



**Rethinking the Threat:**  
*A Look into the History of U.S. Securitization of  
Immigration and the Path Toward Desecuritization*

**Patricia Berber**  
**Supervisor: Dr. Michael Williams**

Major Research Paper  
Graduate School of Public and International Affairs  
University of Ottawa  
2022

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

\*\*\*

*To my parents, who believed in me and supported me in all my pursuits and endeavours. You immigrated to Canada at a young age to provide a better life for your children. I cannot pay you back enough for your sacrifices and hard work, but I hope I've made you proud.*

*And to Christian, who pushed me when things got hard, who picked me up through bouts of self-doubt, who has shown me unconditional support, and who has been my absolute rock.*

## ABSTRACT

In recent years, Donald Trump has empowered racism and xenophobia to become more overt in the U.S., specifically toward immigrants of colour. His popular political slogan 'Build the Wall' has been an attempt to mask his and his supporters' racism against many minorities using claims of national security, though many have criticized this as being a larger symbolism of walling off America from supposed foreign threats. This study aims to display the history of the U.S. government's securitization of immigration to show patterns of racial discrimination against people of colour that has long preceded Trump and will long succeed him. Through a constructivist lens, this paper claims that the perception of immigrants and immigration as a threat is socially constructed and unnatural and by using a widened security analysis to analyze the alleged threats that immigration poses to the state, politics, economy, and society, this paper deduces that the U.S. immigration policies no longer reflect the realities of contemporary threats. This paper proposes that desecuritization of immigration will serve to benefit the U.S. and its citizens more in all security sectors as immigrants have made positive contributions to the country, and thus the U.S. government should urgently work toward developing its policies to reflect this.

**Keywords:** *Securitization, desecuritization, immigration, racism, xenophobia, American identity, and national security*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
❖ 1.1 Purpose.....	9
❖ 1.2 Structure.....	10
<b>CHAPTER 2: FRAMEWORKS.....</b>	<b>11</b>
❖ 2.1 Theoretical Framework.....	12
➤ <i>Constructivist Perspective on Immigration.....</i>	<i>12</i>
➤ <i>Understanding Immigration through Different Security Sectors.....</i>	<i>14</i>
❖ 2.2 Conceptual Framework.....	20
➤ <i>Securitization and National Security.....</i>	<i>20</i>
➤ <i>Immigrants and Immigration.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<b>CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>26</b>
❖ 3.1 History of Securitizing Immigration in the U.S.....	26
❖ 3.2 Racialization of Immigration and Immigrants in the U.S.....	32
❖ 3.3 Pre-9/11.....	38
❖ 3.4 Post-9/11.....	40
<b>CHAPTER 4: TOWARD DESECURITIZATION.....</b>	<b>44</b>
❖ 4.1 What Does it Mean to Desecuritize? .....	44
❖ 4.2 Desecuritizing Immigration.....	46
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION – WHY DESECURITIZE? .....</b>	<b>50</b>
❖ 5.1 Military Sector and Foreign Threats.....	51
❖ 5.2 Political Sector and Scapegoating.....	52
❖ 5.3 Economic Sector and Labour .....	53
❖ 5.4 Societal Sector and Integration.....	54
❖ 5.5 Final Thoughts.....	55
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>57</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1. Securitization Process.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Figure 2. Public Perceptions on the ‘American Identity’ .....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Figure 3. Immigration Eras and Patterns.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Figure 4. Increasing Support for Immigration in the U.S. ....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Figure 5. Core Domains of Integration.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Figure 6. Political Process of Securitization and Desecuritization.....</i>	<i>45</i>

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.” - Donald Trump*

Donald Trump said the above quote on June 16, 2015, when he announced that he would run for president of the United States (Hughey, 2017). What follows this initial remark are claims that U.S. immigration policies necessitated a wall to be built on the U.S.-Mexico border to keep out Mexican immigrants due to falsely perceiving and generalizing over 127 million people as criminals. As a result, ‘Build the Wall’ became a popular political slogan during the Trump era, usually shouted by crowds during Trump’s political rallies. In a Politico article, Andrew Selee, the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute president, claims that building a physical wall on the border was never the purpose because it was not about the wall. Instead, it was “always about a larger symbolism about walling off America from outside dangers” (Rodriguez, 2021). Of course, ‘danger’ in this case is relatively subjective and is highly dependent on one’s own biases and prejudices. Although Trump clearly claimed that people who are not U.S. citizens are the ‘danger’ that needs to be kept out of the U.S., racism and xenophobia do not necessarily stop at one’s obtainment of a U.S. citizenship. Trump’s rhetoric targeted Mexicans specifically; however, racism and xenophobia span more broadly and target any non-white (in phenotype and ethnicity) person and has long preceded the Trump era and continues today. Under Trump’s administration, zero-tolerance immigration policies became more prominent, including separating children from their parents and detaining individuals in crowded cages (Kiehne & Androff, 2021). With the U.S.

facing several issues beyond immigration, many of Trump's immigration policies remain in effect a year and a half into the Biden-Harris administration, though Biden did sign several immigration-related executive orders on his first day in office, which included halting the construction of the border wall (Kumar, 2021).

The broad criminalization of specific immigrant populations is largely unfounded even when considering the claims of illegality. In a Washington University in St. Louis article, sociology professors Ariela Schachter and René D. Flores conducted a study in 2018 that shows a large percentage of white Americans who participated in their experimental survey viewed many immigrants as 'illegal' until proven otherwise. Schachter noted that "there's a clear implication that the Trump administration's rhetoric on immigrant criminality is driving these beliefs, which...are not based in reality" (Everding, 2020). The incessant focus on 'illegal' immigrants, referring to those who are undocumented or overstay their visa—especially those who are coming from the southern border—is curious. For much of the nation's early history, undocumented immigration was not considered an issue and was a civil violation rather than a criminal one in which illegal persons were given a chance to gain legal status. However, in more recent history, illegality goes beyond this explicit definition and can fall under a political category as made evident by certain government policies that aimed to deepen the "division between illegal immigrants and their legal counterparts" (Jones-Correa & De Graauw, 2013, p. 186). As will be expanded on later in this paper, some immigration policies complicated the way legality is perceived. While incentives to migrate to the U.S. remained, the "policy changes did little to reduce net migration, [which] simply meant that most migrants were now considered 'illegal'" (Jones-Correa & De Graauw, 2013, p. 187). Furthermore, many laws have been enacted "that restricted immigration admissions, facilitated immigrant deportations, and restricted immigrants' access to

employment, housing, education, and social welfare programs,” thus further distinguishing their illegality (Jones-Correa & De Graauw, 2013, p. 187). As illegality became a political issue, debates around it overpowered and masked the underlying structural issues in immigration policies that continue today and target those without the appropriate documentation to build a life in the U.S. This has led to their unjust treatment and the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudices used against immigrants.

Unfortunately, the legality of one’s immigration status does not protect individuals in specific minority groups from harassment and unjust treatment. In 2018, Tianna Spears, an African-American U.S. citizen working as a Foreign Service Adjudicator with the U.S. State Department, who was stationed at the U.S. Consulate General in Mexico, was stopped at the border to El Paso, Texas for secondary inspection five times in less than a month. Despite passing extensive background and security checks to become a foreign service officer, obtaining a Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) card, and having a diplomatic passport, she was stopped more times than her white colleagues, who rarely, if ever, had issues with crossing the border with *their* official documents. During one of Spears’ vehicle searches, a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer took her car keys and SENTRI card and put them on the windshield of her car because he claimed that he did not want Spears to steal the car. After finally speaking up about the harassment she has continued to experience, a CBP supervisor assured her that the officer’s main concern was of ‘national security’ (Spears, 2020).

Fast forward to 2021, Haitian President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in his home in Port-au-Prince, and Haiti experienced a magnitude 7.2 earthquake. In September 2021, thousands of Haitian migrants came to the U.S.-Mexico border intending to cross the Rio Grande and find refuge in the U.S. During this mass exodus, U.S. border agents were pictured mounted on

horseback aggressively chasing off the migrants in the river to prevent them from crossing over to the U.S. One of the agents yelled at the migrants, saying, “You use your women? This is why your country is sh\*t, because you use your women for this.” As a response to the news of the mistreatment of the Haitian migrants, Daniel Foote, the U.S. special envoy to Haiti, resigned from his position to protest the Biden administration’s “inhumane, counterproductive decision to deport thousands of Haitian refugees.” He also added that “the U.S. policy approach to Haiti remains ‘deeply flawed’” (Duster, 2021).

The border agent’s remarks are similar to Trump’s generalization of an entire population of people based on a few, supposedly, bad examples, and having those few bad examples represent a country. The usage of ‘they’ and ‘you’ are interesting in these scenarios. Trump used ‘they’ when referencing all Mexicans, and the U.S. border agent used ‘you,’ not explicitly directed at the Haitian man he was harassing, but Haitians as a whole. The common denominator for these types of narratives and language usage seems to be that the people who are spewing them are stripping others, specifically people of colour, of their individuality and humanity. It could be that Trump has empowered racists and xenophobes to make their sentiments against immigrants of colour more overt despite being under a new administration, but as mentioned earlier, these sentiments have long preceded Trump and continues to succeed him—it has always been present in the U.S. and people are now becoming more aware of its ubiquity. Consider, for example, Biden’s approach to welcoming Ukrainian refugees in 2022 as they experience a crisis in their country, which has been positive and empathetic with claims of welcoming them with “open arms,” compared to how the Haitian refugees were treated (Barros and Vorozhko, 2022). Both refugee groups experienced crises and hardships in their home country that necessitated their need for immediate refuge and asylum, but both had polarizing experiences when they sought help from the U.S. This is not to

claim that Biden and his administration are necessarily racist, but that this example shows the inherent prejudices against immigrants who are people of colour that have always been present in the U.S.

These two scenarios displaying the mistreatment of coloured immigrants are just a few of many examples. Despite Tianna Spears being a legal immigrant, a U.S. citizen, and a U.S. foreign service officer, she was still treated as if she could be a criminal. Despite the Haitian migrants wanting to seek refuge from the political unrest and natural disasters in Haiti, border agents still treated them as criminals who were illegally migrating. While one can use illegality as an excuse to disfavour this example of the mass migration of Haitians, it cannot be used to excuse the mistreatment they experienced at the hands of the border agents, especially considering their possible reasons for wanting to immigrate. So, what exactly are the security risks that people in the U.S. are so afraid of regarding immigrants and immigration? Why do people selectively apply those risks to specific groups of immigrants? Finally, why do people continue to apply their fears to specific groups of immigrants that do not pose an actual threat, such as those who immigrated legally and do not possess a criminal record? By delving into these issues and perceptions of threat, the objective is to understand how the U.S. got to where it currently is regarding its policies and sentiments toward immigration and determine how to move toward desecuritization.

## **1.1 Purpose**

The central purpose of this paper will be to explore why and how the U.S. government and its citizens securitize immigration in ways that do not reflect the reality of contemporary threats. Mainly, it will look at the critical roles that racism, xenophobia, and islamophobia play in securitization and why they have no legitimate basis in guiding the policies of securitization

regarding immigration. Drawing on constructivism as the core theoretical foundation, which claims that threats are socially constructed, this paper will explore the notion of threat perception as one of the main drivers of securitizing immigrants and immigration in the U.S. Moreover, it will analyze the concept of security through the framework that Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde (1998) present in their book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Buzan et al. widen the security agenda to branch out of the typical security threats to the state and examine the nuances of threat perception within various other sectors of security and society. When people perceive immigrants as ‘dangerous,’ particularly non-white immigrants, whether a U.S. citizen or not, where is that fear coming from, who is perpetuating this fear, and how are people justifying their concerns? This paper will answer these questions by defining what security means through widening the security agenda to four sectors that Buzan et al. present: the military sector, the political sector, the economic sector, and the societal sector.

By exploring the types of perceived threats that influence the current securitization of immigration in the U.S., we can move away from the rhetoric and disposition of immigration being a threat to the state and gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of people’s concerns. More importantly, we will be able to determine whether those concerns are relevant and reflect the reality of the current situation. Ultimately, this paper aims to explore whether the concept of desecuritization is more applicable to how the U.S. should be approaching immigration and will offer a discussion from the perspectives of each security sector.

## 1.2 Structure

Chapter 2 will begin by presenting constructivism and threat perception as its main theoretical foundation and introduce Buzan et al.’s framework for security. Using Buzan et al.’s

framework, this paper will explore the types of perceived threats related to different security sectors. Next, it will provide a conceptual framework, which will define and explore securitization, immigrants, and immigration. Understanding these terms and how they support the current security narrative regarding immigration in the U.S. will be critical to exploring the concept of desecuritization. To begin the discussion, Chapter 3 will first delve into the history of securitization of immigration in the U.S., such as how immigration came to be securitized and the different perspectives on immigration. Then, it will examine the racialized history of immigration in the U.S. by looking at the concept of ‘obvious citizens,’ typically Anglo-Saxon, or more broadly, those who look ‘white’ and European. The background will conclude by presenting the drastic shift in attitudes and securitization toward immigration before and after the attacks on 9/11. By exploring the policies that were enacted under different presidents, including Johnson, Reagan, Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden, it will present how attitudes have shifted and how significant events affected the ways that different minorities became targeted, scapegoated, and discriminated against. Lastly, Chapters 4 and 5 will discuss desecuritization and will explain what it means to de-securitize and what it means to de-securitize immigration. It will also examine why we should de-securitize immigration by providing different reasons from each security perspective.

## **CHAPTER 2: FRAMEWORKS**

This chapter will introduce the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that will form the foundation of this paper. The theoretical framework will use the theory of constructivism to understand threat perception as being one of the main drivers of securitization. Then, this paper will outline Buzan et al.’s framework for security to widen the security agenda to four different

security sectors, including the military sector, the political sector, the economic sector, and the societal sector. The conceptual framework includes securitization, immigrants, and immigration. It is crucial to interpret the nuances of these terms because they are critically relevant to why immigrants and immigration are seen as threats and why securitization of immigration persists in the U.S.

## **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

### ***Constructivist Perspective on Immigration***

The fundamental claim of this paper is that the perception of immigrants and immigration as a threat is socially constructed and not natural. That is, immigration itself is not universally regarded as a threat. However, the U.S. perception of it being a threat is confined to how the U.S. perceives threats, specifically in relation to itself. According to Alexander Wendt (1994), constructivism is a structural theory that makes the following claims: “(1) states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory; (2) the key structures in the state system are intersubjective, rather than material; and (3) state identities and interests are... constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics” (p. 385). Wendt (1992) also outlines that a fundamental principle of constructivism is that “people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them” and that anarchy and the distribution of power are insufficient to tell us who is the enemy and who is a friend (p. 396-397). In the presence of racism, xenophobia, and islamophobia, the U.S. attaches a negative meaning to immigration, specifically to non-white immigrants, thus acting as if immigrants are a threat. However, these are largely based on worst-case assumptions. Wendt also claims that “decisions should be made on the basis of probabilities,” which are

produced by interactions with actors and by what actors actually do (1992, p. 404). Thus, the U.S. should not securitize immigration on the basis of ‘potential threats,’ but instead it should approach securitization of immigrants based on the probabilities of threats, which can be examined based on immigrants’ individual actions. Regarding Tianna Spears’ anecdote, considering that she was a thoroughly vetted U.S. foreign service officer, there was a low probability that she was a threat, so, the CBP officer should not have treated her as if she was one.

Moreover, we can consider immigration in relation to constructivism by examining how the perspectives on immigration were created and recreated through different interactions and how they have evolved (Zehfuss, 2002). At one point, immigrants and immigration were not perceived as threats, but then over time, through processes of interactions with the early U.S. white settlers, they began to be regarded as something to be threatened by. With the U.S. being founded on immigration, and providing asylum and refuge being considered a form of patriotism, when, why, and how did immigration suddenly become a threat (Lepore, 2019)? Didier Bigo (2002) asserts that migrants are framed as foreigners “who do not fit the ‘national standard’ of norms and values ... [and are thus perceived] as a danger to the homogeneity of [the people], the state, the society, and the polity” (p. 67). Hence, the U.S. began to perceive immigrants and immigration as threats when people who did not fit the homogeneity of white America immigrated to the U.S., thus destabilizing the community (in a political, economic, and societal sense), which then forms a collective understanding of structural unease that the propaganda of the far-right politics and the rise of racism, xenophobia, and islamophobia exacerbates (Bigo, 2002). It is also critical to note that much of the securitization of immigration is due to politicians, who have the power to uphold this securitization, fearing the loss of their control and power and thus portraying immigration as a threat to justify why the public should turn to them for their security (Bigo, 2002).

### *Understanding Immigration through Different Security Sectors*

Buzan et al. (1998) note that “security should not be thought of too easily as always a good thing” (p. 4). This paper investigates the negative implications of securitization within the security sectors that Buzan et al. outline in their security framework and their widened approach to security provides a more nuanced understanding of the securitization of immigration. While it is still important to acknowledge the military sector as a justifiable approach for threat examination, widening the security agenda to non-traditional security sectors, including political, economic, and societal, allows for a deeper analysis of threat perception. The purpose of this section of the chapter is to outline these sectors based on Buzan et al.’s perspectives to gain a better understanding of what these sectors are securitizing, who is the securitizing actor, and how they securitize it. This section will outline the foundational definitions of these sectors, then Chapters 3 and 4 will provide a more detailed analysis of how these security sectors approach immigration.

According to Buzan and Waever (2003), securitization is a speech act “through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (p. 491). A speech act, in this case, means that by simply uttering ‘security,’ something is being done (similar to when one makes a promise), and that by simply “labelling something a security issue that it becomes one” (Waever, 2004, p. 9). Traditionalists typically maintain a ‘narrow’ state-centered perspective on security issues and “equate security with military issues and the use of force,” while Buzan et al. (1998) present a new ‘widened’ perspective that considers other sectors of security (p. 1). Analyzing security as a speech act involves three types of units: *referent objects*, referring to things that are perceived to be existentially threatened, *securitizing actors*, referring to those who securitize issues and are the

ones who deem something to be existentially threatened (essentially, they are the ones who perform the security speech act), and *functional actors*, referring to those who have the power to influence the dynamics of a security sector (Buzan et al., 1998).

Waever (2004) outlines that in security discourse, “an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object,” which is traditionally the state (p. 9). Thus, Buzan et al. claim that security is “a ‘self-referential’ practice because it is in this practice that the issue

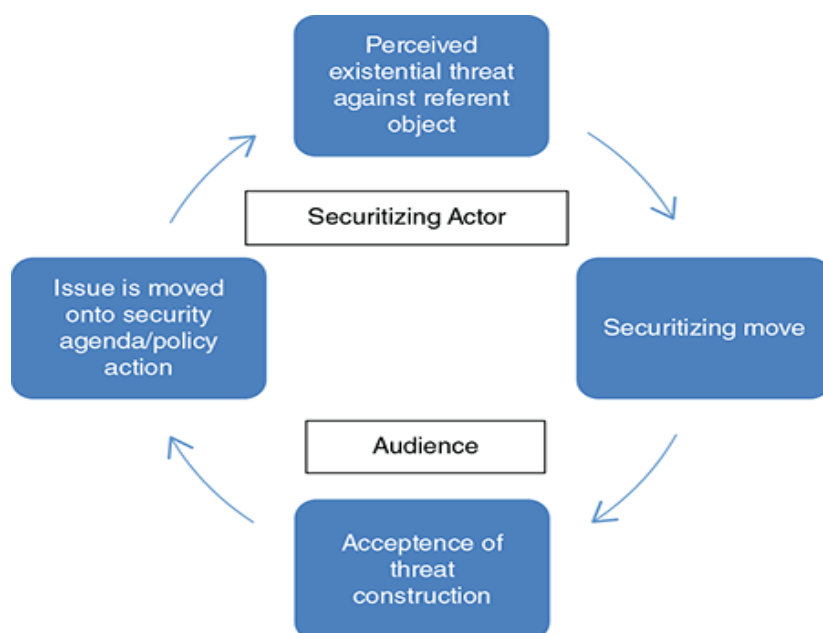


Figure 1. Securitization Process (Sjöstedt, 2017)

becomes a security issue—not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat” (1998, p. 24). Figure 1 displays the process of securitization starting with the securitizing actor (the U.S. government) perceiving an existential threat (immigration) against a referent object (the state, for example). The securitizing actor then makes a securitizing move (performing a speech act) on immigration, such as deeming immigrants from certain countries a concern for national security. The audience (functional actors) accepts the threat construction made by the securitizing actor, thus supporting the issue to be placed onto the security

agenda and justifying policy action against immigration (Sjöstedt, 2017). In all cases outlined below, the perceived existential threat is immigration, and the securitizing actor is the U.S. government as it is responsible for creating and implementing the laws regarding the legality of immigration status through immigration restrictions, while the referent objects differ within each security sector.

### **The Military Security Agenda.**

The military sector is the traditional security sector, which perceives security as being all about survival. Buzan et al. note that “contrary to the traditionalist position, not everything in the military sector is necessarily about security,” but rather, armed forces play a role that has more to do with political and economic relations than military relations (1998, p. 49). One of the perceived threats under this security sector is physical security of the state and its people. The state is the most important referent object in this sector but not the sole referent object. At the same time, the ruling elites, such as politicians and the government, are the most important securitizing actors, but not the sole securitizing actors. From the military perspective, threats in which military action is justifiable can materialize inward, such as the state’s domestic systems, and outward, such as the state in relation to the other members of the international system. For the purposes of this paper, it will not delve into interstate relations and the notion of a perpetual security dilemma regarding the proliferation of military technologies, but rather it will focus more on the maintenance of military security against the migration of people.

### **The Political Security Agenda.**

The political security sector is unique as it intersects with military and societal security, and ultimately, all security sectors can be political (Buzan et al., 1998). Regarding political security, Buzan (1991) claims the following:

Political threats are aimed at the organizational stability of the state. Their purpose may range from pressuring the government on a particular policy, through overthrowing the government, to fomenting secessionism, and disrupting the political fabric of the state so as to weaken it prior to military attack. The idea of the state, particularly its national identity and organizing ideology, and the institutions which express it are the normal target of political threats. Since the state is an essentially political entity, political threats may be as much feared as military ones. (p. 118)

With nationalism and political ideologies serving as the primary ideas that hold the state together, the influx of immigration threatens the stability of political order as immigrants bring with them their distinct cultures, ideologies, and sense of identities (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 150). Many recent immigrants who still identify with their ethnic background typically use a hyphenation when claiming their identity, such as Filipino-American. When every immigrant hyphenates using their respective ethnic backgrounds, it eventually dilutes the universal American identity (in reference specifically to the U.S., and not the rest of the Americas) that nativists are familiar with, and thus de-stabilizes the political order and threatens their sense of nationalism.

### **The Economic Security Agenda.**

The contemporary discourse surrounding the economic security sector is concerned about instability, such as the economic decline of the U.S., and inequality, such as “the role of the

state...[and the] disadvantaged economic position of most Third-World states” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 97). This sector outlines a varied agenda of specific issues, but for the purposes of this paper, it will focus on the domestic issue as it relates to immigration. Buzan et al. (1998) state the following:

[There are fears that the] global market would generate more losers than winners and would heighten existing inequalities (manifested internationally at the top of the range by U.S. fears of hegemonic decline, at the bottom by developing country fears of exploitation, debt crises, and marginalization, and domestically by fears of permanent unemployment and growing social polarization). (p. 98)

Buzan et al. note that “an existential economic threat depends on the referent object,” such as basic human needs: adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, and education (1998, p. 104). The rise of immigration in the U.S. creates domestic fears of permanent unemployment and growing social polarization, which is one of the reasons for its securitization. However, Buzan et al. claim that beyond the basic human needs, issues such as unemployment or welfare cannot legitimately be securitized in the economic sector (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 104). While systemic crises, such as threats to states and firms, can surely be classified as a major disruption to the economy and would consequently affect an individual’s access to basic needs, issues of unemployment due to a surplus in labour from a rise in immigration would not constitute an economic threat. However, the popular rhetoric and belief that immigrants ‘steal jobs’ from native-born U.S. citizens or that they hinder the economy, both of which are perceived threats under this security sector,<sup>1</sup> are greatly contested. In actuality, many immigrants are highly skilled compared to native-born people and many of those with less qualifications usually take on jobs that the native-born do not want to do (Hoban, 2017).

---

<sup>1</sup> In a Brookings article, Dany Bahar (2017) states that “while immigrants represent about 15 percent of the general U.S. workforce, they account for around a quarter of entrepreneurs and a quarter of inventors in the U.S.” (para. 3)

### **The Societal Security Agenda.**

The focus of the societal security sector is identity. Distinct from social security, which focuses on the individual, societal security is about a collective identity and ‘imagined communities’, such as that of the ‘American identity’ (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 120; Anderson, 1983). The American identity includes key elements like the English language, Christianity, religious commitment, and English concepts of the rule of law (Baur, 2004, p. 174)<sup>2</sup>. This is a socially constructed idea of how one perceives a collective ‘we’ and ‘us’, thus creating the threat of ‘them’ by association that encompasses all those who do not fit this construction of self. Migration is one of the most common perceived threats to societal security due to fears that the influx of immigrants into the country will dilute and change the established American identity.<sup>3</sup> The perception of immigration as a threat can then influence the state agenda through securitization via “legislation and border controls” (Buzan et al., p. 121-122). There is a multidimensionality to the American identity that many people do not acknowledge as they believe that the dimensions of their current identity are what should be accepted. For example, even by embodying what people perceive the American identity to be, one cannot fully be identical to another person as they may differ in political affiliation and opinion about whether the American identity is fixed or transient. Under this sector, people become concerned about the survival of culturally specific aspects of identity as immigration bolsters multiculturalism and inhibits the fixed and unified identity (Buzan et al., p. 130-131).

---

<sup>2</sup> See Figure 2 for public perceptions of the American identity, which closely aligns with the key elements that Baur outlines.

<sup>3</sup> As shown in Figure 2, we are already seeing in a decline of people considering Christianity as an important factor to be ‘truly American’.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

### *Securitization and National Security*

To begin unravelling how the U.S. can rethink their threat perception and move toward desecuritization of immigration, we must first understand what securitization means within the context of national security. To reiterate an aforementioned point, by simply uttering ‘security,’ the securitizing actor will make a securitizing move against an existential threat in order to protect the referent object that is being threatened (Buzan and Waever, 2003; Waever, 2004; Stritzel, 2007). The defining feature of securitization is therefore a specific security rhetoric which is marked by survival, priority of action, and urgency, a claim to a modus of exceptionality that is contained in the meaning of (national) security (Wæver, 2003, p. 10).

We often hear the term ‘national security,’ but what exactly does this term mean and how does it relate to securitization? Each state has its unique definition of national security because they all have different perceptions of what they perceive to be a ‘threat.’ In some cases, a state will claim that specific individuals or citizens pose threats, which this paper aims to elucidate concerning U.S. immigration policies (Krause and Williams, 2018). The relationship between national security and immigration presents two perspectives: immigration is a threat or that immigration is a humanitarian imperative. The National Immigration Forum, or simply the ‘Forum,’ launched an initiative called the ‘Council on National Security and Immigration,’ which argues that the “current immigration system [undermines] national security, and a more efficient and effective approach would improve both our immigration system and our national security” (Charles Koch Institute, 2021<sup>4</sup>). The Forum advocates for the value of immigrants and immigration, and through its recent initiative, it aims to “counteract the narrative that has started

---

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that the Charles Koch Institute is generally considered a highly conservative group and has “spent a fortune pushing the American government to the right” (Gage, 2019)

to dominate the right, [which is] an isolationist, nationalist picture of what the country needs to be” (Charles Koch Institute, 2021).

In an interview with Ali Noorani, the President and CEO of the Forum, and Elizabeth Neumann, a former Homeland Security official, they present an interesting and important point to consider regarding refugees seeking asylum in the U.S. According to Noorani and Neumann, the most vetted group of people that migrate to the U.S. are refugees. While the U.S. has a comprehensive and well-run vetting system, it can take a long time to process refugees, which keeps them displaced and in limbo for an extended period. Excessive periods of displacement create vulnerability factors, such as getting recruited into a gang or terrorist group, thus creating a national security problem for the U.S. This eventually creates a perpetual loop of securitizing immigration due to the U.S. perceiving immigrants as being a potential national security concern, and immigrants potentially becoming a national security concern due to securitization of immigration in the U.S., as exemplified by the excessive processing times of refugees (Charles Koch Institute, 2021). In order to break this cycle, the U.S. needs to rethink its securitization process for immigrants and refugees to counteract the vulnerability factors that arise during displacement.

### ***Immigrants and Immigration***

It is important to note that the term “immigrant” is socially constructed; this does not refer to the term itself, but rather what people think an immigrant is and the public perception of immigrants. In the most basic terms, an immigrant is a person who is “born in a country other than the one in which she or he is now residing” (Deaux, 2008, p. 929). The definition of an immigrant may seem unassuming, but the term’s nuances are worth exploring as they touch on why people

may have an issue with immigrants and immigration as a whole. In their work, Celicia Menjivar and Andrea Gomez Cervantes (2018) argue that contemporary, negative constructions of immigration and immigrants are not parallel to what immigrants do and who they are as people. Menjivar and Cervantes use Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theoretical approach of social construction, or the social construction of reality, to inform their argument.

Firstly, Berger and Luckmann argue that knowledge, such as our understanding of the world, “develops out of shared meanings, which are constructed through the interactions and communication that human beings have with others” (Menjivar and Cervantes, 2018, p. 320; Berger and Luckmann's, 1966). They mean that individual understandings of the world are not created in isolation, but rather they are constructed through interactions with other people. Thus, people's realities are subjective and prone to changes based on social influences, particularly modern media (Menjivar and Cervantes, 2018). The public and the media have negatively constructed immigrants and immigration, which becomes a problem when you consider how wide of a reach the media has. Despite some media outlets only being aired locally, platforms such as YouTube enable virtually any person with an internet connection to view news reports that use derogatory language when discussing immigrants and immigration from anywhere in the country, and even anywhere in the world. Thus, these common negative representations of immigrants and immigration become “[naturalized, and they] eventually form the cognitive frames that individuals use to make sense of immigration, but also to defend unjust laws and mistreatment against immigrants” (Menjivar and Abrego, 2012). It is worth noting that this mistreatment generally targets mostly non-white immigrants as racism has been an consistent undertone in many perceptions of immigration.

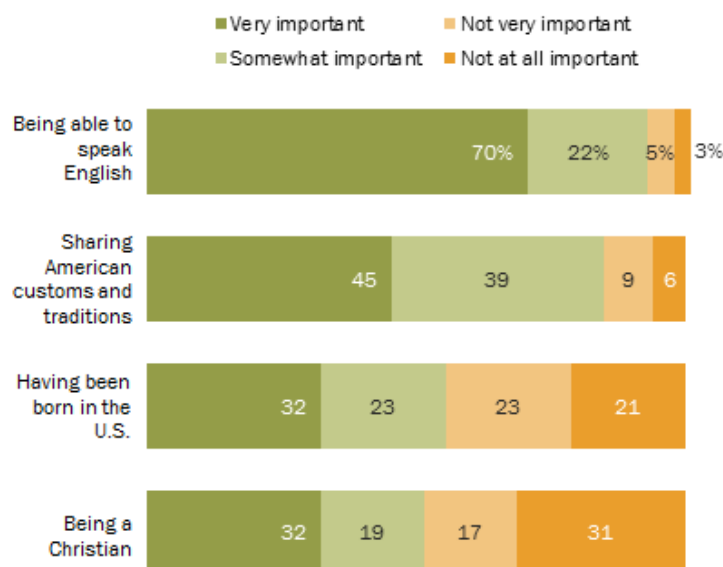
Moreover, the timeline in which one can be considered an immigrant is intriguing. Defining generational immigrants, such as first, 1.5, second, and third generations, will allow for a better understanding of the implications of this timeline. This will also illuminate why older generations (second and third) experience less discrimination and securitization because they would have been well integrated into the American society and would have adopted many of its core values and aspects of identity. The country from which an immigrant is originally from also affects how their generational status, and the generations after them, integrate with the host country's cultural and societal norms and how people will perceive them. First-generation immigrants are not universally defined, but they are commonly perceived as people who are "born and socialized in another country who immigrate as adults" (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1165). More broadly, it includes any person born in another country, regardless of age (Rumbaut, 2004). However, the U.S. government may define a first-generation immigrant as "the first member of a family to acquire citizenship or permanent resident status" (Moffett, 2021). Second-generation immigrants are considered people who are "naturally born in the relocated country to one or more parents born elsewhere" (Moffett, 2021). The 1.5 generation of immigrants are considered to be people who are foreign-born but relocate to another country at an early age, typically before their teenage years. Finally, third-generation immigrants are native-born and have native-born parents (Moffett, 2021). It is essential to distinguish between generations of immigrants because each generation integrates with their host country in different ways, with first and 1.5 generations typically having a more challenging time compared to second and third generations. The more an immigrant integrates into the host society, the more well-received they will be, which becomes a critical factor in people's general perception of immigrants and immigration. Those who have integrated well into the society and culture of the U.S., such as by obtaining fluency in English, will usually not be met with as many

racist remarks or discrimination. However, this does not mean they become fully exempt from experiencing racism.<sup>5</sup>

---

### U.S. public: To be 'truly American,' speak English and share customs and traditions

*Some people say that the following things are important for being truly American. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?*



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a-d.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---

Figure 2. Public Perceptions on the 'American Identity' (Stokes, 2020)

From a socio-political standpoint, with nationalism and political ideologies being the ideas that hold the state together and identity being the focus of societal security, the threat that immigrants and immigration pose is the dilution of the American national identity, which concerns the categories outlined in Figure 2. Many citizens, mainly white Americans, become concerned

---

<sup>5</sup> Figure 2 displays the public perceptions of what the 'American Identity' is supposed to be. Interestingly, majority of the public believes that the English language and upholding American customs and traditions are integral parts of being American, while opinions are split somewhat evenly regarding being U.S.-born and being a Christian. With the U.S. being a nation of immigrants, its 'customs and traditions' are just an amalgamation of cultures and traditions brought over from other countries. Thus, the majority of the public agreeing on the importance of this element of the American identity is curious, since every person will have a unique definition of what this may be.

that immigrants, particularly immigrants of colour, will overpower their sense of identity as a people and as a nation and thus threatening their ontological security referring to “the need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time...in order to realize a sense of agency” (Mitzen, 2006, p. 342). The categories outlined in Figure 2 are some traditional notions of the American identity, but as shown, less people are considering being native-born and being a Christian as an integral part of this identity, which speaks to the dilution that many Americans, particularly white Americans, fear. However, identity is not one single fixed idea, nor are the perceived threats against it, but rather it is “constituted in relation to difference...[and] is achieved through the inscription of boundaries which serve to demarcate an 'inside' from an 'outside,' a 'self' from an 'other,' a 'domestic' from a 'foreign’” (Campbell, 1992, p. 8).

Additionally, while the American national identity has been subject to constant rewriting, it does not do so to expand its ideas of identity in the name of inclusivity and multiculturalism, but rather it becomes more exclusive and serves to encompass only those who fit its ever-dwindling definition (such as that, its definition accepts a smaller demographic after each rewriting) (Campbell, 1992, p. 33). With an influx of immigrants bringing unique identities into the mix, the rewriting of American national identity (which is, in many ways, only inclusive of white Europeans and elite groups) only exacerbates the otherization of those who do not fit its traditional mold (refer to Figure 2). Samuel Huntington hypothesized that due to a clash of civilizations, the fundamental source of conflict in this world would be culture (Huntington, 1993). However, Mahbubani and Summers (2016) argue that rather than a ‘clash’ of civilizations, there has been a fusion of civilizations, which makes sense in the context of globalization and the influx of migration. Countless cultures and religions cohabit in the U.S., seemingly fusing together from a macro perspective. However, upon analyzing the situation from a microscopic lens, the influx of

immigrants coming into the U.S. presents more of a clash of cultures, as evident by the rise of far-right populism and American nationalism, which this paper will expand on further in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND

### 3.1 History of Securitizing Immigration in the U.S.

U.S. immigration policies shifted and transformed in various ways over time with people staggered on the spectrum of support for it. Many people who were in favour of immigration believed that it would strengthen the nation, while those against it feared that it “would compromise national security by causing domestic unrest and exposing the government to espionage and terrorism” (Totten, 2008, p. 38). As the U.S. was still on the verge of its westward expansion in the 19th century, early settlers thought that restricting immigration would harm their manifest destiny and their efforts to grow as a nation (Jagers et al., 2014). Since their early efforts to establish a nation, there have been multiple eras of U.S. immigration policy up until the 21st century that demonstrated the transient nature of immigration sentiments, which includes the *Open Door era*, *Regulation era*, *Restriction era*, and *Liberalization era*. Though immigration was welcomed in the name of nation-building, the nation that was being built was only for a specific demographic. Each era highlights the explicit processes of racialization as undertones in racist and xenophobic policymaking and there are other dimensions that also contribute to form the complex whole of immigration policy, such as sociopolitical and economic factors, all of which determined what ‘type’ of immigrants became securitized. By outlining the history of immigration, the aim is to display how early policies based on discrimination and racism set the precedent for the current

otherization of racialized immigrants. We must understand how we came to have the current immigration policies we have in order to determine how to move toward desecuritization.

Throughout the history of securitization of immigration, there have been many political and economic driven shifts in immigration policies. However, the factor that has remained constant is the supposed fixed American identity. The growing diversity of people, cultures, and traditions in the U.S. threatens nativists' ontological security, referring to the "need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time...in order to realize a sense of agency," because it disrupts the established routines amongst nativists and does not allow for cohesion and predictability across the myriad of people (Mitzen, 2006, p. 342-347; Giddens, 1991; Laing, 1969). This feeling of threat to one's identity is a main contributing factor to the racialization of immigration policies, as well as the role of functional actors, namely the U.S. citizens who wish to uphold the identity of a white America, in the continued otherization of non-white immigrants in the U.S.

During the Open Door era (1776-1881), legislators passed the Naturalization Act of 1790, which granted citizenship to "all white men of good moral character," while women were only granted citizenship through their husband or father. This era was seemingly accepting of immigrants, though its restrictions on what type of immigrant they would tolerate sets the early precedent on the current otherization of immigrants who were not considered 'white' (Jagers et al., 2014). Today, many people of colour often get asked the question "where are you from?" despite being born in the U.S., or their family having lived in the U.S. for generations. CNN interviewed many non-white Americans on their experiences of being asked this question and their responses varied from feeling that they were not American enough to feeling that they did not belong at all. Many people also maintain prejudices and preconceived ideas of people of colour, with one interviewee explaining that due to his brown skin tone, people assume that he is Muslim,

which he is not (Zdanowicz and Chiaramonte, 2017). There is an inherent assumption nowadays that only those who appear to have European ancestry are deemed ‘American’ and they typically have the privilege of being exempt from questions about where they come from, unless perhaps they have an accent in their speech that suggests otherwise.

Following the Naturalization Act of 1790, other immigration laws were enacted, such as the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, which included the Alien Act that allowed the president to deport any alien (foreign-born person) that compromised the safety of the U.S., and the Alien Enemies Act that allowed the president to deport any alien from a country at war with the U.S. (Jagers et al., 2014, p. 4). These new laws demonstrated the onset of immigration regulation by making it harder to become a U.S. citizen, such as expanding the citizenship residency requirements from 2 years to 14 years and requiring a process of naturalization for foreign-born immigrants (Jagers et al., 2014). By making it more difficult for certain immigrants to gain citizenship, the divide between groups of people in the U.S. is deepened, as citizenship is one of the foundational elements of integration for immigrants.

Restrictions on immigration to the U.S. were not racialized initially. In an effort to avert the influx of undesirable immigrants, such as impoverished Europeans, the 1819 Steerage Act (also known as the Manifest of Immigrants Act) placed limits on the number of passengers that ships can carry and required a written manifest of every person on board that included their country of origin (Sadowski-Smith, 2008). With the gradual increase of immigration from countries outside of Europe, other policies began to transpire that placed further restrictions on certain immigrants. As immigrants from China began to arrive during the Era of Regulation (1882-1916), tensions increased, which led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This was a restrictive immigration policy that prevented skilled and unskilled immigrant labourers from China from coming to the

U.S. for 10 years, which was later extended to indefinitely, and also prohibited all Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized (Jagers et al., 2014; Sadowski-Smith, 2008). Despite allowing Chinese immigrants who were already in the U.S. to stay, this meant that they were subject to the developing prejudices and racism, which made integration difficult, and thus their continued otherization allowed the white majority to perceive them as threats to be securitized.

At this time, nativist ideologies began to emerge and further intensified the otherization of immigrants. The notion of ‘us versus them’ became more prominent as the ‘American identity’ evolved and solidified (as per the categories in Figure 2). Samuel Huntington outlined that ‘Anglo-Protestant culture’ is deeply intertwined with the American identity and asserts that the question asking, ‘who are we?’ is directly connected to ‘who is not us?’ further arguing that national identity building requires the explicit need of enemies who then become the targets of securitization (Huntington, 1993; Baur, 2004, p.175). With people from diverse cultures who do not necessarily embody this ‘Anglo-Protestant culture’ contributing to the fluctuating ethnic and cultural make-up of the U.S. and with less people considering Christianity as an important factor for being ‘truly American,’ the Anglo-Protestant culture that once shaped the American identity is now in deep decline and the question of ‘who are we’ is shifting away from this traditional identity. Thus, the securitization of ‘who is not us’ is the attempt made by many white Protestant Americans and elite groups who want to uphold the once dominant Anglo-Protestant culture. It is important to note that while the U.S. also racialized some Europeans along with other ethnicities, Europeans “reaffirmed their common whiteness,” and were thus treated differently compared to other immigrants (people of colour) considering they were “never completely barred from admission” and their rights to become a citizen were “accorded even to those who may have arrived in the [U.S.] as improperly documented or unauthorized entrants” (Sadowski-Smith, 2008, p. 789). Recognizing the

exceptions that some European immigrants received during this time is critical in order to understand how the current connotation of the American identity is centered around whiteness and how people of colour have historically been excluded in one way or another. Despite this, the Dillingham Report, which studied the effects of immigration on U.S. society, concluded that the “mass migration of Europeans was damaging American culture and society,” therefore it had to be reduced (Jagers et al., 2014, p. 6). The burgeoning nativist ideologies and fears of immigration

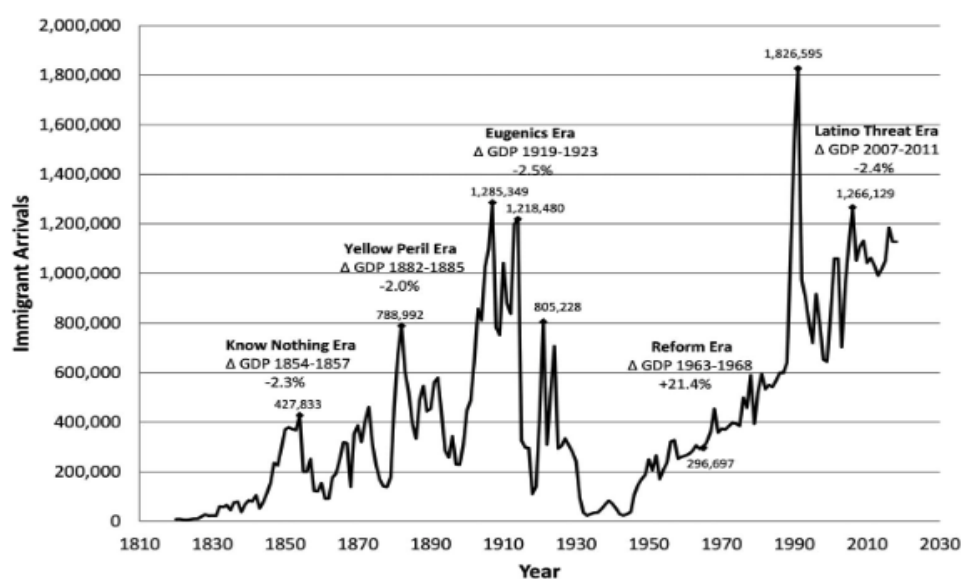


Figure 3. Immigration Eras and Patterns (Massey, 2020)

from Europe and China eventually led to the Naturalization Act of 1906, which required immigrants to learn English before they could be granted citizenship, thus further solidifying the American identity as English-speaking (Jagers et al., 2014).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Figure 3 displays the shifts in U.S. immigration since the 19th century and how economics and politics, in addition to racialization, are contributing factors to the securitization of immigration and of certain immigrants. Massey (2020) noted the following regarding how GDP affected xenophobic sentiments:

From 1963 to 1968, America's GDP per capita increased by a remarkable 21.4% in real terms, creating a context precisely opposite that associated with earlier episodes of xenophobia. With incomes steadily rising, inequality declining, and a small foreign-born population composed mostly of graying grandparents, Americans felt confident enough economically and socially to confront the nation's historical legacy of racial prejudice and discrimination. (p. 789)

The Era of Restriction (1917-1964) placed more immigration bans such as the Immigration Act of 1917, which banned illiterate persons over the age of 16 from immigrating to the U.S. and “gave cause for the implementation of a literacy test” as a means for entry (Jaggers et al., 2014, p. 6). This act also established the Asiatic-Barred Zone, which excluded immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands, including India, the Middle East, and the Philippines. However, political motivations shifted as the need to build global alliances in WWII grew. In the name of Allied Unity, under the Magnuson Act, Chinese migrants were given a ‘token quota’ in 1943, which allowed Chinese nationals to apply for citizenship and the U.S. accepted 105 new Chinese migrants to enter the country after being barred from entry for 20 years (Jaggers et al., 2014). Consequently, due to the shortage of labour that the war caused, economic-driven motivations shifted immigration policy once again and established the Bracero Program with Mexico in 1943 to help fill the labour vacancies in several economic sectors.

During this era, the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 “eliminated all racial and ethnic preferences in immigration, [and instead created] three classes of immigrants—the skilled immigrant or, related to a U.S. citizen, the average immigrant, and the refugee” (Jaggers et al., 2014, p. 7). Furthering on its political motivations and economic rationalism during the Cold War, the U.S. reconstructed its immigration policies to enforce ideals of democracy, freedom, and capitalism, thus denying entrance to Communist Party members and supporters (Silverstein, 2005; Jaggers et al., 2014). Seemingly, this era displays the declining restrictions on immigration policy. Nonetheless, accepting immigrants from countries that were once barred does not eliminate the inherent racist intentions that supported restrictive policies in the first place.

While the Era of Liberalization (1965-2000) saw radical changes to U.S. immigration policies, which this paper will outline in more detail in section 3.3, there were also significant

changes to the objective American identity as a whole as more people began to immigrate to the U.S. from various countries. The term ‘objective’ is worth highlighting as the traditional elements of the American identity that were previously noted remained the same, while the ethnic makeup of the country diversified. The objective diversity that the U.S. portrays itself to have was, and continues to be, inconsistent with what many nativists inherently believe America, or an American, is supposed to be—an ideology that was cultivated by early settlers and further enforced through early securitization of immigration that favoured white, English-speaking, Christian Europeans.

### **3.2 Racialization of Immigration and Immigrants in the U.S.**

More recently, obvious citizens began to encompass all those who appear to be ‘white’ of European descent, though they were not initially regarded as such and only became accepted as obvious citizens over time through the process of rewriting the American identity, as outlined in the previous sections (Campbell, 1992). The otherization of Europeans who did not initially fit the American identity was due to various historical events that contributed to the racial and cultural scapegoating of these people. For example, during WWI, Germans in the U.S. were the target of stigmatization and discrimination, and similar sentiments resurfaced during WWII against Italians with claims that their usage of their language was “a marker of potential disloyalty” during the war (Carnevale, 2003, p. 4). Italians were treated in a similar manner to Japanese-Americans as many of them were “arrested on suspicion of aiding the enemy and sent to an internment camp in Montana,” and many more were labeled as “enemy aliens” (Carnevale, 2003, p. 8). In acknowledging that some Europeans were targets of discrimination in parts of U.S. history, it is no longer the case in contemporary history as many of them, at first glance, are accepted as being ‘obvious citizens.’ This is not to say that many Europeans who maintain their ethnic identity do

not get discriminated against in some ways, but that their whiteness now provides them the privilege to avoid being targets of securitization.

The multidimensionality of race and ethnicity complicates the way that people accept and identify others, including their perceptions of threats, and thus affects the way that some immigrants become securitized. As U.S. immigration policies have historically been discriminatory against any non-European immigrant, as exemplified earlier through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and through many more recent restrictions, there has been no evolution in many of the white majority and elite groups' perceptions of the 'American identity,' which is not inclusive of those who do not appear to be white. These are the groups of people that may have the power to affect how immigrants become securitized, thus those who refuse to broaden their ideas of identity could hinder the process of desecuritization of immigration. While tolerance has increased through more progressive movements against racism and xenophobia and support for immigration has grown in recent decades (as shown in Figure 4), the undertones of systemic racism<sup>7</sup>, nativism, and otherization persist, even when unintentionally being discriminatory, racist, or xenophobic (as exemplified by the polarizing approach to accepting Ukrainian refugees compared to Haitian refugees). During the earlier eras of immigration, racism was more overt as the U.S. government explicitly securitized and restricted certain races of people from immigrating to the country. In more recent decades, specific races may not be explicitly targeted, except, for example, Trump's executive order to ban Muslims from specific countries during his presidency (CNN Politics, 2017). However, tolerance for immigrants does not equal acceptance of them.

---

<sup>7</sup> Systemic racism in the U.S. refers to how darker skin has historically been associated with inferiority. Even with higher tolerance of immigrants in the U.S. in recent years, many people of colour still experience and are disadvantaged by the racial inequities that are deeply intertwined within several systems and structures, such as "housing, healthcare, employment, education, and the criminal justice system." This makes it difficult for many immigrants of colour to fully integrate and be fully accepted under the American identity (Galiardi, 2021).

The aforementioned CNN interview that explored how people of colour feel about being asked where they are 'really from' is an example of how many people's racism and xenophobic prejudices are more covert nowadays, and also exemplifies that while people may tolerate immigrants of colour, they do not actually accept them as being 'Americans'. In many ways, this transformed how immigrants, more specifically people of colour, are securitized. Bigo (2002) poses the following questions in his article regarding European migrants, which also fits in the context of U.S. perceptions of immigration:

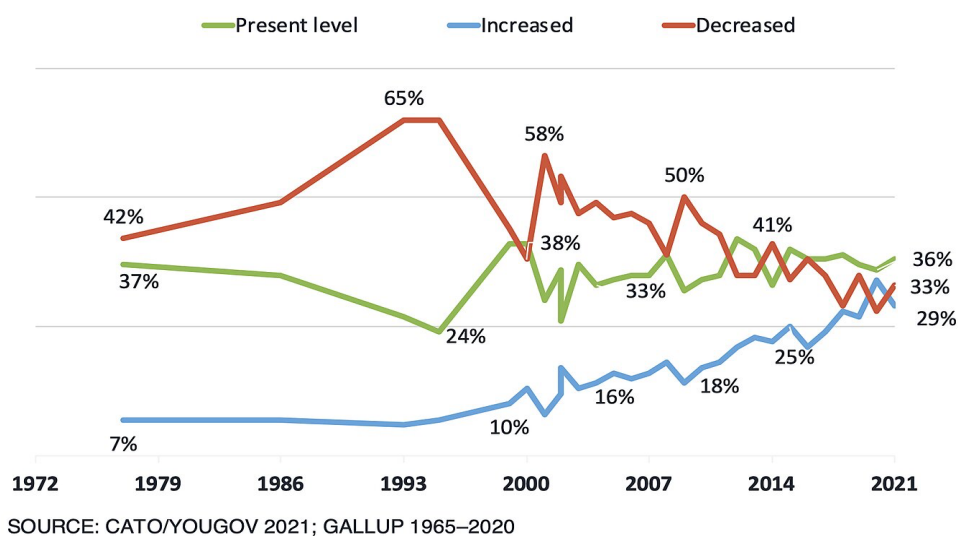
[The] articulation of migration as a security problem continues. Why? What are the reasons of this persistent framing of migration in relation to terrorism, crime, unemployment and religious zealotry, on the one hand, and to integration, interest of the migrant for the national economy development on the other, rather than in relation to new opportunities for European societies, for freedom of travel of the over the world, for cosmopolitanism, or for some new understanding of citizenship? (p. 64)

Similar to the sentiments around immigration in the U.S., Bigo outlines the duality in people's perceptions of immigration in Europe, rather than changing and evolving their perceptions entirely to have a new understanding of citizenship. This duality in perception is what transformed the way that people of colour became securitized. While many people are showing more support for immigration, the systems, and structures in place (within the political, economic, and societal sectors) have not caught up with the increasing diversity, which makes it difficult for many people of colour to fully embody their citizenship status and their sense of belonging in the U.S.

Moreover, Bigo claims that the securitization of immigration is “not only an effect of...the propaganda of the far-right political parties, the rise of racism, [or] a new and more efficient rhetoric convincing the population of a danger” but rather it is “anchored in the fears of politicians about losing their symbolic control over territorial boundaries” (2002, p. 65). With the U.S. government, namely the politicians who have the power to create and implement laws and policies, being the primary securitizing actor that makes the securitizing moves against immigration, understanding their fears of losing control and their desire to maintain their power explains why

### Support for more immigration has increased over the past several decades

*In your view, should immigration to the U.S. be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?*



*Figure 4. Increasing Support for Immigration in the U.S. (Ekins, 2021)*

immigration remains a perceived threat. As increasing diversity in the U.S. disrupts the established routines and sense of identity of nativists, it also creates structural unease, and thus politicians use securitization of immigration “as a mode of governmentality by diverse institutions to play with the unease, or to encourage it if it does not yet exist, so as to affirm [the government’s] role as providers of protection and security and to mask some of their failures” (Bigo, 2002, p. 65). The

securitization of immigration now goes beyond physical restrictions into the country and has evolved into prejudices that cause people to perceive certain immigrants of colour as threats, which maintains and upholds the practice of otherization.

While it may seem harmless to be curious about someone's ethnicity or cultural background, it presents several problems that only perpetuate the securitization of immigrants. First and foremost, only people of colour are interrogated about their ethnic background in an otherizing manner, unless of course someone who is white-passing has an accent that distinguishes them as not being from the U.S. The problem here is that white people, or phenotypically white-passing people, are usually just accepted as being a U.S. citizen (their sense of belonging is not questioned), even if they may not be, while people of colour who are U.S. citizens do not have the luxury of this reflexive acceptance, as exemplified by the question 'where are you really from?' Moreover, the otherization of people of colour through these covert methods perpetuates how the U.S. government and many U.S. citizens securitize them. In reference to how an immigrant's generational status determines how well they integrate into society and thus to what extent the white majority will tolerate them, no matter how well a person of colour, whose family has lived in the U.S. for generations with citizenship status, exemplifies the 'American identity' (for example, if they speak English well without a noticeable accent), they will still experience otherization. If, for example, a white-passing person stays in the U.S. illegally with an expired visa, many people would not be threatened by, nor would they question, their presence. This is due to the established ideas and prejudices of who is accepted as being 'American' or an 'obvious citizen'. Of course, a person of colour who illegally stays in the U.S. in the same manner is not excusable. However, it is the explicit difference in how people of colour are treated that upholds the systems of securitization of immigration and immigrants of colour.

During the Trump era, the rise of nationalism and far-right politics scapegoated and targeted many people of colour, and highlighted how racism, xenophobia, and islamophobia are still very active in the U.S. Figure 4 shows that around 2019-2021, there was a steep decrease in those who think that we should accept more immigrants and a steep increase in those who think that we should not accept more immigrants, which was likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With these stark changes in perspectives came more over-securitization of immigrants, both of U.S. citizens and of those who desire to immigrate to the U.S. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, it was understandably rational to restrict people from certain countries from entering the U.S. in an effort to control the spread of the virus. However, it does not excuse the overt racist rhetoric and targeted attacks against Asian people in the country. Trump referring to Covid-19 as the 'China Virus' gave many people in the U.S. an excuse to scapegoat Asian people as a whole (regardless of whether or not they are Chinese) and also fueled the attacks against them (Rogers et al., 2020). The pandemic allowed Trump to use the securitization of Asian people to affirm his role as the provider of security and protection as a political move to gain support from Americans and exploit their feelings of unease during this tumultuous time in history.

Another reason for securitizing immigration and immigrants are key events that cause shifts in sentiments of specific races and people, such as Germans being targets due to WWI, and, more recently, Asian people due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The key events that unquestionably exacerbated the securitization and racialization of immigration are the attacks on 9/11. Sentiments before and after 9/11 were drastic, which affected how the duality of sentiments toward immigration are exhibited and experienced today.

### 3.3 Pre-9/11

The attacks on 9/11 heavily influenced the over-securitization of immigration in the U.S. The next two sections will display the changes to securitization, threat perceptions, racial scapegoats and targets, and referent objects within the military, political, economic, and societal sectors pre-9/11 and post-9/11. The sectors are grouped together as they are all affected simultaneously through the radical changes to immigration policies. The following sections will outline how immigration policies shifted under each presidency, which also displays the trajectory that brought us to where we are today.

#### *The Johnson Era*

While there were specific events that affected immigration and the racial sentiments that targeted specific races and people, it was still relatively minimal compared to how sentiments shifted post-9/11. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that halted the federal quota system that “severely restricted the number of people from outside Western Europe eligible to settle in the [U.S.]” (U.S. House of Representatives, n.d.). With this law opening up the country to people from outside of Northwestern Europe, it naturally invited people to bring with them their distinct identities, ideologies, and cultures that are far off from that of the norm, and thus dramatically altered “the racial and ethnic makeup of the [U.S.]” (Fitzgerald & Cook-Martin, 2017; Chishti et al., 2017). As a result, this law inadvertently “laid the foundation for the steep rise in illegal immigration” (Chishti et al., 2017).

### *The Reagan Era*

Due to the rise of illegal immigration during Reagan's presidency, many politicians either supported amnesty for illegal immigrants or wanted to end illegal immigration, which led to the passing of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986. The main components of this act included "amnesty for illegal immigrants who had lived continuously in the country since January 1, 1982, and penalties for employers who willingly hired illegal immigrants" (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021). While this law placed some restrictions on illegal immigration, the U.S. was still relatively welcoming of immigration from across the world compared to prior racist and xenophobic laws and sentiments.

### *The Clinton Era*

Distinct from racism and xenophobia, Islamophobic sentiments emerged after the 1993 World Trade Center terrorist attacks due to radical Islamist ideologies. This influenced two bills that affected immigration policy significantly: the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996. Both bills increased penalties toward immigrants regardless of their legal status and made it more difficult for refugees seeking asylum in the U.S. During this time, those who supported increasing restrictions on immigration argued that "immigrants had negative economic effects, failed to assimilate culturally, used an abundance of welfare, and amplified the perceptions of lawlessness and social chaos along the border with Mexico caused by illegal immigration" (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021; Krogstad et al., 2021). This set the foundation for this type of rhetoric against immigration and immigrants, which are still used in the present day.

### 3.4 Post-9/11

#### *The Bush Era*

During the few decades prior to the attacks on 9/11, islamophobia was present but was only exacerbated after 2001, resulting in increasing anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments. The "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001" (USA Patriot Act) was passed as a direct response to 9/11, which "reduced the rights of immigrants by expanding deportation powers to suspected terrorists and allowed the attorney general to detain aliens without charge or recourse to due process" (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021). After enacting this law, threat perception increased and immigrants were seen as threats to national security across all security sectors, but more specifically the military sector due to 9/11 being a physical attack to the state (Sinnar, 2003; Niskanen, 2006).<sup>8</sup> However, some argue that the U.S. government "greatly overreacted to the terrorist threat to Americans" and "[created] a false sense of insecurity" (Niskanen, 2006, p. 352). While the Patriot Act deterred foreign threats, it simultaneously threatened domestic civil liberties. The implementation of strict airport search procedures by the Transportation Security Administration is one of the more significant changes to security that developed as a result of 9/11 (Niskanen, 2006). President Bush also passed other laws that increased the securitization of immigration, such as the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002 and the Secure Fence Act of 2006, which "reaffirmed the government's power to detain immigrants without trial, authorized about 850 miles of fencing along the southwest border, and expanded the size of the Border Patrol" (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021; Kanstroom, 2010). According to the Pew Research Center, illegal immigration

---

<sup>8</sup> After the attacks on 9/11, all sectors tried to gain back a sense of security and stability. From the perspective of the societal security sector, the naming of the "USA Patriot Act" tried to create a sense of collective identity amongst U.S. citizens, as if the attack on the state was an attack on all Americans.

reached 12.2 million by 2007 and was a critical issue during the 2008 presidential election (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021). As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, some immigration policies complicated the way legality was perceived because while incentives to migrate to the U.S. remained, the “policy changes did little to reduce net migration, [which] simply meant that most migrants were now considered ‘illegal’” (Jones-Correa and De Graauw, 2013, p. 187).

### *The Obama Era*

President Obama had contrasting immigration policies that targeted many Latin-American immigrants as they made up most of the immigrant population during this time, both legal and illegal. Although Obama was extremely harsh on illegal immigrants, removing (deporting) 1,242,486 illegal immigrants during his 8-year presidency and was dubbed ‘Deporter-in-Chief’, he also introduced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA) in 2012. DACA “offered temporary deferral of deportation for a renewable period of 2 years to eligible youth” but did not provide a path to U.S. citizenship (Mallet-Garcia and Garcia-Bedolla, 2021). As many DACA recipients consist of 1.5 generation immigrants,<sup>9</sup> it disrupts their notions of identity as many consider themselves to be ‘American’ despite not being a citizen. They are usually well integrated (see Figure 5<sup>10</sup>) into American culture and society and speak English fluently, so it would not make sense to deport them after years of integration. This barrier to citizenship that DACA recipients face perpetuates the lack of a ‘sense of belonging’ that many immigrants experience as well as notions of ‘illegality,’ which makes it more difficult to fully integrate, thus

---

<sup>9</sup> 1.5 generation immigrants consist of youth who immigrate to another country at a young age. With this status, many 1.5 generation immigrants no longer have a connection to their country of birth and are, by many respects, ‘American’, thus making it difficult for those who are deported under DACA.

<sup>10</sup> Ager and Strang (2008) display the core domains of integration. After years of living in the U.S. many DACA recipients have already achieved and maintain many of these domains, except for rights and citizenship.

creating obstacles to developing a more unified American identity, and further fuels more nationalist sentiments.

### *The Trump Era*

Trump's racist, xenophobic, and Islamophobic sentiments created a much more divisive and nationalist environment in the U.S. that bolstered the 'us versus them'<sup>11</sup> rhetoric amongst many white natives and even some citizens of colour. During his presidency, immigration and immigrants had no place in his ideas of a 'great America' and were threats to all security sectors:

- *Military*: Trump and his supporters consider many immigrants to be criminals,<sup>12</sup> specifically targeting those coming from the Southern border, and proposed building a wall across the U.S.-Mexico border in addition to increasing border patrol (USA Today, 2017). He also barred many people from Muslim-dominant countries from entering the U.S. claiming issues of national security (CNN Politics, 2017).
- *Political*: Patrick Carlineo, a supporter of Trump, threatened to kill Ilhan Omar, a congresswoman, and claimed "that he was a patriot, that he loves the president, and that he hates radical Muslims in our government" (Swaine & Adolphe, 2019).
- *Economic*: Another one of Trump's justifications for building the wall across the U.S.-Mexico border is claiming that immigrants are taking jobs away from Americans (Hoban, 2017).

---

<sup>11</sup> According to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the process of 'othering' or using the 'us versus them' narrative includes "categorizing a group of people according to perceived differences, such as ethnicity, skin colour, religion, gender, or sexual orientation," and "identifying that group as inferior" (Curle, 2022). In Trump's case, his overt otherization of immigrants of colour fueled many of the covert perceptions that the far-right had about immigrants, eventually leading to the overt polarization of left-leaning and right-leaning politics that we see today.

<sup>12</sup> Trump said the following quote: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people" (Hughey, 2017).

- *Societal*: In a 2016 study that was conducted shortly before the election, researchers found that if “people who strongly identified as white were told that non-white groups will outnumber white people in 2042, they became more likely to support Trump,” which demonstrates that Trump’s policies, rhetoric, and overall views of a ‘great America’ benefit and centers on whiteness, thus perpetuating the us (white people) vs. them (everyone else) narrative (Lopez, 2016; Major et al., 2018).

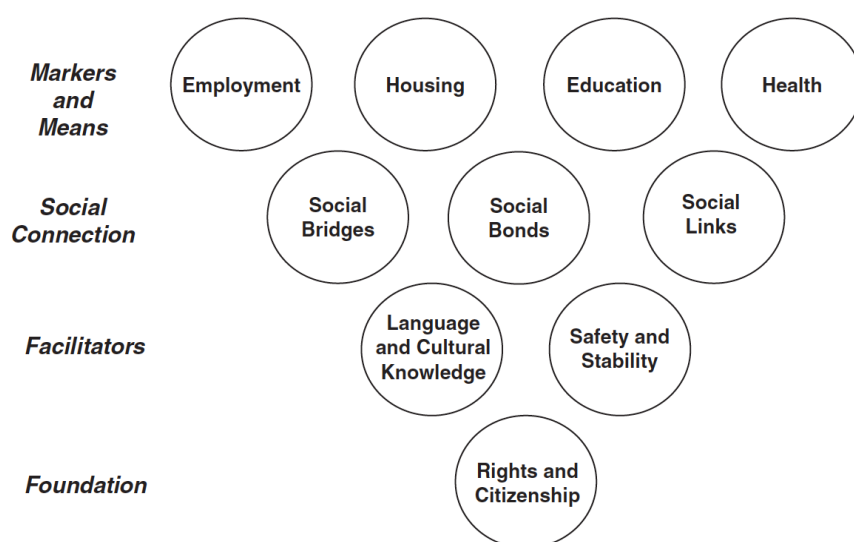


Figure 5. Core Domains of Integration (Ager & Strang, 2008)

The anti-immigration sentiments during Trump’s presidency invited the rising threat of domestic terrorism that targeted many immigrants, people of colour, and those who did not fit the traditional identity of ‘white America’ that Trump was attempting to manifest. His focus on foreign terrorism and foreign threats to the U.S. economy, society, and identity distracted many people from the domestic threats at the hands of U.S. citizens, particularly white nationalists. In order to reconfigure how we perceive threats (regarding immigration, illegality, identity, job insecurity, and etcetera), immigration policy under the Biden administration needs to actively implement desecuritization within all security sectors.

## CHAPTER 4: TOWARD DESECURITIZATION

Understandably, maintaining security is critical and desecuritization does not equate to abandoning all forms of security altogether. People want to have a sense of security and feel that they are not always facing imminent threats whether physically, ontologically, economically, and more. However, one's perception of security should not equate to the insecurity of another, and it is especially dangerous when specific perceptions have been ingrained into societal systems for hundreds of years. In order to keep up with the effects of globalization, address more domestic security concerns, and revise the meaning of citizenship, the U.S. government needs to rethink its threat perceptions as the main securitizing actor and work toward desecuritization of immigration.

### 4.1 What Does it Mean to Desecuritize?

The concept of desecuritization was coined by Ole Waever and the Copenhagen School, which focuses on “the attractions and dangers of moving 'out of security'... [and] refers to the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere,” and thus should be first implemented politically (Waever, 1995; Hansen, 2012, p. 526; Aradau, 2004). Desecuritization centers in the “unmaking rather than the making of security problems” in that something that is securitized can also be desecuritized at some point (Waever, 1995; Huysmans, 2006). According to Waever (1995):

Viewing the security debate at present, one often gets the impression of the object playing around with the subjects, the field toying with the researchers. The problematique itself locks people into talking in terms of "security," and this reinforces the hold of security on our thinking, even if our approach is a critical one. We do not find much work aimed at *de-*

*securitizing* politics which, I suspect, would be *more effective* than securitizing problems.  
(p. 57)

Securitization can be an ineffective approach to policy as many policies require long-term considerations, which Buzan et al. (1998) argue in favor of desecuritization as “the long-range political goal” (p. 210). States should not desire to keep something securitized permanently as this technique does not make room for the ever-growing nature of society and nation-building. Regarding the U.S. perception of threat concerning national security within all security sectors, in the same sense that “security should not be thought of too easily as always a good thing,” the U.S. government should not idealize national security as it “works to silence opposition and has given power holders many opportunities to exploit ‘threats’ for domestic purposes, to claim a right to handle something with less democratic control and constraint” (Buzan et al., 1998).

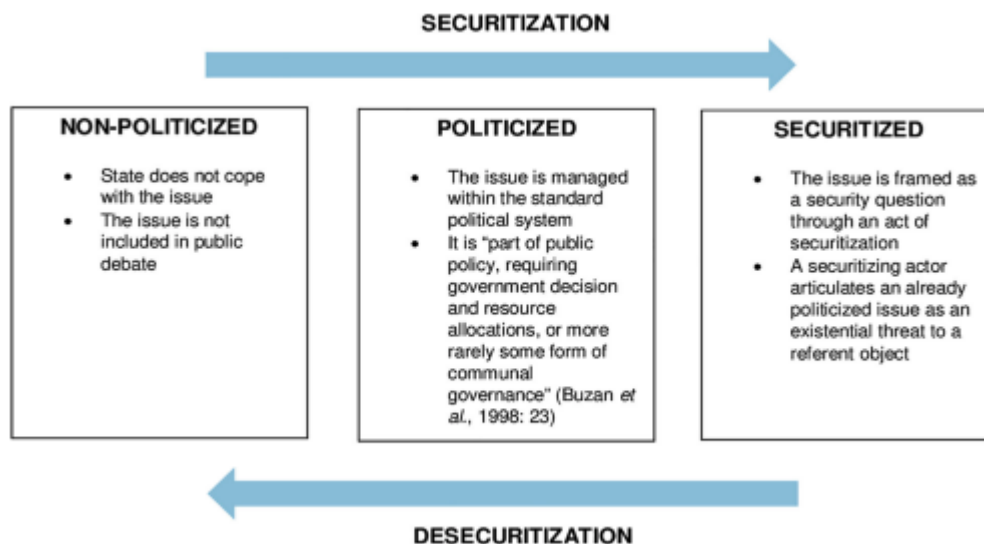


Figure 6. Political Process of Securitization and Desecuritization (Secen, 2021)

Figure 6 displays the political process of securitization and desecuritization. The goal of desecuritization of immigration is to remove it from political discourse and discontinue the threat perceptions related to it. By normalizing immigration as an integral element of modern nation-

building, the issue should no longer be debated or controversial among public discourse (Huysmans, 1998).

It is critical to note that regular people (the audience) can be facilitators of securitization and “it is made easier if one can point to matters associated with threats, but the ultimate locus of securityness is social rather than technical, and it is between a securitizing actor and its audience in reference to something they value” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 40). Thus, desecuritization relies on the audience of regular citizens just as much as those in power because the process does not solely involve policies and laws, but also public discourse and sentiments regarding the issue within social communities.

## **4.2 Desecuritizing Immigration**

Huysmans (2006) defines desecuritization of immigration as “a critical strategy that tries to re-locate the question of migration to a context of ethico-political judgement in which one does not seek to found the political on the basis of existential insecurity...[and re-frames] security questions by applying understandings that are less prone to instituting the political relations between people and the governance of these relations on the basis of existential dangers” (p. 127). Hence, desecuritization allows for the discussion of security questions in relation to immigration without exhibiting immigrants as “existential dangers” (Huysmans, 2006, p. 127). Immigration becomes a policy issue when an increasing number of immigrants “trigger challenges to economic, social, or political objectives” (Huysmans, 2006, p. 107). It is difficult to place immigrants within the context of the host society they live in because “they do not fully belong to [its] political community ... and they do not live in the national community to which they should fully belong,” thus they fall into somewhat of a liminal threshold as exemplified through their hyphenated

identities (such as Filipino-American) (Huysmans, 2006, p. 108). Despite being a part of and contributing to shaping the social fabric of U.S. society and community (as every immigrant has done and continues to do since the first settler immigrants came to what is now the U.S.), the only reason for their existential displacement is due to their supposed late arrival to the U.S. after early white settlers have already begun solidifying the American identity to suit their ideals. This is why many second and third-generation immigrants integrates into U.S. society much more smoothly and are more likely to be accepted by the majority than their first and 1.5-generation relatives. Thus, a crucial element of desecuritizing immigration in the U.S. is understanding that immigrants will continue to shape the communities, traditions, and cultures, just as their predecessors have done throughout history. To reshape the political identities of immigrants, desecuritization needs to be established through political processes and encouraging each security sector to rethink its perception of immigrants as threats to their respective referent objects, including the state, the economy, and identity.

Since Biden took the presidential office, there has been a massive shift in the discourse surrounding immigration and immigrants compared to Trump's presidency, which implies the possibility of achieving desecuritization of immigration through undergoing political processes. Under Trump's administration, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) updated its mission statement<sup>13</sup> to remove the phrase "nation of immigrants" and replaced it with a new statement that emphasizes "safeguarding its integrity and securing the homeland" (Acosta and

---

<sup>13</sup> The former mission statement under Obama states the following: "USCIS secures America's promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system." However, under Trump, it was updated to state the following: "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services administers the nation's lawful immigration system, safeguarding its integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits while protecting Americans, securing the homeland, and honoring our values" (Acosta and Tatum, 2018).

Tatum, 2018). The American Immigration Lawyers Association referred to this in a press release as the Trump administration's way of "[diminishing] the valuable contributions that immigrants have made to our nation and our local communities," ultimately displaying and upholding the intrinsic and systemic racism and xenophobia within the U.S., as outlined in Chapter 3 (Tzamaras and Woods, 2018). In an article by Elie Mystal in *The Nation*, he recounts when Trump held a naturalization ceremony for five brown people at the White House and broadcasted it to the Republican National Convention. He mentions that the five people were "reduced to smiling, non-speaking props in Trump's reelection campaign," they were not even notified that they would be filmed for a campaign stunt, and that Trump did not even bother to learn how to pronounce their names correctly. Mystal asserts that "tokenism doesn't get more blatant than finding five new Americans to smile for you while you suppress the votes of thousands just like them" (Mystal, 2020). By denying that the U.S. was built by immigrants, Trump's administration tried to espouse the notion of 'obvious citizens,' albeit indirectly, and strategically by tokenizing some of his non-white supporters to obscure his advocacy for a 'white America,' and maintain the securitization of immigration, both politically and socially, by positioning immigrants as something that the U.S. should 'safeguard' and 'secure' itself from (Mystal, 2020; Sands, 2022).

Now, a year into Biden's presidency, USCIS changed its mission statement again to "USCIS upholds America's promise as a nation of welcome and possibility with fairness, integrity, and respect for all we serve" (Sands, 2022). With the U.S. government being the main securitizing actor, the usage of the words "welcoming" and "respect" in the new statement, in addition to the Biden administration's motion to end the usage of the term "illegal alien" in public documents and speeches, is going to set the precedent in how immigration and immigrants will be perceived in the next few years (Sands, 2022). Trump allowed covert racism and xenophobia to become more

apparent within public discourse, ultimately giving U.S. citizens who harboured these sentiments indirect permission to act on them verbally and sometimes even physically. Now, Biden is setting a new precedent that aims to be more intolerant of racism and xenophobia, and more accepting of immigrants and immigration.

With that said, the socio-political tone in the U.S. drastically shifted to a slightly more promising one for immigrants, though maintaining this tone will depend on whether Biden delivers on his commitments to create a more welcoming America (American Immigration Council, 2021a; Flores, 2021). In addition to positively changing the public discourse around immigrants and immigration, Biden should earnestly work toward immigration reform and desecuritize U.S. immigration policies. Huysmans (2006) mentions the following regarding desecuritization and immigration in the European Union, which would also apply within the context of the U.S.:

Applied to the area of migration and asylum, de-securitization then becomes a question of whether security policy is an effective way of managing an influx of immigrants and refugees. For example, if the policy objective is to reduce illegal immigration would restricting immigration by increasing policing of borders and making it more difficult for outsiders to obtain a visa be an effective policy option? Or, would it lead to an increase of illegal immigration because it becomes more difficult for immigrants to legally enter the European Union? (p. 126)

Indeed, it would be counterproductive to increase immigration enforcement and create high barriers to obtain a visa if the state's goal is to reduce illegal immigration as this would most likely increase illegal immigration. According to the Migration Policy Institute, the 2020 budget for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency (CBP) increased 176% since 2005 (from \$6.3 billion to \$17.4 billion), while the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) increased

171% (from \$3.1 billion to \$8.4 billion) (Chishti and Bolter, 2020). Conversely, USCIS, the agency that adjudicates green cards and applications for naturalization and asylum, has been required by Congress to be largely self-funded since 1988 through application fees and has been given a budget of only \$132 *million* as of 2020 (compare this to the *billions* allocated to other agencies that perpetuate the securitization of immigration) (Chishti and Bolter, 2020). Underfunding the USCIS means processing refugees and immigrants will be delayed, which keeps them displaced and in limbo for an extended period. As previously mentioned, excessive periods of displacement create vulnerability factors, such as getting recruited into a gang or terrorist group, thus creating a national security problem for the U.S. and is antithetical to its interests and priorities (Charles Koch Institute, 2021). Through desecuritization of immigration, it would be more productive to fund the agencies that process legal immigration and ensure that immigrants are not kept waiting long periods for their applications to be processed.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION – WHY DESECURITIZE?**

This paper outlined the history of securitization of immigration in the U.S., which described the events and policies that set the precedent for how we got to where we are in the present day. As previously stated, securitization of immigration is ineffective and can be counterproductive to the interests and priorities of the U.S. Moreover, the U.S. continues to securitize immigration in ways that do not reflect the reality of contemporary threats. We can consider the following arguments within the military, political, economic, and societal sectors regarding why the U.S. government should actively work toward desecuritization of immigration.

## 5.1 Military Sector and Foreign Threats

The U.S. is no longer facing the same threats that it was facing during the height of securitization of immigration post-9/11. The implementation of the USA Patriot Act to deter foreign threats to the state (specifically after 9/11) was, in many cases, successful in its purpose. However, the U.S. government should now take far-right domestic threats more seriously and should no longer consider immigrants an existential threat to the state. It is interesting that while attacks to the state and “American values” from a person of colour is considered terrorism, this same sentiment usually does not apply to a white person committing a violent attack despite similar or more casualties. For example, in 2015, Trump called for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” after the San Bernardino attacks by Muslim extremists who killed 14 people, and even called for surveillance of mosques (Lind, 2015). In 2017, Trump officially signed an executive order that restricted people from several Muslim-majority countries entry into the U.S. Despite the horrendous event in San Bernardino, the framing of Muslims as uniquely problematic to the point of generalizing Muslim-majority countries is unfair and Islamophobic. According to data from Statista, majority of the mass shootings that occurred in the U.S. between 1982-2021 were committed by a person with a white ethnic background (66 incidents) and is quite a significant difference in numbers compared to the second highest number of incidents by those whose race is Black (21 incidents) (Statista Research Department, 2022). However, white people have never been criminalized as a whole and are not labeled as possible terrorists to the state in the same way that people of colour are. The ongoing rhetoric regarding foreign threats to the state, especially through representations in Hollywood films that typically present Arab and Muslim characters as terrorists, is unwarranted and unjust for those who do not associate with radicalized extremism. Despite Biden reversing the Muslim ban early in his

presidency, the damage that the ban inflicted on Muslim and Arab immigrants (current and future) lingered. The fact remains that Islamophobia in the U.S. is deeply ingrained into people's perception of Muslims and Arabs and that for those applying for immigration, U.S. embassies have a "culture of looking with suspicion at applicants from previously banned countries...[which is] very difficult to reverse" (Abdalla, 2022). The insurrection on January 6, 2021 when white supremacists stormed the Capitol is a prime example of the domestic terrorism that the U.S. government should be focusing on, but was instead labeled as "patriotism" by many of those in power (Zerkel, 2021). While people continue to focus on the foreign threats that were once a serious issue in the U.S., many of the contemporary threats that are on the rise are overlooked.

## **5.2 Political Sector and Scapegoating**

The rhetoric that political campaigns use in relation to immigrants and immigration is dangerous as it encourages the covert racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia that many people in the U.S. harbour. The most recent example is Trump using China (and as an extension, Asian immigrants as a whole) as a scapegoat for the Covid-19 pandemic by calling it the "China virus." During the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, hate crimes and attacks on Asian-Americans grew exponentially. According to data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), anti-Asian hate crimes increased more than 73% in 2020, totalling 279 incidents against Asians compared to 161 incidents in 2019. The data also reported that white people accounted for more than 55% of the offenders against Asian-Americans (Venkatraman, 2021). In order to ease the fears of the white majority concerning the pandemic, politicians found it easy to use Asian immigrants as a scapegoat, thereby maintaining their political power and legitimacy through winning the votes of those who are satisfied with having someone to blame.

Similar to the umbrella of blame placed on Muslims due to the attacks in San Bernardino, generalizing the blame on Asians (especially since, during that time, the virus was only first reported in China, but the real origin remained unknown) is unjust and baseless. Moreover, we can consider the ban placed on southern African countries during the height of the Omicron variant as another form of politically scapegoating people of colour. Matshidiso Moeti, the director of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Africa, states that “with the Omicron variant now detected in several regions of the world, putting in place travel bans that target Africa attacks global solidarity” (BBC News, 2021). It is understandable to want to securitize travel to actively control the spread of Covid-19, but to restrict only specific countries like Africa but not placing the same level of security on countries in Europe, where Omicron was also detected around the same time, displays the inherent biases that the U.S. government has against people of colour. Domestically, this level of political scapegoating makes many people of colour vulnerable to physical threats. Internationally, it can damage bilateral relations with other countries during a time when solidarity is urgently required.

### **5.3 Economic Sector and Labour**

Trump exacerbated many of the myths surrounding immigrants and labour, claiming that immigrants illegally steal jobs from U.S. workers and are highly dependent on government aid (Boak, 2019). These myths persevere in the U.S. despite many researchers debunking several claims against immigrants. The Pew Research Center claims that both legal and undocumented immigrants mostly fill jobs that U.S. citizens do not want, hence many of Trump’s claims are unfounded and contribute to the negative discourse concerning immigration (Krogstad et al., 2020). Additionally, the labour shortages during the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the flaws in

U.S. immigration policies as immigrants play a critical role in “alleviating shortages in healthcare,” but are sometimes barred from working in their respective fields (Liebert, 2021). Many immigrants who are medically trained professionals end up working low-wage and low-skill jobs upon immigrating to the U.S. While the barriers of entry for foreign-trained medical professionals are high in terms of the process of being able to practice their profession in the U.S., social and cultural capital, in addition to discrimination, also pose as significant barriers. The U.S. should be more proactive in investing in training qualified immigrant professionals to develop their social and cultural skills that will grant them the opportunity to better contribute to the economy (Liebert, 2021). As the top immigrant-destination country in the world, the U.S. can greatly benefit from desecuritizing immigration in the economic sector by creating policies that will focus more on effective integration of skills and appropriate training to take advantage of the human capital that many immigrants offer.

#### **5.4 Societal Sector and Integration**

Lastly, the ongoing securitization of immigration is a human rights issue. By exploring the cases of DACA recipients, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), and illegally settled migrants, the continued securitization of their identities and livelihoods is incredibly detrimental. In many cases, these settled migrants and ‘DREAMers’ should be considered ‘Americans.’ Most likely, they embody most of the domains of integration shown in Figure 5, such as employment, housing, education, health, social bridges, social bonds, social links, and language and cultural knowledge (Ager and Strang, 2008). However, without being given an effective path to citizenship, they lack the foundation of having rights, safety, and stability. Many immigrants that fall under these categories have fully integrated into U.S. society

and they may no longer have a connection to the country they were originally ‘from.’ In other cases, despite the child of an illegal immigrant who is born in the U.S. being considered a citizen under the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, this does not mean that this citizenship can easily be transferred to the parents, which may result in family separation if the parents are deported (American Immigration Council, 2021b). It does not make much sense to offer immigrant youth under the age of 16 “deferred action” concerning their legality in the U.S. when they could be easily “removed” (deported) when they become 31 years of age. Within the 15 years that DREAMers are eligible for status renewal and deferred action, they have already fully embodied most of what the ‘American identity’ is supposed to be, which would also apply to many of those who have illegally settled in the U.S. Thus, deporting them after years of integration would worsen their instability. Desecuritizing immigration and creating a path to citizenship without such high barriers would positively address the human rights issue of family separation and the deportation of immigrants to countries where they do not feel safe or no longer have a sense of belonging in.

## **5.5 Final Thoughts**

The arguments outlined above are by no means the only examples within each security sector and only serve as means of understanding why the U.S. should begin to desecuritize immigration. The history of securitization in the U.S., specifically its racialized history, exhibits the components that formed the negative discourse around immigrants of colour that are present today. While the U.S. government was the main securitizing actor, the public has also played a significant role in the perpetuation of the myths regarding immigrants that encouraged their continued securitization. Trump’s presidency pushed societal progression several steps backward in the case of changing the rhetoric on immigration at the expense of many people of colour in the

U.S., and future immigrants of colour. Increased funding for agencies that attempt to deter illegal immigration have not resulted in any improvements and continuing to uphold the ideology that securitization will protect national security has been proven to be ineffective. To move forward as a nation, the U.S. should begin to reconstruct and modernize its perceptions of identity, citizenship, and nationality, and actively dismantle the ongoing perception that immigrants pose a threat.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdalla, J. (2022, February 4). *'empty promises': The us's 'Muslim ban' still reverberates*. Muslim Ban News | Al Jazeera. Retrieved February 13, 2022, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/4/empty-promises-the-us-muslim-ban-still-reverberates>
- Acosta, J., & Tatum, S. (2018, February 23). *US immigration agency updates statement to no longer say 'nation of immigrants'* | CNN politics. CNN. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/22/politics/uscis-mission-statement/index.html>
- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal Of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>
- American Immigration Council. (2021a, January 20). *New leadership strikes a new tone for America*. Immigration Impact. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from <https://immigrationimpact.com/2021/01/20/biden-new-tone-for-america/#.YgnhUFjMJTY>
- American Immigration Council. (2021b, September 15). *The DREAM act: An overview*. American Immigration Council. Retrieved February 16, 2022, from <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/dream-act-overview>
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.
- Aradau, C. (2004). Security and the democratic scene: desecuritization and emancipation. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 7(4), 388–413. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800030>
- Bahar, D. (2017, February 8). *A spicy red sauce and how immigrants generate jobs and growth in the US*. Brookings. Retrieved January 3, 2022, from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/02/07/a-spicy-red-sauce-and-how-immigrants-generate-jobs-and-growth-in-the-us/>
- Barros, A., & Vorozhko, T. (2022, March 16). *Biden administration considers expediting resettlement of Ukrainian refugees with US connections*. VOA. Retrieved March 17, 2022, from <https://www.voanews.com/a/biden-administration-considers-expediting-resettlement-of-ukrainian-refugees-with-us-connections-/6486906.html>
- Baur, C. (2004). Whose Challenge is it? – Huntington's Nativism and the Ideological Trench Warfare within U.S. Conservatism. *Iberoamericana* (Madrid, Spain), 4(15), 173–176. <https://doi.org/10.18441/ibam.4.2004.15.173-176>
- Baxter, A., & Nowrasteh, A. (2021, August 3). *A Brief History of U.S. Immigration Policy from*

- the Colonial Period to the Present Day*. Cato.org. Retrieved January 11, 2022, from <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/brief-history-us-immigration-policy-colonial-period-present-day#executive-summary>
- BBC News. (2021, November 29). *Covid: South Africa's president calls for lifting of Omicron Travel bans*. BBC News. Retrieved February 12, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59453842>
- Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality : a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Doubleday.
- Bigo, D. (2002). Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 27, 63–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754020270S105>
- Boak, J. (2019, February 8). *Ap fact check: Trump plays on Immigration Myths*. PBS. Retrieved February 16, 2022, from <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/ap-fact-check-trump-plays-on-immigration-myths>
- Budiman, A. (2020, September 22). *Key findings about U.S. immigrants*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved January 14, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>
- Buzan, B. (1991). *People, states and fear: An agenda for international security studies in the post-cold war era*. Lynne Rienner.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: a new framework for analysis*. Rienner.
- Buzan, B. & Wæver, O. (2003). *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Vol. 91). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511491252>
- Campbell, D. (1992). *Writing security: United States Foreign Policy and the politics of identity*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Carnevale, N.C. (2003). “No Italian Spoken for the Duration of the War”: Language, Italian-American Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in the World War II Years. *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 22(3), 3–33.
- Charles Koch Institute. (2021, May 27). *What's the relationship between National Security and Immigration?* Charles Koch Institute. Retrieved November 2021, from <https://charleskochinstitute.org/stories/whats-the-relationship-between-national-security-and-immigration/>.
- Chishti, M., & Bolter, J. (2020, October 28). *As #DefundThePolice movement gains steam,*

- immigration enforcement spending and practices attract scrutiny*. migrationpolicy.org. Retrieved February 9, 2022, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/defundthepolice-movement-gains-steam-immigration-enforcement-spending-and-practices-attract>
- Chishti, M., Hipsman, F., & Ball, I. (2017, March 2). *Fifty Years On, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act continues to reshape the United States*. migrationpolicy.org. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/fifty-years-1965-immigration-and-nationality-act-continues-reshape-united-states>
- CNN Politics. (2017, January 28). *Full text of Trump's executive order on 7-nation ban, refugee suspension | CNN politics*. CNN. Retrieved January 16, 2022, from <https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/28/politics/text-of-trump-executive-order-nation-ban-refugees/index.html>
- Collins, S. (2020, July 21). *Trump once flirted with white nationalism. now it's a centerpiece of his White House*. Vox. Retrieved January 16, 2022, from <https://www.vox.com/21313021/trump-white-nationalism-supremacy-miller-bannon-immigration>
- Curle, C. (2022). *US vs. them: The process of othering*. CMHR. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from <https://humanrights.ca/story/us-vs-them-the-process-of-othering>
- Deaux, K. (2008). To Be an American: Immigration, Hyphenation, and Incorporation. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(4), 925–943. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00596.x>
- De Genova. (2013). Spectacles of migrant “illegality”: the scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(7), 1180–1198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.783710>
- Duster, C. (2021, September 23). *Special envoy for Haiti resigns citing 'inhumane' us decision to deport thousands of Haitians from US border*. CNN. Retrieved September 25, 2021, from <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/23/politics/daniel-foote-haiti/index.html>
- Duster, C., & Vazquez, M. (2021, September 22). *Biden administration expresses horror over images of Border Patrol confronting migrants*. CNN. Retrieved September 25, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/21/politics/alejandra-mayorkas-del-rio-border-cnntv/index.html>
- Ekins, E. (2021, April 21). Poll: 72% of Americans Say Immigrants Come to the United States for Jobs and to Improve Their Lives. Cato Institute. Retrieved January 2022, from <https://www.cato.org/blog/poll-72-americans-say-immigrants-come-us-jobs-improve-their-lives-53-say-ability-immigrate>
- Everding, G. (2020, November 10). *White Americans see many immigrants as 'illegal' until proven otherwise, survey finds*. The Source. Retrieved March 13, 2022, from

<https://source.wustl.edu/2018/10/white-americans-see-many-immigrants-as-illegal-until-proven-otherwise-survey-finds/>

- FitzGerald, D., & Cook-Martin, D. (2017, March 2). *The geopolitical origins of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1965*. migrationpolicy.org. Retrieved January 3, 2022, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/geopolitical-origins-us-immigration-act-1965>
- Flores, C. (2021, February 4). *Biden has set the tone on immigration. but will he deliver for us?: Opinion*. Newsweek. Retrieved February 15, 2022, from <https://www.newsweek.com/biden-has-set-tone-immigration-will-he-deliver-me-my-family-opinion-1566920>
- Flores, R., & Schachter, A. (2018). Who Are the “Illegals”? The Social Construction of Illegality in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, 83(5), 839–868. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418794635>
- Gage, B. (2019, September 10). *The Koch Foundation is trying to reshape foreign policy. with liberal allies*. The New York Times. Retrieved March 14, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/10/magazine/charles-koch-foundation-education.html>
- Gagliardi, J. (2021). What Are the Data Really Telling Us About Systemic Racism? The *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 29(10), 1074–1076. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jagp.2021.06.007>
- Getrich, C. (2013). “Too Bad I’m Not an Obvious Citizen”: The effects of racialized US immigration enforcement practices on second-generation Mexican youth. *Latino Studies*, 11(4), 462–482. <https://doi.org/10.1057/lst.2013.28>
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity*. New York: Polity Press.
- Hagan, Eschbach, K., & Rodriguez, N. (2008). U.S. Deportation Policy, Family Separation, and Circular Migration. *The International Migration Review*, 42(1), 64–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2007.00114.x>
- Hansen, L. (2012). Reconstructing desecuritisation: the normative-political in the Copenhagen School and directions for how to apply it. *Review of International Studies*, 38(3), 525–546. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000581>
- Hoban, B. (2017, July 19). *Do immigrants "steal" jobs from American Workers?* Brookings. Retrieved January 3, 2022, from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2017/08/24/do-immigrants-steal-jobs-from-american-workers/>
- Hughey, M. W. (2017). Bad Hombres? The Implicit and Explicit Racialization of Immigration. *Humanity & Society*, 41(1), 127–129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597616680016>

- Huntington, S. P. (1993). The Clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3), 22–49.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/20045621>
- Hurd, I. (2008). Constructivism. In C. Reus-Smit & D. Snidal (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (pp. 298–316). essay, Oxford University Press.
- Huysmans, J. (1998). The Question of the Limit: Desecuritisation and the Aesthetics of Horror in Political Realism. *Millennium*, 27(3), 569–589.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298980270031301>
- Huysmans, J. (2006). The politics of insecurity : fear, migration and asylum in the EU. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203008690>
- Jagers, J., Gabbard, W. J., & Jagers, S. J. (2014). The Devolution of U.S. Immigration Policy: An Examination of the History and Future of Immigration Policy. *Journal of Policy Practice*, 13(1), 3–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15588742.2013.855695>
- Jones-Correa, & De Graauw, E. (2013). The Illegality Trap: The Politics of Immigration & the Lens of Illegality: Immigration & the Future of America. *Daedalus* (Cambridge, Mass.), 142(3), 185–198.
- Kanstroom, D. (2010). *Deportation nation: Outsiders in American history*. Harvard University Press.
- Kiehne, & Androff, D. K. (2021). Advancing Integration: The Social Work Response to Restrictionist U.S. Immigration Policies. *Journal of Poverty*, 25(2), 119–137.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10875549.2020.1751376>
- Krause, K., & Williams, M. (2018). Security and “Security Studies”: Conceptual Evolution and Historical Transformation. In A. Gheciu & W. C. Wohlforth (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Security* (pp. 14–28). Oxford University Press.
- Krogstad, J. M., Lopez, M. H., & Passel, J. S. (2020, August 26). *Most Americans say immigrants mainly fill jobs us citizens don't want*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved February 16, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/10/a-majority-of-americans-say-immigrants-mostly-fill-jobs-u-s-citizens-do-not-want/>
- Krogstad, J. M., Passel, J. S., & Cohn, D. V. (2021, May 28). *5 facts about illegal immigration in the U.S.* Pew Research Center. Retrieved January 15, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/12/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>
- Kumar, A. (2021, March 9). *Biden yet to act on overturning some trump immigration policies*. POLITICO. Retrieved March 11, 2022, from <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/03/09/biden-immigration-overhaul-474361>
- Kunst, & Sam, D. L. (2014). “It’s on Time That They Assimilate” – Differential acculturation

- expectations towards first and second generation immigrants. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 39(1), 188–195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.10.007>
- Laing, R.D. (1969). *The Divided Self*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Laustsen, C. B., & Wæver, O. (2000). In Defence of Religion: Sacred Referent objects for Securitization. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29(3), 705–739. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298000290031601>
- Liebert. (2021). U.S. Immigrant Integration Policy in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Public Administration Review*, 81(6), 1197–1203. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13331>
- Lepore, J. (2020). *This america: The case for the nation*. John Murray.
- Lind, D. (2015, December 7). *Donald Trump proposes "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United states"*. Vox. Retrieved February 12, 2022, from <https://www.vox.com/2015/12/7/9867900/donald-trump-muslims>
- Liptak, K., Alvarez, P., Diamond, J., & Wright, J. (2021, September 24). *Crisis of Haitian migrants exposes Rifts for Biden on immigration*. CNN. Retrieved November 27, 2021, From <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/24/politics/biden-harris-texas-migrants/index.html>.
- Lopez, G. (2016, July 25). *Donald Trump's long history of racism, from the 1970s to 2020*. Vox. Retrieved March 14, 2022, from <https://www.vox.com/2016/7/25/12270880/donald-trump-racist-racism-history>
- Mahbubani, & Summers, L. H. (2016). The Fusion of Civilizations: The Case for Global Optimism. *Foreign Affairs* (New York, N.Y.), 95(3), 126–135.
- Major, B., Blodorn, A., & Major Blascovich, G. (2018). The threat of increasing diversity: Why many White Americans support Trump in the 2016 presidential election. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 21(6), 931–940. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430216677304>
- Mallet-García, M. L., & García-Bedolla, L. (2021). Immigration Policy and Belonging: Ramifications for DACA Recipients' Sense of Belonging. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 65(9), 1165–1179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764221996777>
- Massey, D. (2020). The Real Crisis at the Mexico-U.S. Border: A Humanitarian and Not an Immigration Emergency. *Sociological Forum* (Randolph, N.J.), 35(3), 787–805. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soef.12613>
- Menjívar, C. & Abrego, L. J. (2012). Legal Violence: Immigration Law and the Lives of Central American Immigrants. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 117(5), 1380–1421. <https://doi.org/10.1086/663575>
- Menjívar, C., & Cervantes, A. (2018). Immigration. In A. Treviño (Ed.), *The Cambridge*

- Handbook of Social Problems (pp. 319-338). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108656184.019
- Mitzen, J. (2006). Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma. *European Journal of International Relations*, 12(3), 341–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066106067346>
- Moffett, D. (2021, February 16). *Would you be considered a first or second generation immigrant?* ThoughtCo. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.thoughtco.com/first-generation-immigrant-defined-1951570>.
- Mystal, E. (2020, September 2). *We need to talk about the GOP's 'black friends'*. The Nation. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from <https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/rnc-black-republicans/>
- Niskanen, W. (2006). The Several Costs of Responding to the Threat of Terrorism. *Public Choice*, 128(1/2), 351–356. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-006-9057-5>
- Rodriguez, S. (2021, January 13). *Trump's partially Built 'big, Beautiful wall'*. POLITICO. Retrieved September 30, 2021, from <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/01/12/trump-border-wall-partially-built-458255>.
- Rogers, K., Jakes, L., & Swanson, A. (2020, March 18). *Trump defends using 'Chinese virus' label, ignoring growing criticism*. The New York Times. Retrieved January 1, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/us/politics/china-virus.html>
- Rumbaut, R.G. (2004). Ages, Life Stages, and Generational Cohorts: Decomposing the Immigrant First and Second Generations in the United States. *The International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1160–1205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00232.x>
- Sadowski-Smith, C. (2008). Unskilled Labor Migration and the Illegality Spiral: Chinese, European, and Mexican Indocumentados in the United States, 1882-2007. *American Quarterly*, 60(3), 779–804. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.0.0037>
- Sands, G. (2022, February 9). *Immigration agency adds 'respect' and 'welcome' to mission statement after Trump-era controversy*. CNN. Retrieved February 12, 2022, from [https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/09/politics/uscis-mission-statement-biden-administration-change/index.html?utm\\_campaign=later-linkinbio-cnnpolitics&utm\\_content=later-24506768&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=linkin.bio](https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/09/politics/uscis-mission-statement-biden-administration-change/index.html?utm_campaign=later-linkinbio-cnnpolitics&utm_content=later-24506768&utm_medium=social&utm_source=linkin.bio)
- Secen, S. (2021). Explaining the Politics of Security: Syrian Refugees in Turkey and Lebanon. *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogaa039>
- Silverstein, P. (2005). Immigrant Racialization and the New Savage Slot: Race, Migration, and Immigration in the New Europe. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34(1), 363–384.

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.34.081804.120338>

- Sinnar, S. (2003). Patriotic or unconstitutional? The mandatory detention of aliens under the USA Patriot Act. *Stanford Law Review*, 55(4), 1419+.  
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A102555292/AONE?u=otta77973&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=b76e2c4a>
- Sjöstedt, R. (2017). Securitization theory and foreign policy analysis. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.479>
- Spears, T. (2020, August 31). *I was a U.s. Diplomat. customs and Border protection only cared that I was black*. POLITICO. Retrieved September 30, 2021, from <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/08/30/black-us-diplomat-customs-border-protection-cbp-detained-harassed-325676>.
- Statista Research Department. (2022, February 1). *Mass shootings by Shooter's race in the U.S. 2021*. Statista. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/476456/mass-shootings-in-the-us-by-shooter-s-race/>
- Stokes, B. (2020, May 30). *Views of national identity by country*. Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2017/02/01/views-of-national-identity-by-country/>
- Stritzel, H. (2007). Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond. *European Journal of International Relations*, 13(3), 357–383.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066107080128>
- Swaine, J., & Adolphe, J. (2019, August). *Violence in the name of Trump*. The Guardian. Retrieved January 16, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2019/aug/28/in-the-name-of-trump-supporters-attacks-database>
- Totten, R. (2008). National Security and U.S. Immigration Policy, 1776-1790. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 39(1), 37–64. <https://doi.org/10.1162/jinh.2008.39.1.37>
- Tzamaras, G., & Woods, B. (2018, February 23). *AILA - rewrite of USCIS mission statement cannot change America's identity as a nation of immigrants*. American Immigration Lawyers Association. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from <https://www.aila.org/advocacy/press-releases/2018/rewrite-of-uscis-mission-statement-cannot-change>
- USA Today. (2017). *The wall – an in-depth examination of Donald Trump's border wall*. USA Today. Retrieved January 11, 2022, from <https://www.usatoday.com/border-wall/>
- US Census Bureau. (2021, November 22). *About foreign born*. Census.gov. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/foreign-born/about.html>.
- U.S. House of Representatives. (n.d.). *Immigration and nationality act of 1965*. US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives. Retrieved January 9, 2022, from

<https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1951-2000/Immigration-and-Nationality-Act-of-1965/>

- Venkatraman, S. (2021, October 25). *Anti-asian hate crimes rose 73% last year, updated FBI data says*. NBCNews.com. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-rose-73-last-year-updated-fbi-data-says-rcna3741>
- Wæver, O. (1995). Securitisation and Desecuritisation. In R. D. Lipschutz (Ed.), *On security* (pp. 46–86). essay, Columbia University Press.
- Wæver, O. (2004). Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen: New schools in security theory and the origins between core and periphery, ISA Conference, Montreal.
- Wendt, A. (1992). Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics. *International Organization*, 46(2), 391–425. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027764>
- Wendt, A. (1994). Collective Identity Formation and the International State. *The American Political Science Review*, 88(2), 384–396. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2944711>
- Williams, M. (1998a). Identity and the politics of security. *European Journal of International Relations*, 4(2), 204–225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066198004002003>
- Williams, M. (1998b). Modernity, identity and security: a comment on the “Copenhagen controversy.” *Review of International Studies*, 24(3), 435–439. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210598004355>
- Wolf, Z. B. (2021, September 23). *Why many thousands of Haitians converged on the US-mexico border*. CNN. Retrieved September 25, 2021, from <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/22/politics/haitian-immigrants-us-border-explained/index.html>
- Zdanowicz, C. & Chiamonte, T. (2017). *This personal question ticks people off*. CNN, from <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/08/opinion/where-im-really-from/>
- Zehfuss, M. (2002). *Constructivism in international relations : the politics of reality*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zerkel, M. (2021, May 21). *Why we should rethink calling white supremacist violence "terrorism"*. American Friends Service Committee. Retrieved February 9, 2022, from <https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/problem-labeling-violence-domestic-terrorism>