with each other.

While Liberalism has shaped intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations and institutions such as international law, the key school in IR theory including conflict studies remains realism. Realists understand the world in quite a different way to liberalists. They see the international system as a place that is ruled and determined by global anarchy. Anarchy in IR is defined as the lack a global authority with the power to control individual sovereign states

(Jackson et al., 2019, p.43). Realists—drawing from foundational ideas like Hobbes’ state of nature and the social contract theory—interpret the baseline human condition as one of selfishness and self-interest, which results in a state of constant competition between men (Jackson et al., 2019, p.76). Thus, a central authority is responsible for providing security in a world ruled by self-interest. This idea, known as social contract theory, was first introduced in Hobbes work of Leviathan. In Leviathan, Hobbes posits that citizens of a society or state will ‘contractually’ consent to surrender some of their rights to a central power in exchange for protecting their other rights, the social order, and security (Hobbes, 1588). Thus, the state is the key actor and primary provider of security in an international system ordered only under the condition of anarchy. Realists believe in a zero-sum game made-up of relative gains. Relative gains are defined as benefits that are only determined by their relativity (their competition) to others (Jackson et al., 2019, p.132). Thus, a state’s strength, power, and most importantly security, comes from its relative power in relation to others. Thus, borders represent the literal and constructed boundaries of the state, making it paramount that they are well secured and regulated.

The expansive body of migration scholarship covers a variety of conditions including why people leave their home countries and why they choose to move to others. These conditions could include any combination of dozens of push-and-pull factors. Most dominant factors include poverty affected and exacerbated by global trade integration, the origins and legacies of regional and global labor mobility, climate change driven movement, and political and social group conflict, among others. From a theory perspective, Theodore Cohn’s work on the global economy and integration, for one, provides an invaluable insight into the movements of people (2016). His work focuses heavily on a weighting of benefits and consequences associated with

the near global adoption of neo-liberal free trade policy standards and its legacies, the related economic stratification, international production lines, deconstructing global exploitation in both raw goods and labor, and how these standards have been institutionalized through several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) that govern international trade (Cohn, 2016). Additionally, he describes the response to neo-liberalism and the possible economic landscape of the future.

These economic conditions subsequently push people to make perilous journeys against an ever-increasingly militarized border landscape. The increasing militarization, including more weaponry, officers, barbed fencing, limited approvals for crossing, and hostility towards crossers, is documented both in extensive studies of policy change over time as well as life histories documented through ethnographic studies. One such ethnographic life history called *The death and life of Aida Hernandez: a border story* documents not only the change in militarization at the border, but also how these policy changes affect the lives of real people in the area (Bobrow-Strain & Hernandez, 2019). Additionally, scholarship covering the actual journeys encompasses different stages of departures, when and how people leave their families and abandon their communal ties, how migrants transition through third countries, and how they live through the final arrival at the U.S. border. One such journey is documented in Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* where 14 Mexican citizens died while crossing in an area in south Arizona known as the Devil's Highway (Urrea, 2004).

Another area of literature covers the broad policy landscape in the U.S., which has for decades exacerbated negative outcomes. Analysis of these policies can be seen in Migual Diaz-Barriga and Margaret Dorsey's work *Fencing In Democracy: Necro-citizenship and the US-Mexico Border Wall* and Jeremy Slack's *Deported To Death: How Drug Violence Is Changing*

Migration on the US-Mexico Border (Díaz-Barriga & Dorsey, 2020; Slack, 2019). Additionally, other works build and expand the more abstract understanding of what borders are and how they facilitate the perception of the dangerous, foreign, and mobile ‘other.’ Specifically, a growing body of scholarship focuses on the meaning of movement and mobility as a performance and violation. This includes how fear is associated with the diversity of people, poignant across borders and the meaning connected to the act and symbolism of movement as the permeation of a boundary.

It is the violation of the safety of the self, its protection, and security. Examples from the global context can be found in Maggie Ibrahim’s *The Securitization of Migration: A Racial Discourse* in which she explains how the discourse, surrounding migration has turned into an often racially motivated characterization of migrants themselves as a human security threat (2005, p.163). This discourse then also flows into the policy arena by influencing actual policy making. Christoph Ramm’s *The Muslim Makers: How Germany ‘Islamizes’ Turkish Immigrants* touches on the increasing characterization of migrants as foreign within their new communities because they are reduced to a national, ethnic, or cultural ‘otherness’ (van Teun, 2013). This otherness—often seen as a contradiction of ‘our values’—is then characterized as a threat to the safety and security of a community and then transferred and replicated into the larger political structures like governments (Ramm, 2010).

Studies pertaining to these movements of peoples and related violations of boundaries tend to be from a more context-oriented point of view. Much of these bodies of work come from other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and economics. They tend to study events and characteristics of these cases as products of a specific environment. They touch briefly on the global implications of their findings but make no assertion on the process in which people

develop these worldviews and act on them but rather, dissect the environment as a mere consequence of these attitudes and related policies. Often when studying a specific case, the global implications about any number of patterns like indigenous rights, labor rights, women rights, colonial legacies, global resource extraction, unfair standards, and so on will be briefly mentioned at the end of a work, but often seem just an afterthought. It is important to consider context when looking at individual cases, yet a lack of macro trend identification is a serious gap in the current research. The movements of people in each context according to any number of social, economic, and political factors can be explained. However, there is not much work on explaining larger patterns as seen through theoretical lenses. This thesis attempts to dig deeper past the policy environment and events themselves and unpack the motivations behind these larger patterns of fear and ‘othering’ that have been identified. This study seeks to identify, explain, and understand the increased fear of the movement of peoples across boundaries and changes in population makeup. Although the context varies, this trend remains a growing global issue that is far from losing relevance.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis’ empirical evidence primarily consisted of local newspaper articles and editorial opinion pieces to help explore in-more depth how migrants and migration have been rhetorically framed as a threat in a certain regional/geographical area and during a certain time period. The empirical data collection was part of activities facilitated through New Mexico State University’s 2021 National Science Foundation grant received by NMSU’s Department of Government. Specific choices such as excluding blogs or social media platforms tried to narrow the available data sets. Rather the data, sourced from various newspaper articles and editorials, was individually entered into a program called Zotero. This program allows users to build

libraries or databases of resources and then tag, or code, each input with markers to organize them into categories. Although not as sophisticated as qualitative software programs such as NVivo, Zotero provides a platform that helps building an online database with basic coding capabilities. After collecting a total of 552 newspaper articles and editorials from The Albuquerque Journal, The Las Cruces Sun News, The Roswell Daily Record, and finalizing the database, a first read of the material provided the themes and patterns of this thesis' analysis.

As will be outlined in the realism analysis, who speaks of migrants and of migration and then through which rhetorical markers and key words (fear, threat, security etc.) was first divided by two types of actors/speakers: law enforcement and the public. After re-reading the material, the following broader, overarching categories emerged from this thesis' open coding:

- Pattern I: Law Enforcement – who speaks and how?
- Pattern II: The Public and Community – who speaks and how?

Open coding is the initial, first engagement and labeling with one's data. Open coding provides the researcher with the first, broader impression of the material and highlights a specific rhetorical summary. Word clouds in the realism and liberalism analyses chapters through text search queries in the qualitative software program NVivo furthermore helped the researcher to identify, confirm, and then visualize key words and phrases. After the data collection, the researcher then opted for discourse analysis as its analytical methodology since by its very nature the term discourse sees socially constructed meaning always through the mode of language. Discourse analysis also seemed appropriate specifically to explore the fear-of-the-other in the context of global mobility because fear and threat as two key emotions are usually disengaged from certain tangible actions or circumstances. They are predominately based on an individual or collective, conscious, or subconscious perceptions.

Additionally, a successful methodology is one, as scholars have pointed out, “that is able to give a satisfactory [...] answer” (van Teun, 2013) to a project’s research question—a social phenomenon, which needs to be discovered and explained. Discourse analysis also helped to return the empirical evidence to answer the thesis’ broad research questions: Why and how do people construct fear toward migrants? How did the southern border get securitized? It also deductively supported this thesis final findings: IR’s theoretical frameworks of realism and liberalism can help to better understand the construction of the fear-of-the-other phenomenon.

Discourse Analysis, as a methodology, is foundational to this type of research in a multitude of ways. It is similar to other types of qualitative research methods in that it analyzes how social phenomena is not explained but interpreted. However, discourse analysis goes one step deeper and seeks to explain not only how things are *interpreted*, but how these socially produced ideas and objects are *constructed* and reproduced in the first place (Gerring, 2004, p.19). With the understanding that social phenomena like ideas are primarily constructed through language, discourse analysis places the written word of actors at the center of the research. Discourse analysis then examines how a reality is produced and reproduced (Gerring, 2004, p.19).

As a methodology, it is important to understand that discourse analysis makes two assumptions. First, it assumes that social reality is not a static set of belief systems, which researchers uncover. Rather, it is a dynamic phenomenon that we actively create through continued interaction (Gerring, 2004, p.20). Thus, discourse analysis focuses on the process that produces these ideas and objects. Second, discourse analysis assumes that meaning and social reality are derived from the public and private discussion, or discourses. Thereby these discourses provide a material record of the market of ideas which are then the basis of new ideas,

objects, and practices (Gerring, 2004, p.20). This approach provides a strength where other forms of qualitative analysis like content analysis for example, have a weakness. Content analysis assumes there is stability in meaning that then allows for finding patterns through coding. Although an important method, content analysis does not account for change in meaning over time through context while discourse analysis looks for both with a particular emphasis on the process of creating meaning (Gerring, 2004, p.20). Discourse analysis then is the best approach to answering this thesis' questions on how fear-of-the-other is constructed and how it can possibly be deconstructed.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

This honors thesis makes two broad, main contributions to the field of migration studies: First, it places global mobility and the fear-of-the-other into a distinct, local rhetorical context. Second, it examines local media outlets and local activism and their roles and voices within a very narrow, local rhetorical space. It understands, however, that, for one, this thesis builds on a large body of existing scholarship—within constantly shifting policy and political environments. It also understands the limitations of its empirical evidence as seen through the lenses of who and/or what are the thesis sources of knowledge. This thesis and its author recognize the limitations, emerging from the researcher's positionality and partiality. The researcher will always remain on the outside of context and content of a specific social phenomenon such as the fear-of-the-other.

By narrowing data collection to newspaper articles the researcher's methodological decision has also excluded the voices of migrants and migrant communities from the discourse. It also did not distinguish between discursive events, which shifted and changed a certain outcome. The thesis also did not analytically refine its initial coding. Furthermore, as an

undergraduate student this thesis researcher understands the privilege of what higher education affords and the biases and subjectivities, emerging from such privilege.

ANALYSIS REALISM

Realism is one, if not the most influential school of thought in the study of International Relations. Its framework for understanding state-to-state relationships has reigned supreme for the most part in complex human society. The strength of this system is sourced from what historians call modern era occurrences. The emergence of sovereignty from the 17th century's Peace of Westphalia laid out the concept of the modern state system. This point in history is critical in supporting realism's long-standing supremacy. It established that states not only recognize each other's sovereignty, but also sovereignty's reigning structure amid an international self-help system. The global system is, therefore, anarchical and only the state as the unitary actor can provide security. This long-standing tradition of thought has singularly influenced global and domestic politics for centuries, particularly after the Westphalian Peace in 1648. The realist understands that one's security originates from one's relative power compared to another. It is a traditional, yet still highly influential political framework that pulls from foundational political thoughts and concepts like sovereignty, anarchy, security, and power. Realism uses these assumptions about power on the international stage. They predate Enlightenment ideas about representative democracy and security through cooperation as they are contemporarily understood today. Realism, as a school of thought provides us with an overarching lens in which to interpret international relations.

Discussions related to the foundations of complex human interactions start from the most basic understandings of the human condition. Classical realist thought bases its entire argument and theoretical framework on the Hobbesian understanding that the human experience is based

on the ‘state of nature.’ The human experience without the state is considered “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes, 1588; Honderich, 2005). Other foundational scholars who provide realists with basic theories include Athenian philosopher and historian Thucydides. Thucydides and Hobbes, for example, have first articulated the realist concept of security dilemma in international relations. Thucydides developed the security dilemma idea from observing the motivations behind the Peloponnesian Wars between city states Sparta, Thebes, and Athens in the fifth century BCE (Dobransky, 2015, p.219).

The security dilemma is termed a ‘spiral model’ that traces the relationship between one actor, seeking to increase its own security and another interpreting such increased defensive capability as a perceived threat to its own security (Glaser, 1997, p.171). The security dilemma assumes that not only is power relative in the anarchical system, but that because of this assumption, any attempt to change one’s capabilities—even for the purposes of defense—can change that relativity and thus be interpreted as a threat (Glaser, 1997, p. 171). This understanding of a constant battle for relative power is called the zero-sum game.

Moving forward to the 16th century, Florentine philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli and his famous work *The Prince* builds on these basic ideas. He sees statecraft as representing a unique position, which requires a ruler to shed *private* morality—based in ethical considerations of right and wrong—for *public* morality, which only focuses on national security (Clarke, 2022, p.486; M. Jackson & Grace, 2018). Machiavelli continues building on Thucydides’ ideas of the security dilemma and international anarchy by making the argument that state leaders wielding force, demanding obedience, and striking fear are foundational to the maintenance of security in this system (Clarke, 2022, p. 487). Nearly 150 years later in the 17th century, English philosopher

Thomas Hobbes also famously contributed to the security dilemma concept through his work *The Leviathan*, as mentioned previously (Jackson et al., 2019, pp.72-81).

Post-World War II, classical realist scholars, such as Hans Morgenthau—still echoing Hobbes and Machiavelli—argued that the only secure political space is the state, which is then continuously tasked to provide its territory with safety and peace (Morgenthau et al., 2006). In his classical realist work *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Morgenthau argued that politics remains a game of relative power and the only way to enjoy a peaceful life is to use one's power to contain and restrain other peoples and states' 'lust for power' (Jackson et al., 2019, p.78). Basic realist ideas like Machiavellian's public morality or Hobbes' assumptions about human nature were the focus of realists' studies for centuries and are still a focus of classical realism today (Hobbes, 1588; M. Jackson & Grace, 2018). Morgenthau and other classical realists were later challenged by scholars like Kenneth Waltz, which introduced the concept of Neo-Realism to understanding international relations. Although the basic ideas of the security dilemma and anarchy remains widely accepted within the realist school, the more nuanced interpretations of state craft, morality, and human nature—still foundational to classical realist thought—have been largely abandoned by several sub-groups (Jackson et al., 2019). Neo-Realist's focus not on statecraft and human nature but see the *structure* of the international system as key.

There are two main groups in this new structuralist subset called the strategic realists and the neo-realists. The basic assumption in this contemporary understanding is that the international system is indeed ruled by anarchy, but that the primary goals are power and security as they solely operate through the anarchical structure (Waltz, 2010). Strategic realists like Thomas Schelling, for one, subscribe to ideas like Rational Choice and Game theories. They

broadly argue that state-level actors are fully capable of and do make rational choices based on self-interests (Schelling, 2008). Therefore, one can scrutinize and then utilize these interests and weaknesses to manipulate them. The rational process of interpreting and then utilization is called bargaining. Schelling calls this *The Art of Coercion*, or also known as the diplomacy of violence. Coercion is defined not as brute force but only the threat of force. Through the diplomacy of violence then, a state actor can prescribe, change, or manipulate an interaction to one's strategic advantage based on another actor's rational response to a threat (Schelling, 2008). This idea again assumes that state actors make rational choices based on weighing cost and benefits.

Neo-realists also assume that the structure of the international system governs its rules. This sub-group is further divided into the defensive and offensive neo-realists. Neo-realists—as a whole—argue that the anarchical structure of the international system shapes interests and interactions through a system of punishment and rewards. Highly influential defensive neo-realist Kenneth Waltz argues that not only does the anarchical system produce Great Powers, which dominate, but that these states and their allies create a balance of power within the structure of the international system (Waltz, 2010). This balance is sourced by states of varying relative power, aligning together and forming groups that balance against not only that relative power but the perceived relative threat. Such alignments are often referred to as bandwagoning (Waltz, 2010). Bandwagoning is defined as siding with the more powerful party of a conflict. This constant flux of shifting alliances and picking sides in an attempt to balance power and threat then provides a system of bipolarity. This roughly equal power provides defensive guarantees and safety in that no one power has the ability to completely decimate another (Waltz, 2010). Thus, this idea is called defensive realism.

Offensive realists like John Mearsheimer, in comparison, disagree and support ideas such as Hegemonic Stability Theory. Hegemonic Stability Theory, for one, understands the international system as profoundly hierarchical. It argues that the most stable global system is one that has a single hegemonic power. An anarchical system produces a constant competition for power, thus avoiding conflict is only possible when a single state controls the structure and provides security and stability because no one can threaten their power (Jackson et al., 2019). When this flux of balancing happens and the hegemon is challenged and threatened, war is more likely to occur. Therefore, balancing powers should be avoided. The debate continues even further into discussions on whether hegemonic power is even sustainable in that Great Powers eventually tend to overextend themselves.

These most foundational ideas about international relations provide a baseline to interpret more complex phenomena. The school of realism defines the state as the primary actor in the international realm. The state as it is understood today, refers to both a populated geographic area, but also the political structure, including the organizations that govern it. The state is a territory based socio-political order that is responsible for maintaining political and social norms like justice, peace, and security. The state is understood as having a quality to it known as sovereignty, i.e., authority over its own affairs, territory, and populations. Sociologist Max Weber argued that a modern state is defined through its monopoly on the legitimate use of power within its territory (Jackson et al., 2019, p.237). Scholars to this day question its origins but the most widely accepted starting point of the concept of sovereignty can be traced back to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 that ended the Thirty Years War (Jackson et al., 2019, p.356). The Peace of Westphalia marked what is today known as the birth of the modern state system in international relations. In practice, classical and neo-realists assume that states operate in an

anarchical system and that there is a naturally occurring hierarchy of power amongst all state actors (Morgenthau et al., 2006; Waltz, 2010). Great Powers then are simply more powerful—by nature—relative to other powers. The main role of foreign policy is to advance and defend the interests of the state as the state provides security and stability to its population (Waltz, 2010). Therefore, the most important driving factor in state-to-state relations is security and relative power (Jackson et al., 2019, p.70).

Realists have a particular understanding of the relationship between the state and its borders and territories. The state is a territory-based socio-political organization and the political structure such as democracy or autocracy, for example, which governs it. Additionally, in the modern state system, a premier importance is placed on sovereignty and specifically on its reciprocal recognition by other states. With these two fundamental ideas, the border is a literal representation of the state, its recognized sovereignty, and security. This ‘line’ represents the geo-political boundary of the sovereign state and its associated powers. To cross the border is to pass into another legal order. Historically, especially during the ancient, medieval, and early modern periods, borders were not hardlines but rather consisted of what one could define as a buffer zone, front, or ‘frontier’ as the *American West* was called. In terms of the modern state system according to realists, the border represents the literal boundary of the state’s power and goal of security. Thus, its unregulated permeation is a threat to state security (Frédéric, 2019). The state views territory as belonging to itself and its people, hence, the prime goal is to protect its territory and the people who live there (Jackson et al., 2019, p.71).

In recent decades, however, borders have again become more fluid concepts. They are more critically understood as “spaces in their own right [...] but also as processes” (Johnson et al., 2011, p.67). Such fluidity turns borders not only into state-centric entities with fixed, static

parameters, but also into practices. Borders *do* something – they border, re-border, include, exclude, take in—and shut out. Borderlands or border zones then are defined as areas “at the margins of states” (Topak, 2014, p.818). Borders, border practices—or what some scholars call “borderwork” —then include a variety of different non-state actors. NGOs, smugglers, citizens, cyber spaces, and corporations, among others “have the ability to shape debordering and re-bordering (Rumford, 2006, pp.164-165).”

Although the basic ideas of realism have endured over time, the overarching school remains divided—as previously stated—into different branches and scholars such as offensive and defensive realism that interpret the effects of the structure of the international system differently. In practice, when it comes to explaining the current migration and border environment, one political scholars’ work stands out. Carl Schmidt, former high-ranking Nazi party member and German legal scholar's work on the state-of-exception provides for an interesting connection between theoretical framework and policy on the ground. Much of his work spans many different political and legal realms, including thoughts on human nature to specific policy positions. In 1932, Carl Schmidt wrote his most famous work *The Concept of the Political* in which he argues that ‘*the Political*’ should principally be understood as an existential distinction between friend and enemy. He argued that the mere existence of human diversity will cause political conflict and this friction naturally “be reduced [to] that between friend and enemy (Schmitt, 2007, p.26).” This view of humanity is very much in line with Hobbes view and informs the larger realist school of thought.

Also in the early 20th century, Schmidt developed an idea which he called *Ausnahmezustand* or the *State-of-Exception*. Schmidt posits that a sovereign state reserves the right, authority, and ability to disregard the rule of law by establishing and institutionalizing

extrajudicial rules in the event that the common good is threatened. This concept arguably contributed to the reasoning that justified martial law in 1933 Germany and would eventually pave the way to Germany's Holocaust. The *State-of-Exception* is extraordinarily closely related to realist ideas of the role of the state as the provider of security.

Securitization—or the theory of how an issue or person can be constructed as an extraordinary threat—some argue, borrows, in part, from Carl Schmidt's state-of-exception idea. Historically, this process in Nazi Germany, for example, was carried out to deadly ends. In February of 1933, the *Reichstagsbrand* or the burning of the German Lower Parliamentary chamber was used as a catalyst to deem communism as a threat to the security and safety of the German state and its people. In the weeks following the fire not only was a state of emergency and martial law declared—suspending civil liberties and targeting communists across the board including parliament members—but it gave the then newly sworn in chancellor Adolf Hitler extraordinary executive powers. The concept, for one, was used to justify the Holocaust.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The concepts of securitization and the state-of-exception have remained dominant themes not only in international relations, but they have affected specific domestic policies and actions. The following section outlines this thesis' findings based on its qualitative methodologies. As mentioned in the introduction, the overarching voice found in the local and national news media was predominately law enforcement based. By the nature of the profession, law enforcement is heavily influenced by a realist understanding of the world. U.S. Border Patrol specifically are charged with the protection of the border and everything that it represents. This idea holds firm with the realist emphasis on the importance of the state, territory, and security.

As time has passed, the U.S. - Mexico border specifically has been the site of continued securitization and political talking point commandeering. There is a long growing trend of labeling individuals from outside the U.S. as threats to U.S. national security. This characterization has fueled large amounts of funding and manpower at the U.S. southern border to combat the constructed threat. Over time, policies have continued to become stricter. One could argue that the state of exception is continuously applied across the U.S. in the form of administrative detention of migrants, who are in the process of applying for asylum, refugee status, permanent residency, or any other legal residency designation. These policy positions on the part of the populace—their representatives, and the bureaucracy that is responsible for implementation—are a product of the individual and groups production of this fear-of-the-other. U.S. domestic policies and institutions then reflect these domestic beliefs, norms, and values. Therefore, this thesis posits that this fear-of-the-other—and related policy positions—are a byproduct of a realist understanding of how the world operates. One must be afraid and react in kind to ensure one's own safety and survival.

2021 DATA COLLECTION

In practice, realism is reflected in several U.S. policies and regions. In the summer of 2021, the National Science Foundation (NSF) funded a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Cite Program on Immigration Policy and Border Communities at NMSU. While working with the local Immigration Detention abolitionist group Advocate Visitors for Immigrants in Detention (AVID), data collection in the U.S. borderland in New Mexico identified several emerging patterns. A database in the database program Zotero documented the New Mexico based media coverage of topics relating to immigration over time. The database consisted of

digitized news reports from The Albuquerque Journal, The Las Cruces Sun-News, and The Roswell Daily Record ranging from February 1995 to April 2020.

PATTERN I: ACTOR - LAW ENFORCEMENT - WHO SPEAKS & HOW?

Overall, the predominant voice in the media was that of law enforcement. From earlier discussions, it is clear that law enforcement is heavily influenced by and arguably is the result of realist conceptions of the global conflict and tensions. Often, the media's direction of reporting was very heavily influenced by immigration officials and law enforcement, with little input from the broader community. Articles and editorials from the Albuquerque Journal often used ostentatious language in their headlines like "Ignoring ICE Hold Requests Puts Communities at Risk (Albuquerque Journal Editorial Board, 2014). The narrative then often follows a similar structure. Local authorities are dispensing their duties, including arresting people with warrants and then immigration officials make demands for what is called an immigration hold.

Essentially, this means that a person who is arrested and lawfully detained is held past the amount of time they can be *legally* detained. This is called unlawful or unwarranted detention. In the U.S., these illegal detentions are a violation of the rights outlined in the fourth amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the legal statute of Habeas Corpus as outlined in the Judiciary Act of 1789. In practice, say a citizen was arrested for public drunkenness and taken down to the county jail and charged. A judge determines a person as either free to leave of their own recognizance or must pay bail. They pay bail and would legally be allowed to leave. An immigration hold, however, is an illegal staying of one's release based on the *suspicion* that one may be in the country without documentation. In the case of the Albuquerque Journal article—and the hundreds like it—the main topic is whether these types of holds are legal. In this article immigration officials argue that refusing to honor these holds on the part of local law

enforcement *poses a threat to public safety*. Local agencies then retort by arguing that they can be held civilly liable for unwarranted detentions i.e., local agencies can be sued for illegally detaining someone. The Third Circuit in Philadelphia ruled that immigration holds are simply considered a request and are not legally binding. Therefore, ICE has no legal authority to request holds on persons in detention and to do so constitutes a violation of a persons' constitutional rights (ACLU, 2014). Thus, it calls into question the legality of detaining someone based on the suspicion that they are in the U.S. without documentation. Additionally, the practice of immigration officials waiting for a person to be released from jail or court and then immediately detaining them has also been documented repeatedly. Many people in the immigration policy realm—including both legal scholars, other academics, and activists like the southern New Mexico based immigration detention abolitionist group Advocate Visitors for Immigrants in Detention (AVID)—are concerned that the practice of immigration holds, and other immigration law enforcement related policies, are depriving people of their civil rights and liberties.

This argument about civil liberties is important to this thesis because it demonstrates the dangers and slippery slopes of using realist ideas to govern public policies. This case—and the hundreds of other articles like it—demonstrate realist ideas at play. Specifically, the state of exception profoundly structures many immigration enforcement policies and actions. Notice the wording of the immigration officials in the Albuquerque Journal example to justify their illegal detaining of persons under suspicion of being in the U.S. without documentation. They say that disregarding these requests poses a 'threat to public safety.' As mentioned previously, Carl Schmidt explained that a state and its representatives—in this case immigration authorities—can and have to act extra judiciously under the guise that there is a threat to the common good. On March 15th, 2019, U.S. President Trump declared a national emergency on the U.S.-Mexico

border citing “alien families arriv[ing] in record numbers” and immigrants associated with drugs or gangs as a justification for the argument that “securing our southern border [is] vital to ensuring the safety of the American people (Trump, 2019).” Trump said specifically that

“The current situation at the southern border presents a border security and humanitarian crisis that threatens core national security interests and constitutes a national emergency (Trump, 2019).”

Notice the rhetoric markers such as *crises*, *security*, *national security interests*, and *emergency* used in the statement. As Schmidt demonstrated, these rhetorical devices are used to elevate a situation from the standard landscape into one of crisis. It, thereby, is loosening the legal constraints on arbitrary executive power. As covered previously, a declaration of crisis can and has been used to justify cruel, extrajudicial, and undemocratic actions by a government. This is extraordinarily dangerous and can lead to or even exacerbate the already terrible treatment of immigrants. Additionally, it can directly fuel human rights and international law violations. The argument of the state-of-exception made by Schmidt, and later instituted by executive power/order such as the Trump administration, are heavily based in realism and concepts related to security and borders. Thus, these damaging, and arguably illegal activities are *realism at work*.

PATTERN II: ACTOR – THE PUBLIC – WHO SPEAKS AND HOW?

Like any discussion or engagement in the public discourse, there are several different interest groups whose opinions and viewpoints widen the policy spectrum. The news coverage of immigration also provided a look into the reactions to immigration policies and practices on the part of the public. Firstly, civil society members like those in organizations like AVID are unique

in that they tend to reject the concept of securitization because it is fundamentally contradictory to their experiences and engagements with the people these policies affect. For the rest of the population, who are often removed from the direct effects of the securitization of the U.S.-Mexico border, their opinions are informed by their interests, values, and belief systems. People who believe that one's strength comes from mutual cooperation and interdependency tend to have a negative reaction to securitization. The sentiments detected in the media reports from this segment of the population was one of sadness or anger at the border landscape and treatment of immigrants. Usually this ended with a statement against the current immigration and border enforcement agencies. Examples include expressions such as "does this have to be this way" or in extreme cases, statements like "He [referring to Donald Trump] is stoking racism (Borunda, 2018)" and "Abolish ICE (Kaplan, 2018)."

Of course, every debate has at least two sides. Media outlets such as local newspapers provided public platforms to people to express their opinions as they saw fit. Almost always, these opportunities for unfiltered commentary were used to bemoan the presence of immigrants and make claims that they were someone being robbed of something by immigrants being there. They seem to generalize very quickly from isolated incidents and create a broader sense of fear. Most of the time it was claims of migrants abusing social safety net programs like social security, disability, food stamps, housing assistance, etc. without paying taxes. Although those claims are false, many times these public platforms were filled with derogatory statements and slurs about migrants, including commentary on their legal status, their looks, clothing, accents, cleanliness, integrity, their right to exist in a space, and their perceived threat to the community.

All these examples are ways of demonstrating how larger international relations theories can be applied to individual behaviors and beliefs with the goal of explaining why they occur.

Realism can explain why some people develop or use the fear-of-the-other. In a realist world, the *other* remains always a threat as one always competes for relative power and security.

ANALYSIS LIBERALISM

Realism is the reigning framework for understanding state-to-state relationships in the study of International Relations (IR). However, realism—and its different interpretations of world politics such as classical or neo-realism—is not the only major theoretical framework in the field. Although its influence in IR became more pronounced after WW I, liberalism has gradually emerged as a significant challenger to the realist assumptions about the international system. IR liberalists understand the international system as a place where a state's strength and security are sourced from maintaining cooperative relationships with each other. Historically, these ideas were developed by Enlightenment era philosophers such as John Locke (1632-1704), for instance. Locke's thoughts on government and the individual citizen broadened liberal ideas and assumptions about modernity, capitalism, and progress. Other early liberalist scholarship such as the Cato's Letters coauthored by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, which endorsed free speech and criticism of government, added to the distribution of Locke's anti-tyranny concepts in the early 18th century (Trenchard et al., 1995). Other liberal philosophers, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his social contract theory, Adam Smith and his work on civil liberties, Immanuel Kant's perpetual peace, and Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism scholarship built on Locke's liberal ideas (Heywood, 2017, pp.24-60; Jackson et al., 2019, pp.108-110; Love, 2011, pp.21-32,33-38).

These scholars provide some of the intellectual foundations related to liberal societies and their organization. Immanuel Kant's famous 1795 perpetual peace publication, for one, envisioned the state as a place structured as a *Rechtsstaat*, meaning by the "rule of law" such as a

constitution. This contrasts to the former *Machtstaat*, which translates to a state solely ruled by power (Jackson et al., 2019, p.53). In such an international system comprised of a constitutional state power, authority would be constrained by the law to protect against its arbitrary exercise against the people. Kant argues that these societies will form a lasting peace with others based on the shared values of civil rights, cooperation, and hospitality. Although often a mischaracterization, Kant did not posit that a state should have ‘open borders’ with no regulation but that one can manage who crosses in a way that is not exclusionary (Zavediuik, 2014). This concept is contemporarily known as Democratic Peace Theory (Jackson et al., 2019, pp.122-125). Broad liberalist assumptions on the potential for human rationality and progress asserts themselves opposite to Thomas Hobbes’ ‘dog-eat-dog’ world of classical realism where one’s security is always determined by its relative power to one’s neighbor. In a liberalist world, individuals and groups do not have to fear and compete with one another to be secure in themselves and their communities. Today, these liberal ideals are increasingly compiled into institutions: rules, norms, and sets of behaviors that govern states’ interactions. Contemporary liberalist scholars like Joseph Nye, Ernst B. Haas, Thomas Paine, Michael Doyle, Robert Keohane, Bruce Russett, David Lake, and Lisa Martin argue that developing these institutions in all realms of contact including social, political, and economic, then govern states’ actions and mitigate conflict for the gains received through cooperation, progress, and strengthened relationships (Jackson et al., 2019, pp.49-52, 110, 117-124, 201-211). These relationships are important because the constant and reiterated cooperation with each other generates strength and security.

There are several assumptions that liberalism makes about the human condition and societies. Liberalists, for one, assume that humans are capable of progress. Humans are also seen

as reasonable and rational beings that understand that constant competition is counterproductive. Liberal theorists argue that human progress is a natural, linear evolution towards peace and prosperity. In this case, sourcing concepts from Enlightenment era scholars, modern liberals believe that peace can be achieved through cooperative social action. States, governments, and individuals can come together and develop institutions (norms and rules)—such as peace, cooperation, human rights, democracy, collective security, and progress—that are then embedded and represented through intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations and other entities such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), the European Union (EU), or even alliances like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Historically, institutions were not considered important and often outright rejected by realists. Liberalists in comparison argue that institutions—norms, rules, sets of behaviors—are not only important, but they are achievable. They claim that the human condition is not one of suffering and pessimism, but of progress and optimism. Immense, conceptual ideas like human rights, progress, cooperation, and peace are relevant and applicable in every corner of the world. They matter in every country, every government, every policy arena, every community, and every person.

Human rights—and generally the treatment of human beings—are a major focus of the work of immigration policy activists. The non-profit immigration detention abolitionist group Advocate Visitors for Immigrants in Detention (AVID), for one, makes its human rights advocacy and position clear. The practices of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, racial profiling, migrant detention, immigration holds, immigration court hearings without legal representation or adequate translations, at all levels and branches of the U.S. government are seen as inhumane, legally questionable, and direct violation of basic human rights. Organizations that view the world through a liberalist lens—one of cooperation, human rights,

and peace—overwhelmingly argue that these practices are wrong. The justification for the treatment of human beings in this manner is based on an outdated, realist understanding of the world that has increasingly lost its relevancy.

As seen through AVID, liberalism in action can also be found in civil society organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Immigration Advocates Network, American Immigration Council, and locally in the Southern New Mexico Immigration Round Table (SNIRT), for instance. These non-profit organizations collect enormous amounts of information and research data on immigration policy. Although there are a variety of different aspects to the entire immigration policy landscape in the U.S., the consensus among immigration advocacy groups remains that current U.S. policies are not only outdated, but harmful in their conceptual foundations. They are based on a realist understanding of the international system that is no longer accurate and only produces and reproduces violent and inhumane policies and practices.

The process of constructing the fear-of-the-other is heavily influenced by the perceived threat to one's safety whether that be the state or a person. The fact that immigration is administrated predominantly by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is telling in and of itself. The DHS is a U.S. federal bureaucratic department that is responsible for public safety, border security, immigration and customs, and anti-terrorism efforts (The Department of Homeland Security, 2022). DHS was formed as a result of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 that passed in response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City's World Trade Center. From its foundation, the DHS is a bureaucracy that is meant to assess and combat threats to the 'homeland.' Its key objective was "keeping America safe" (The Department of Homeland Security, 2022). By giving DHS almost all responsibility to administer and manage

immigration then it is nearly guaranteed that immigration and immigrants themselves will be shaped through the threat-based, realist lens of this department's foundational principles.

Again, the concepts of threat and security often translate into criminalizing migrants. Former President Donald Trump, for one, infamously called Latin and Hispanic immigrants, rapists (Amber Phillips, 2017). This derogatory and dehumanizing characterization was then often followed by a series of narratives meant to construct a specific discourse of fear and hatred towards migrants. Rare, violent felonies committed by migrants then are often being generalized and pushed into the public sphere as *the* dominate discourse of migrants while the reality is less monolithic and more complex. To illustrate, in the last ten years, data indicate that in the U.S. a person is more likely to be harmed by someone who is a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident than by an undocumented migrant (Light et al., 2020, p.32341). Yet, the fear-of-the-other and its false narratives persist.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

In the U.S., civil society groups such as local organizations like AVID or national groups such as the ACLU consistently criticize and often legally challenge immigration policies. This thesis interprets these critiques, in part, as a deliberate strategy to construct counternarratives to the predominantly realist's security and threat-based dehumanization discourse about migrants. This thesis' empirical research and data analysis found that specific keywords such as human rights, humane treatment, legality, and sustainability are utilized in mission statements, position papers, or press releases to construct these counternarratives.

AVID, in southwestern New Mexico and Texas, does considerable work not only with migrants directly and in the policy arena, but also by disseminating these counternarratives to local communities in Las Cruces, Dona Ana County, and southern New Mexico as well as

similar immigration focused organizations from New York, to Georgia, and across the U.S. to California. They consistently engage with a variety of local media outlets to counter the current characterization of immigration in the U.S. For example, the group's five core values of 1. abolishing the immigration detention system, 2. drawing knowledge from people directly impacted by these policies, 3. acknowledging the history and role of white supremacy, capitalism, and imperialism, 4. acknowledging the inability to be politically neutral, and 5. an acknowledgement of the role of the prison-industrial complex, as shared by its sister organization Freedom For Immigrants based in California, rhetorically frame immigration detention as a concept deeply steeped in injustice, discrimination, and inequity (AVID, 2018). Rhetorical markers such as for-profit prisons, racially motivated legal determinations, and simply the history of immigration policy in the U.S. also link immigration detention to an immigration system predominately based on white supremacy, neoliberal capitalism, the U.S. prison-industrial complex, and western imperialism (AVID, 2018). Such a system fosters dehumanization and inhumane treatment of immigrants.

During participatory observations of some of the meetings of the Southern New Mexico Immigration Round Table (SNIRT) based in Las Cruces, NM during the summer of 2020, this research finds that some of SNIRT's predominant advocacy objectives were closely linked to human and civil rights. Although groups like AVID tend to provide more direct support and resources towards the humane treatment of immigrants on its mission of policy change, others like the ACLU take a broader civil rights-oriented approach through the courts system. Qualitative data analysis shows that the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project make fewer arguments on the morality of immigration policies but focuses more specifically on the violation of civil rights. The ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project is "dedicated to expanding and enforcing

the civil liberties and civil rights of immigrants and to combating public and private discrimination against them (ACLU, 2022).” Overall, this thesis finds that these civil society groups rhetorically assert not only a sense of immigration policy violations as morally wrong and inhumane, but they also interpret them as illegal.

By increasingly constructing and disseminating counternarratives, the ACLU and AVID began over time to challenge this pattern. These organizations—and many others like them—consistently displayed in their mission statements or position papers to the broader public that immigrants are not a danger to U.S. society, but rather represent its strength. Immigrants, who are so often rhetorically framed as eminent threats to public safety and social order are human beings, trying to escape political, social, economic, and environmental insecurities. The counternarrative to the realist, security-based characterization of migrants is then directly and consistently challenged by the liberalist framework that understands relational human interaction as critically important to maintain peace, human rights, and security. Liberalism posits that human beings are capable of making progress towards a better life for all people, including immigrants. These liberal ideals are codified in the values, practices, and goals of civil society organizations such as AVID and the ACLU.

The anti-immigration discourse that constructs immigration as a threat to the homeland is inaccurate in a variety of ways. In fact, immigration is important to the future of the U.S. The U.S. has sustained a birth rate *below* generational replacement since 2007. This means U.S. population did not grow, but simply replaced the generation before it. The U.S. population is dying faster than it is being born (BBC News, 2021). Such a population replacement rate is problematic since these population deficits severely affect a country’s economic, social, and political sectors. A low birth rate leads to labor shortages, reduced demand on industries such as

housing and automobiles, and generally a slowing and less dynamic economy (Sherman et al., 2019). As of 2019, the U.S. employs about 27 million foreign-born adults, but these replacement populations remain insufficient to fill the domestic labor gap (Sherman et al., 2019). Immigrant workers bolster falling birth rates and make up the majority of the future net workforce growth by filling in 36 percent of the jobs in the agricultural industry, 36 percent in building and maintenance, 29 percent in textile and apparel manufacturing, 27 percent in food manufacturing, and 24 percent in construction, etc. (Sherman et al., 2019). This fill in by immigrants is important in that the retirement of the baby boomer generation poses a significant economic and fiscal challenge. In simple terms, a huge section of the population is aging out of the labor force and there are not enough younger workers to replace them without immigrants. This is a problem not only in terms of labor shortages, but also most importantly in terms of sustainability of federal welfare system such as social security. Thus, a severe, future solvency issue looms that threatens the livelihoods of millions of U.S. born adults. Immigration then, provides a way out of the impending demographic breakdown in that it provides the U.S. with an immigrant population rate of 78 percent labor-aged adults who can fill in those gaps and prevent severe economic collapse (Sherman et al., 2019). Not to mention, immigrants make up 28 percent of physicians, 24 percent of dentists, and 38 percent of home health and care aides, another industry that will become more important as huge sectors of the U.S. population age (Batalova, 2020).

If migration is so important, why the U.S. immigration system dehumanizes and treats immigrants so inhumanly is called in to question. It is important to note that the securitized system of immigration that brutalizes immigrants is not entirely unique to the U.S. but rather the West in general. Australia, likewise, utilized what the Australian Human Rights Commission calls the Third Country Processing Regime. Essentially, an immigrant who is apprehended after

travelling by boat to Australia is sent to a third country, most often the Nauru and Manus Islands in Papua New Guinea for detention and a process meant to determine the validity of their claim for protection (Triggs, 2013). Often this determination process is slow and unsuccessful all the while immigrants are detained in deplorable conditions indefinitely.

Similar inhumane treatment of immigrant populations is common across the West including most places in Europe and North America. The question then becomes one of the reasoning behind this treatment. There is some scholarship that suggests that the discourse, surrounding immigration has long been racialized and thus immigrants themselves are characterized as a human security threat (Ibrahim, 2005, p.163). Christoph Ramm provides another take on how ‘otherness,’ or the understanding how an immigrant can be constructed as not being ‘of the soil’ in their new community and are thus a threat, has influenced the immigration policy landscape in Europe and the West (2010). These and other scholarship argue that the makeup of immigration policy is far more complex than a basic threat assessment. There is a racial element that along with other factors designates friend and foe. Liberalism rejects this characterization of immigrants and immigration because it does not endorse the hyper-competitive security-driven world of realism. Thus, these policies, highly racialized and violent, are the result of a realist conceptualization of the state, borders, and security.

CONCLUSION

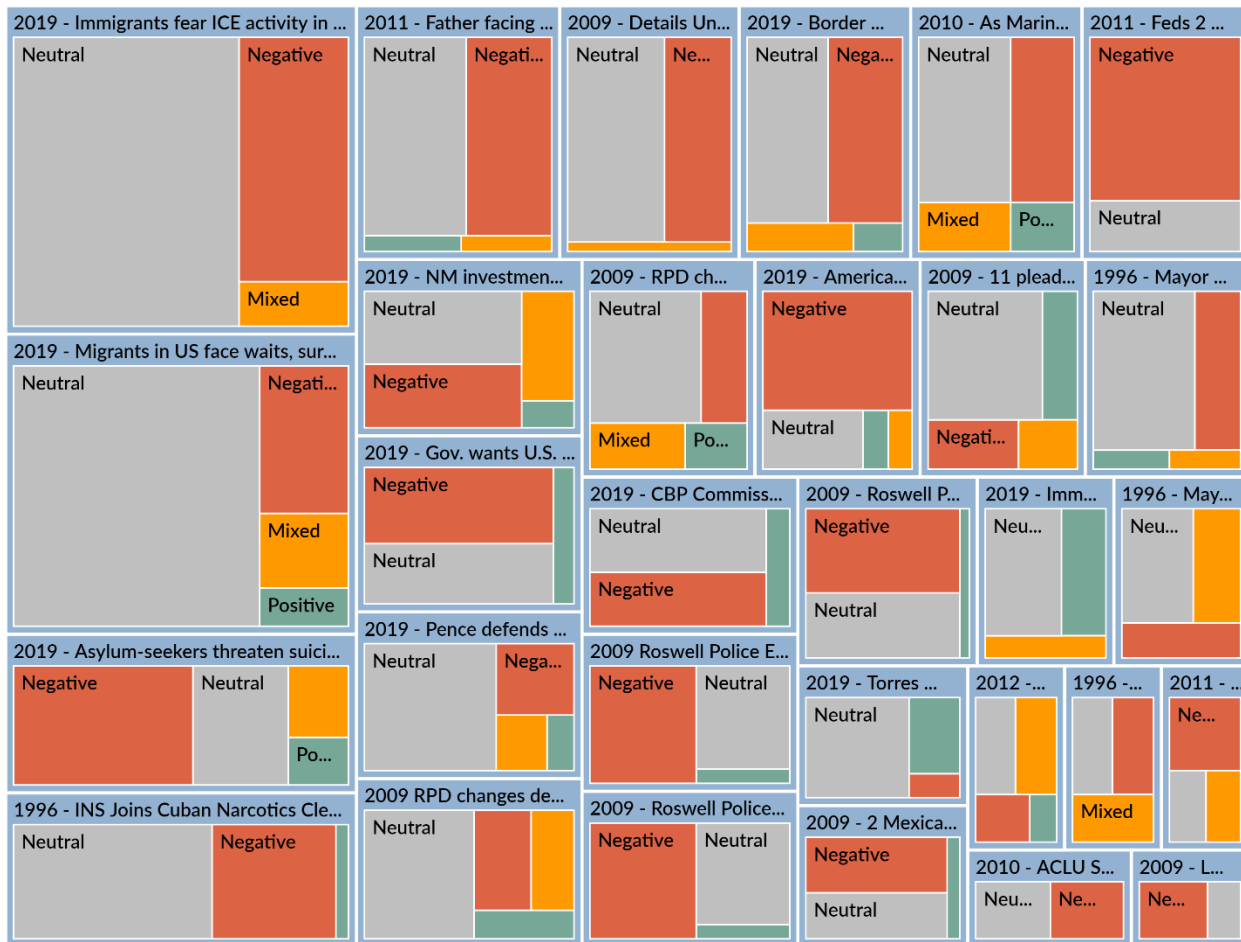
From an international relations theoretical perspective this thesis sought to explain how discourse, surrounding migration and borders is formed and then codified into public policy. The resulting conclusions are then that the ideas and concepts from the larger schools of thought within the study of international relations theory play a role in how individuals, communities, and, therefore, governments understand, construct, and then eventually determine what defines a

threat. Not only does realism explain the fear-of-the-*other* but constructed fear and the related discourse can then be challenged and deconstructed by liberalist scholarship and advocacy.

However, it is still important to recognize and name this research's limitations. Firstly, this thesis did not include voices from sources such as migrant communities or migrants themselves, but rather engaged with the portrayal of these voices through a media lens. Additionally, the field of academia in itself implies a level of removal from the realities of these kinds of issues. The author is not a migrant and has never been portrayed and seen as a human being, one needs to be afraid of. Therefore, the author cannot fully comprehend and develop empathy about the damage these types of ideas and conceptions do to migrant communities and their members.

The issue of constructing fear and threat here raises some additional questions that should be explored in the future. Projections of the future in terms of human migration are pointing towards massive increases in the movements of people. Whether this be related to climate change or global economic integration, people will be moving across international boundaries more as time passes. The question then becomes one of how the modern state system, as it understands borders and sovereignty now, will adapt to this new trend. This thesis among other works in this field have explained that an increasingly securitized understanding of borders and people is not sustainable way of operating now, let alone for the future of global society. Additionally, even if the trends of the future pointed towards decreased mobility and migration, the fact still remains that a realist perspective and understanding of the state and borders is not sustainable and fuels the oftentimes inhumane treatment of human beings. This constant tension – the monitoring for a threat and then the state's mistreatment of people – remains unsustainable.

APPENDIX III – Sentiment Coding Reference Chart



This sentiment coding reference chart visualizes part of the thesis’ text data collection. It was based on an excerpt of local newspapers articles.

REFERENCES

- ACLU. (2014, March 4). *Third Circuit Appeals Court Rules That Immigration Detainers are Non-Binding Requests in Ground-Breaking Case*. <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/third-circuit-appeals-court-rules-immigration-detainers-are-non-binding-requests>
- ACLU. (2022). *Immigrants' Rights*. ACLU.
- Albuquerque Journal Editorial Board. (2014, November 8). Ignoring ICE Hold Requests Puts Communities at Risk. *Albuquerque Journal (NM)*, A6. New Mexico News.
- Amber Phillips. (2017, June 16). 'They're rapists.' President Trump's campaign launch speech two years later, annotated. *The Washington Post*.
- AVID. (2018, July). *Values*. AVID in the Chihuahuan Desert. <https://avid.chihuahuan.org/values/>
- BBC News. (2021, May 6). *US birth rate falls 4% to its lowest point ever*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-57003722>
- Bobrow-Strain, A., & Hernandez, A. (2019). *The death and life of Aida Hernandez: A border story* (First Edition). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Borunda, D. (2018, June 25). Protest at Tornillo Site Draws Celebrities—Several Hundred Show up to Rally Against Immigration Policies. *Las Cruces Sun-News (NM)*, A7. New Mexico News.
- Clarke, M. T. (2022). Machiavelli's Virtuous Princes: Rhetoric, Power, and the Politics of Ironic Historiography. *The Journal of Politics*, 84(1), 483–495. <https://doi.org/10.1086/715596>
- Cohn, T. H. (2016). *Global political economy: Theory and practice: International Student Edition* (7th New edition). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

- Correa-Cabrera, G. (2013). Security, Migration, and the Economy in the Texas-Tamaulipas Border Region: The “Real” Effects of Mexico’s Drug War: Correa-Cabrera / The “Real” Effects of Mexico’s Drug War. *Politics & Policy*, 41(1), 65–82.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12005>
- Díaz-Barriga, M., & Dorsey, M. E. (2020). *Fencing in democracy: Necrocitizenship and the US-Mexico border wall*. Duke University Press.
- Dobransky, S. (2015). The Tragic Script of Thucydides in Political Science. *Peace Review*, 27(2), 217–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2015.1037632>
- Edmonds-Poli, E., & Shirk, D. A. (2016). *Contemporary Mexican Politics* (Third edition). Rowman & Littlefield.
- F. K. Van Zandt. (1976). *Boundaries of the United States and the several States* (U.S. Geological Survey No. 909; Professional Paper, pp. 1–2). <https://pubs.usgs.gov/pp/0909/report.pdf>
Graphic https://faculty.weber.edu/kmackay/chronological_list_ofexpansion.htm
- Frédéric, G. (2019). *The border: A fetish object of political geography, fluctuating forms and effects*. Baripedia.
https://baripedia.org/wiki/The_border:_a_fetish_object_of_political_geography,_fluctuating_forms_and_effects
- Gerring, J. (2004). Qualitative Methods. *American Political Science Association*, 2(1), 1–40.
- Glaser, C. L. (1997). The Security Dilemma Revisited. *World Politics*, 50(1), 171–201.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100014763>
- Heywood, A. (2017). *Political ideologies: An introduction* (Sixth edition). Macmillan Education, Palgrave.
- Hobbes, T. (1588). *The Leviathan*. Penguin Books 1968.

- Honderich, T. (2005). *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780199264797.001.0001>
- Ibrahim, M. (2005). The Securitization of Migration: A Racial Discourse¹. *International Migration*, 43(5), 163–187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2005.00345.x>
- Jackson, M., & Grace, D. (2018). *Machiavelliana: The Living Machiavelli in Modern Mythologies*. BRILL. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004365513>
- Jackson, R. H., Møller, J., & Sørensen, G. (2019). *Introduction to international relations: Theories and approaches* (Seventh edition). Oxford University Press.
- Jeanne Batalova. (2020, May 14). *Immigrant Health-Care Workers in the United States* [Migration Information Source]. Migration Policy Institute.
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigrant-health-care-workers-united-states-2018>
- Johnson, C., Jones, R., Paasi, A., Amoore, L., Mountz, A., Salter, M., & Rumford, C. (2011). Interventions on rethinking ‘the border’ in border studies. *Political Geography*, 30(2), 61–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.01.002>
- Kaplan, E. (2018, August 28). ‘Justice for Roxsana’—Protesters Block Courthouse Over Death of Transgender Immigrant. *Albuquerque Journal (NM)*, A7. New Mexico News.
- Light, M. T., He, J., & Robey, J. P. (2020). Comparing crime rates between undocumented immigrants, legal immigrants, and native-born US citizens in Texas. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(51), 32340–32347.
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2014704117>
- Love, N. S. (Ed.). (2011). *Dogmas and dreams: A reader in modern political ideologies* (4th ed). CQ Press.

- Morgenthau, H. J., Thompson, K. W., & Clinton, W. D. (2006). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace* (7th ed). McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Navari, C. (2018). Liberalisms. In *Security Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge.
- Ramm, C. (2010). THE MUSLIM MAKERS: How Germany ‘Islamizes’ Turkish Immigrants. *Interventions*, 12(2), 183–197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2010.489692>
- Rumford, C. (2006). Theorizing Borders. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2), 155–169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063330>
- Schelling, T. C. (2008). *Arms and influence*. Yale University Press.
- Schmitt, C. (2007). *The concept of the political* (Expanded ed). University of Chicago Press.
- Sherman, A., Trisi, D., Stone, C., Gonzalez, S., & Parrot, S. (2019, August 15). *Immigrants Contribute Greatly to U.S. Economy, Despite Administration’s “Public Charge” Rule Rationale*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/immigrants-contribute-greatly-to-us-economy-despite-administrations>
- Slack, J. (2019). *Deported to death: How drug violence is changing migration on the US-Mexico border*. University of California Press.
- Texas-Mexico Center. (2021). *Timeline*. Dedman College of Humanities & Sciences. <https://www.smu.edu/Dedman/Research/Institutes-and-Centers/Texas-Mexico/About/Timeline>
- The Department of Homeland Security. (2022). *About DHS*. <https://www.dhs.gov/about-dhs>
- Topak, Ö. E. (2014). The Biopolitical Border in Practice: Surveillance and Death at the Greece-Turkey Borderzones. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 32(5), 815–833. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d13031p>

- Trenchard, J., Gordon, T., & Hamowy, R. (1995). *Cato's letters, or, Essays on liberty, civil and religious, and other important subjects*. Liberty Fund.
- Triggs, G. (2013). *Australian Government's third country processing regime: What are the human rights implications?* Australian Human Rights Commission.
<https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/australian-governments-third-country-processing-regime-what-are-human-rights>
- Trump, D. (2019, March 15). *President Donald J. Trump Stands by His Declaration of a National Emergency on Our Southern Border* [Archives]. Trump White House Archives.
<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-stands-declaration-national-emergency-southern-border/>
- Urrea, L. A. (2004). *The devil's highway: A true story* (1st ed). Little, Brown.
- van Teun, D. (2013). CDA is NOT a method of critical discourse analysis. *EDISO Debate – Asociacion de Estudios Sobre Discurso y Sociedad*.
- Walt, S. M. (2005). THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY AND POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8(1), 23–48.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.7.012003.104904>
- Waltz, K. N. (2010). *Theory of international politics* (Reiss). Waveland Press.
- Wilkins, D. E., & Stark, H. K. (2018). *American Indian politics and the American political system* (Fourth edition). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Zavediuk, N. (2014). Kantian Hospitality. *Peace Review*, 26(2), 170–177.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2014.906881>