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**NAVAL  
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**THESIS**

**THE SECURITIZATION OF MIGRATION: AN ANALYSIS  
OF UNITED STATES BORDER SECURITY AND  
MIGRATION POLICY TOWARD MEXICO**

by

James M. Garrett

March 2013

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Robert Looney

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> March 2013	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> THE SECURITIZATION OF MIGRATION: AN ANALYSIS OF UNITED STATES BORDER SECURITY AND MIGRATION POLICY TOWARD MEXICO			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> James M. Garrett				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ___N/A___.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  By examining securitization speech acts and the organizational behavior of the agencies tasked with controlling border security and immigration, this thesis will examine the consequences of security discourse on United States policies for the borderlands, the impact of escalating speech acts for the securitization of those key territories, and the limits placed upon political leaders and relevant organizations by institutional forces. Specifically, this thesis will examine the implementation and consequences of guest-worker programs between the United States and Mexico during World War I and World War II. In addition, this thesis will examine how organizational behavior shaped the ability of United States government agencies to implement and enforce border security and labor policy.				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Immigration, security, securitization, organizational behavior, Mexico			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 69	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(WESTERN HEMISPHERE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

By examining securitization speech acts and the organizational behavior of the agencies tasked with controlling border security and immigration, this thesis will examine the consequences of security discourse on United States policies for the borderlands, the impact of escalating speech acts for the securitization of those key territories, and the limits placed upon political leaders and relevant organizations by institutional forces. Specifically, this thesis will examine the implementation and consequences of guest-worker programs between the United States and Mexico during World War I and World War II. In addition, this thesis will examine how organizational behavior shaped the ability of United States government agencies to implement and enforce border security and labor policy.



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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CBP	Customs and Border Protection
CRS □	Congressional Research Service
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DoD	Department of Defense
DoI	Department of the Interior
DoL	Department of Labor
DoS □	Department of State
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
IRCA	Immigration Reform and Control Act
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
USBP	United States Border Patrol
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VR	Voluntary Deportation
WFA	War Food Administration
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Rodrigo Nieto-Gómez, for his guidance, inspiration, and most of all patience during the thesis writing process. I would also like to thank Professor Robert Looney for serving as Second Reader. Last but not least, I would like to thank the staff of the National Security Affairs department for providing outstanding leadership and guidance during my time at the Naval Postgraduate School.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The security relationship between the United States and Mexico in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a study in contradictions. In areas adjacent to major border communities, law enforcement officials conduct patrols behind massive fences while floodlights illuminate the border at night in an effort to deter illegal immigration. Yet a few miles outside of these populated areas, the fences rapidly dwindle in size and complexity and law enforcement patrols become more infrequent. Once well outside of the population centers, the once-imposing fence system deteriorates into a single line of wooden posts, and then eventually into nothing at all. United States law enforcement officials and the “coyotes” that shuttle illegal immigrants over the border know where the fences end, but the voting public remains satisfied as long as the appearance of security is maintained. Similarly, while American labor and social leaders advocate against the use of illegal immigrant labor in industry and agriculture and social pundits decry the effects of a large population of illegal immigrants on social programs, some business leaders have aggressively lobbied against legal provisions that would significantly punish industry for employing illegal immigrants. To the casual observer, the United States-Mexico security relationship may appear to be comprised of a number of half measures.

To understand the *how* and *why* of the current United States-Mexico security relationship, it is necessary to examine the evolution of both the policies and the organizations tasked with the implementation of those policies. This thesis will utilize securitization as a tool to analyze *why* the United States implemented certain policies, and organizational behavior to analyze *how* policies were executed, in order to examine the development of United States border and labor policy toward Mexico from 1917 to 1964. *Securitization* is a process by which an issue is taken beyond “the established rules of the game” and treated as a special issue that requires extreme methods.<sup>1</sup> In a traditional military-political sense, security is about survival of the state, and the nature of security threats allows the state to take extraordinary measures that would otherwise not be

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<sup>1</sup> Barry Buzan, Jaap Wilde, and Ole Wæver, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 23.



permissible.<sup>2</sup> A *securitization speech act* occurs when a policy argument becomes sufficiently urgent that the target audience will accept violations of rules that “must otherwise be obeyed.”<sup>3</sup> Although by 1917 the U.S.-Mexico relationship had evolved past the time where either nation represented an existential security threat, the formulation and execution of United States policy concerning security of the U.S.-Mexican border and the usage of Mexican labor continued to be influenced by security discourse and organizational behavior of the agencies tasked with executing policy.

#### **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

By examining securitization speech acts and the organizational behavior of the agencies tasked with controlling border security and immigration, this thesis will examine the consequences of security discourse on United States policies for the borderlands, the impact of escalating speech acts for the securitization of those key territories, and the limits placed upon political leaders and relevant organizations by institutional forces.

#### **B. IMPORTANCE**

This thesis will utilize policy analysis to identify how securitization and organizational behavior that have impacted public policy concerning the U.S.-Mexico border relationship and the consumption of Mexican labor by the United States. Policy analysis attempts to answer the question as to “why one specific state of the world came about, rather than some other.”<sup>4</sup> By applying the study of securitization and organizational behavior to analyze United States policy in regard to consumption of Mexican labor and border security, this thesis seeks to answer the “why” of the current U.S.-Mexico relationship and illustrate how securitization and organizational behavior have shaped and limited U.S. policy. The nature of securitization, which implies the necessity for an immediate response to an existential threat that may or may not be real, tends to the limit the responses available to government and other civic leaders who are

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>4</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision Making: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman, 1999), 3.

also limited by organizational behavior.<sup>5</sup> By identifying the constraints placed upon policy makers by the use of securitizing language, this thesis will seek to inform policy makers as to the potentially negative affects of addressing the U.S.-Mexican border and labor market as a security situation rather than a strictly economic and political challenge.

### **C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESIS**

How has United States public policy been shaped by securitizing speech acts and organizational behavior in regard to the consumption of Mexican labor and the implementation of border security policies from 1917 to 1964? The problem can be broken down into two areas: the formulation of policy, and the creation of institutions that implement the policy. Beginning in 1917, United States policy makers faced a dual challenge: how to meet the demands of a wartime economy while simultaneously providing a secure border with Mexico.<sup>6</sup> While American involvement in World War I (WWI) was relatively short lived, policies and procedures put in place to increase available manpower during wartime through the use of Mexican contract labor created a policy template that would be utilized in the next national emergency. World War II (WWII) created an existential threat to the United States that required extraordinary measures to be implemented in the interests of American national security. While emergency labor accommodations put into place during WWII may have been justified under national security conditions, the continuation of these labor policies into the 1964 and their long-term consequences require examination.

Institutions must implement policy. However, a particular institution may be limited in its ability to implement policy by a number of factors. Some internal factors that may affect an institution's ability to implement policy include available manpower, funding, organizational culture, and mission. External factors, such as public perception, political environment, and opposition, can also limit an organizations ability to implement policy. As United States border security and labor policy have continued to

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<sup>5</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Mize and Alicia Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA* (University of Toronto Press, 2011), XXII.

evolve since 1917, the institutions tasked with implementing those policies have developed as well. Specifically, the United States Border Patrol and Immigration and Naturalization Service have been tasked with implementing United States border security and labor policies. However, the institutional organization, available manpower, and funding for these institutions may have affected their ability to implement government policy.

The hypothesis of this thesis is that securitization speech acts in regard to the security of the Mexican border and the consumption of Mexican labor has influenced the creation of United States public policy. In addition, organizational behavior has tended to shape how United States policy has been implemented. By examining major events, political speech acts, and active institutions required to deal with these issues from 1917 to 1964, this thesis expects utilize the study of securitization and organizational behavior to analyze *how* and *why* United States border security and labor policy with regard to Mexico has been created and implemented.

## **D. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Introduction**

While the norms that govern the U.S.-Mexico border and labor relationship continue to develop, they have been significantly influenced by the securitization of several aspects of the U.S.-Mexico relationship. Recent scholarship, such as that by Peter Andreas, Thomas Biersteker, and Timothy Dunn, have focused on United States border security policies from the 1970s through early 2003 and have emphasized the politically successful yet failed policies of border enforcement. By analyzing the beginning of the modern United States-Mexico security relationship, from 1917 to 1964, this thesis seeks to add to the body of knowledge that describes how and why United States border security and labor policy has been crafted and implemented. First, to better understand how the relationship between the United States and Mexico continues to evolve over time, this section will review how realist and liberal theories of international relations help to explain the development of relations between nations. Second, this section will discuss how the framework of analysis proposed by Barry Buzan in *Security: A New*

*Framework for Analysis* applies to the analysis of the United States-Mexico relationship. Finally, this section will discuss recent scholarship by Peter Andreas that illustrates how the implementation of policy can be affected by the external and internal factors of organizational behavior.

## **2. The Development of International Relations**

The realist theories of international relations provide only limited insight into the actual, day-to-day interactions between the United States and Mexico in regard to border security and the consumption of labor. Kenneth Waltz, in his *Theory of International Relation*, theorizes that nations exist in a state of anarchy and seek survival over raw power.<sup>7</sup> The reader could interpret the lack of physical military conflict between Mexico and the United States after 1917 as a survival mechanism for the Mexican government, but the more basic tenants of realism do not adequately describe the relationship between the United States and Mexico. Clearly, the relationship between the United States and Mexico is no longer defined by anarchy and a basic fear for the survival of the nation-state, but are rather defined instead by a set of norms that characterize relations built over time.<sup>8</sup>

As the relationship between the United States and Mexico does not exist in a vacuum, some process must have contributed to the development of roles of each nation. In *The Impact of Norms in International Society*, Arie Kacowicz describes a Cognitive Process in which cognitive evolution serves “as a framework for understanding the dynamics and evolution of international norms over time.”<sup>9</sup> This adaptive process of normalization between states is composed of three processes: innovation, selection, and diffusion. Innovation is the creation of new norms and understandings; selection constitutes the political process that selects certain policies for prolonged implementation, and diffusion is the system through which change is implemented

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<sup>7</sup> Summarized in John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 15.

<sup>8</sup> Arie Kacowicz, *The Impact of Norms in International Society* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 30.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

throughout the transnational system.<sup>10</sup> While change in international norms is useful in examining the evolution of the border security and labor relationship between the United States and Mexico, it does not describe *why* particular changes take place, or how they are formed.

Prior to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, some scholars envisioned a new era of economic and social integration in North America. One school envisioned a “borderless world” where commerce can flow freely, and economic ties bring prosperity to all.<sup>11</sup> Writing in 1996, Richard Rosecrance championed the idea that the world is developing into a “virtual state” where the economy of each country is “reliant on mobile factors of production.”<sup>12</sup> In addition, Rosecrance states: “Developed states are putting aside military, political, and territorial ambitions as they struggle not for cultural dominance but for a greater share of world output.”<sup>13</sup> In an economic light, the idea of a virtual state is useful. For example, passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has allowed American corporations to shift industrial production to Mexico, from which the finished products are re-imported back into the United States. According to Robert Pastor, the “social and economic integration” of North American has created the largest and most productive free trade area in the world. Economic and social integration between Mexico and the United States has been particularly intense, with 21% of Mexican families receiving remittances from family members in the United States. Remittances from the Mexicans working in the United States are substantial, amounting to approximately 17 million dollars per day in 2000.<sup>14</sup> Although the economic and social ties between the U.S. and Mexico have become increasingly close,

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Andreas, *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Rosecrance, “The Rise of the Virtual State,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4, (1996): 47.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Pastor, “Beyond NAFTA: The Emergence and Future of North America, in *North American Politics: Globalization and Culture*, eds. Yasmeen Abu-Laban, Radha Jhapan, and Francois Rocher (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2007), 5.

the United States has increasingly sought to secure its physical border with Mexico. The dual goals of expanding trade while ensuring a secure physical border work at cross-purposes.

### **3. Securitization: A Framework of Analysis**

Just as the relationship between the United States and Mexico is not anarchic as theorized by political realists, the reality of commerce and security do not always coincide with the free trade and open borders of economic liberals. How then can we analyze the normative changes that characterize the relationships that affect the U.S.-Mexico border and the constant flow of migrant labor, drugs, and goods smuggled both north and south of the border? In *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Barry Buzan, et al., moves the study of security issues away from strictly military applications and into the realm of economic and political discourse. Buzan's security analysis framework expands beyond the military sector and allows for the inclusion of the political, environmental, economic, and societal sectors as areas for security analysis. According to Buzan: "the exact *definition* and *criteria* of securitization is constituted by the inter-subjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects."<sup>15</sup> Securitization can be studied directly through the discourse between the political actors that control a situation: i.e., migrant labor policy.<sup>16</sup> The long and varied labor and border security relationship provides ample opportunity for examining all aspects of the U.S.-Mexico border relationship through the lens of securitization.

### **4. Ineffective Policy as Good Politics**

In stark contrast to the optimistic views of the proponents of the "virtual state" is the opinion that the U.S.-Mexico border relationship is moving toward an environment that requires much stricter control of territory despite a massive expansion of trade post-NAFTA. *Border Games*, by Peter Andreas, describes how the United States has

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<sup>15</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

reasserted state sovereignty through securitization of the U.S.-Mexico border by implementing policies that emphasize form over function and often have contradictory goals. Andreas notes that the United States border has never been under full “control” by the United States, and early attempts to increase border security, such as Richard Nixon’s “Operation Intercept” in 1969, was aimed at narcotics smuggling, not migrants or terrorists.<sup>17</sup> Andreas goes further, noting that almost all of the migration and law enforcement efforts directed at the border have been superficial in nature, caused by political demand to “take action” without creating an economic disturbance in the increasingly integrated economies of the United States and Mexico. Andreas notes that political expediency has been the hallmark of United States policy toward its southern neighbor and has emphasized physical border deterrents without providing real incentive for U.S. companies to avoid the use of illegal migrant labor. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, politicians in the United State have been under increased pressure to provide a “100 percent” secure border without compromising free trade. The addition of counter-terrorism to the task of securing the border has only increased the size and complexity of the problem.<sup>18</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

International relations theory is of limited usefulness for describing the development of the relationship between the United States and Mexico. Clearly, the relationship between the United States and Mexico does not exist in a “realist” theoretical state of perpetual anarchy where each state continuously struggles for survival. Instead, the U.S.-Mexico relationship is marked by a continuous development of dialog through extensive trade and political connections. A large border, major cross-border immigration flows, and significant economic ties between the two nations in the post-1917 era means that security situations are more likely to develop in the economic, social, and political sectors rather than military sector. The framework of analysis proposed by Barry Buzan

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<sup>17</sup> Andreas, *Border Games*, 29, 41.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Andreas, “A Tale of Two Borders: The U.S.-Canada and the U.S.-Mexico Lines After 9–11,” *The Rebordering of North America*, eds. Peter Andreas and Thomas Biersteker (New York: Routledge 2003), 2–3.

allows for the study of *why* economic, social, and political sectors transform into issues of “security.” Peter Andreas illustrates how government policy is often limited in its ability to deal with given security situations, either by design or through the organizations tasked with implementation.

## **E. METHODS**

This thesis will utilize two conceptual tools to create a new framework to analyze the creation and implementation of United States border security and labor policy with Mexico. The first tool of policy analysis utilized to build the framework for this thesis is the security analysis paradigm proposed by Barry Buzan, et al., in *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. According to Buzan, “In security discourse, an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme importance; thus, by labeling it as *security*, an agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means.”<sup>19</sup> Some of the “extraordinary” methods implemented by the United States in dealing with security and immigration issues along its southern border have included military incursions into Mexico, wholesale deportation of Mexican migrants, offers of amnesty for illegal workers, and the construction of walls and checkpoints along the U.S.-Mexican border. As a tool of analysis, securitization allows for the various policies implemented by the U.S. government to deal with migration and border control to be examined as economic security, societal security, and political security issues. The ability to examine major milestones in United States policy in regard to Mexican migration and border control through the subsets of economy, societal issues, and the political sector adds depth to the analysis.

The second conceptual tool utilized in this thesis to build a new framework for analysis is organizational behavior. The word “organization” comes from the Greek *organon*, meaning a tool or instrument. An organization is a tool or an instrument that enables a user or a group to achieve an objective.<sup>20</sup> According to Gareth Morgan in

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<sup>19</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization: The Executive Edition* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1998), 21.



*Images of Organization*, all theories that explain the behavior of different organizations are based upon “images, or metaphors, that lead us to understand situations in powerful yet *partial* ways.”<sup>21</sup> Metaphors are a “force through which humans create meaning by using one element of experience to understand another.”<sup>22</sup> An example of an organizational metaphor is the description of an organization as a *machine*. If an organization is like a machine, then we can infer that the organization is rigid, rationally designed to perform a specific task, and the organization produces repeatable results.<sup>23</sup> One important issue when describing organizational theories through metaphors is that while metaphors create new ways of seeing and acting, “metaphors tend to create ways of *not* seeing and acting.”<sup>24</sup> Metaphors help people to understand issues, but they also tend to limit discourse.

This thesis will utilize two behavioral models as tools for its framework of analysis. First, according to the Organizational Behavior Model, the policies implemented by government agencies are a result of their organizational function. By examining the resources and stated mission of an organization, it is possible to better understand why they undertake certain actions.<sup>25</sup> For example, metrics used as a measure of success can influence policy implemented. In regard to the U.S.-Mexican border, the numbers of Mexicans detained at the border have alternately been used as a measure of policy success *or* failure depending upon the policy in force at the time.<sup>26</sup> Of particular relevance to the discussion of border security are the catalysts of organizational learning and change. When government leaders are committed to major change in an organization, a *budgetary feast* can be used to rapidly build capacity for a change in an organizations mission, and to rapidly enhance the perceived effectiveness of an organizations original mission.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, a prolonged *budgetary famine* can reduce the ability of a

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 3–4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>25</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence*, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Andreas, *Border Games*, 93.

<sup>27</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence*, 171–172.

government institution to perform key functions, and may force and organization to streamline or change mission all together.<sup>28</sup> As organizations tend to have firmly established cultures that resist change, even with major changes in funding, a *dramatic performance failure* can serve as the catalysts for major organizational change.<sup>29</sup> The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have been perceived as a dramatic performance failure for multiple U.S. Government agencies, and the resulting major reorganization and consolidation of U.S. customs and immigration services under the Department of Homeland Security have reshaped the role of these organizations.

The Government Politics model helps the analyst to understand the factors that shape the decisions by government stakeholder, their perceptions, and their ability to make decisions within their sphere of authority.<sup>30</sup> The Government Politics model differs from the Organizational Behavior model in that organizational behavior produces a certain output based upon institutional design, where as the output of the Government Politics model is the result of bargaining among political actors and outcomes are formed by preferences for competing objectives.<sup>31</sup> The Government Politics model is especially useful when considering the U.S.-Mexico border relationship because it accounts for large number of actors with contradictory goals, and the need for politicians to satisfy those actors. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 provides an excellent example of the political bargaining that occurs to satisfy all relevant actors. The IRCA implemented the first sanctions against employers who “knowingly” employed illegal migrants as labor, but the legislation was loosely worded as to make workplace enforcement nearly impossible to enforce.<sup>32</sup> The process of political bargaining satisfied law makers who wanted to utilize the IRCA to “get tough” on immigration, while businesses who employed illegal migrant labor were able to successfully lobby for vague enforcement legislation that enabled them to continue operating as before. Bargaining

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>32</sup> Andreas, *Border Games*, 38–39.

allowed both sides to achieve a satisfactory version of their preferences without creating a major change in the system.

## **1. Framework of Analysis**

This thesis will utilize securitization to study *why* policy is created, and then utilize organizational behavior theory to analyze *how* policy is implemented. A framework of analysis that incorporates organizational behavior with securitization is necessary because, while securitization describes how policies are shaped and limited by speech acts, securitization only partially describes how those policies are implemented. Organizations are responsible for carrying out the policies that are produced when a political, economic, or social issue is addressed as a national security threat. Although securitization implies an extraordinary policy response to a perceived threat, organizations and institutions tasked with implementing policy still compete for limited resources, battle ingrained organizational culture, and are limited by their institutional mission in their ability to respond to various threats. To understand *how* and *why* organizations implement policy in a certain manner, we must examine why the policy was implemented, and then examine the resources available to implement the policy.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW**

Chapter II will describe relevant political speech acts that have used the issue of security to shape the United States' policies in regard to Mexican labor, migration, and border from the consolidation of the border region to the end of the *Bracero* program in 1964. Chapter III will analyze how the organizational structure and mission of multiple branches of the United States government tasked with implementing border security and labor policy has influenced how those agencies carried out their assigned tasking. Chapter IV will offer conclusions on how the securitization of the political, economic, and social relationship between the United States and Mexico has produced long-lasting effects.

## **II. BORDER CONSOLIDATION, NATIONAL SECURITY, AND *BRACEROS***

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will analyze how securitizing acts shaped United States policy in regard to the usage of Mexican contract labor and ask the question: did securitizing actors successfully securitize the usage of Mexican labor in the United States from 1917 to 1964? First, a brief overview of the security relationship between the United States and Mexico from 1821 to 1917 is provided in order to show how securitizing actions can take different forms based upon the type of security relationship that exists between two nations. Second, this chapter will describe how securitizing acts and the use of Mexican labor in the United States during WWI set the stage for a much larger contract-labor program during WWII. Third, this chapter will describe the contract-labor policies implemented by the United States from 1942 to 1964. Finally, this chapter will identify and analyze securitizing acts and actors, and their effects on the securitization of Mexican contract labor by the United States from 1917 to 1964.

### **B. BORDER CONSOLIDATION**

Securitization as a tool of analysis presumes that an existential threat, either real or imagined, exists in such a way as to create “substantial political effects...that legitimize the breaking of rules.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, historically, can the interactions between the United States and Mexico from 1821 to 1917 be described as a securitized relationship? If the answer is yes, how has the perception of border security between the two nations changed? By answering the preceding questions, this section will lay the foundation for further analysis of the U.S-Mexico border security relationship post-1917.

#### **1. The United States-Mexico Relationship: 1821–1917**

In 1821, a newly independent Mexico found itself in possession of a vast North American territory while the United States of America pursued its manifest destiny to

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<sup>33</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, 25.

expand to the Pacific Ocean. Tensions between Mexico and the United States eventually evolved into armed conflict, first with the secession of Texas from Mexico in 1836, and once again in the Mexican-American war of 1846–1848, in which Mexico lost 50% of its territory.<sup>34</sup> Under the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, ratified 30 May 1848, Mexico gave up all claim to Texas “and agreed to a new frontier with the United States: from the mouth of the Rio Grande to the southern boundary of New Mexico, then west to a point just south of San Diego, California.”<sup>35</sup> From the establishment of the final U.S.- Mexico border following the Gadsden Purchase in 1853 to approximately 1917, the border area remained a site of frequent conflict in which Anglo settlers attempted to pacify *mexicano* and Native American resistance.<sup>36</sup> Especially in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, consolidation by incoming Anglo settlers frequently resulted in bloody clashes with Texans of Mexican ancestry. During the 1859–1860 Cortina War around Brownsville, Texas, *mexicano* residents of the Lower Rio Grande Valley staged a small-scale rebellion to protest manipulation of land claims, the murder of Texas Mexicans by Anglo settlers, and pervasive racism against the resident Mexican population. The rebellion was put down by a force of Texas Rangers and U.S. Army soldiers, resulting in prolonged and bloody retaliation by Anglo settlers against the *mexicano* population.<sup>37</sup> Violence flared again from 1915 to mid-1916 as *mexicano* residents of the Lower Rio Grande Valley took up arms against Anglo settlers.<sup>38</sup> The *mexicano* rebels, numbering between 1,000 to 3,000 men, raided Anglo farms, railroads, and other targets, with attacks peaking between July and November 1915. Rebel attacks in the Lower Rio Grande Valley claimed the lives of 62 Anglo civilians and 64 U.S. soldiers, and displaced another 30,000 from their homes. The Texas Rangers led a brutal response against the *mexicano* rebels, with widely varying estimates between 300 to 5000 Mexicans killed by the Rangers and the Army.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Miller, *Mexico: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985) 213. See also Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1997), 144.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>36</sup> Timothy Dunn, *The Militarization of the U.S.-Mexico Border 1978–1992: Low Intensity Conflict Doctrine Comes Home* (Austin: CMAS Books, The University of Texas at Austin, 1996), 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

The fearsome response to the rebels by both the Texas Rangers and the U.S. Army essentially ended armed rebellion in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and finally subordinated the local *mexicano* population to Anglo domination.<sup>40</sup>

The Mexican Revolution and the entry of the United States into WWI increased border militarization in a number of ways. First, in an example of what we would today call “spillover violence” from the 1910 Mexican Revolution resulted in the border deployment of 100,000 U.S. National Guard soldiers and a 1916 punitive expedition by U.S. troops into Mexico in response to cross-border raids.<sup>41</sup> Second, the United States perceived a military threat from Germany agents operating from Mexico. In the midst of fears of German subversion from across the Mexican border, respected newspapers carried reports of masses of Mexicans leaving the United States in order to return to Mexico and fight against the United States. From the 7 April 1917 edition of the *Los Angeles Times*:

Several thousand Mexican laborers have recently stopped work in the vicinity of Los Angeles and have left for Mexico...The disappearance of the Mexicans is accompanied by the report to the Sheriff that the men are armed and have been paid to go to Mexico to fight against the Americans...German agents have been active for months among the Mexicans, arranging with them to return to Mexico if there should be a breach of relations between Germany and America.[<sup>42</sup>]

While stories of masses of Mexicans running off from their homes in the United States to take up armed struggle on behalf of Germany proved to be little more than paranoia, the idea that Mexicans constituted an internal military threat to the United States were prevalent enough that the Mexican community in the United States took action on the subject. Under the bold headline “MEXICANS TO PLEDGE ADHERENCE TO THE ALLIES,” newspapers reported on how the “Mexican colony” of Los Angeles planned to show their allegiance to the United States and the allied

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>42</sup> “Exodus of Mexicans is Reported by Sheriff,” *Los Angeles Times* (1886–1922), Apr 7, 1917; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* [1881–1989]), III.

cause.<sup>43</sup> Multiple factors, including old rivalries and prejudices, the instability caused by the Mexican revolution, fear of German influence, and the uncertainties caused by the entry of the United States into WWI reinforced the idea that the border was a violent area that constituted a genuine security threat.

The 1917 loyalty pledge by the Mexican colony of Los Angeles raises an important point: in a nation or society with a relatively free press, the objects of securitizing actions have the potential to make speech acts of their own. Essentially, by issue a public declarative statement of their loyalty to the United States, the Mexican colony in Los Angeles made a *de-securitizing speech act*. Just as securitizing actors can make declarative statements justifying extreme action, de-securitizing speech acts can be made by individuals or groups in order to reshape a public dialogue. De-securitizing speech acts may be just as important as securitizing speech acts, as both are utilized to shape the policy depending upon the nature of the security threat.

Can the U.S.-Mexico relationship from 1821 to 1917 be described as a securitized relationship? For the military sector of securitization, the answer is yes. According to Buzan's framework of analysis: "When securitization is focused on external threats, military security is primarily about the two-level interplay between the actual armed offensive capabilities of states on one hand and their perceptions about each other's capabilities and intentions on the other."<sup>44</sup> From the secession of Texas in 1836 to approximately 1917, interactions between the United States and Mexico focused on the external threat presented by the other nation. During that time, the relationship between the United States and Mexico involved one full-scale war in which Mexico lost 50% of its best territory, multiple European military expeditions in Mexican territory that nearly drew the United States into military intervention, the seizure of Veracruz by the United States in 1914, an American Army expedition into Mexico in 1916, and innumerable cross-border raids conducted by Indians and outlaws from both countries.<sup>45</sup> The 1910

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<sup>43</sup> "Mexicans to Pledge Adherence to Allies," *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922), Aug 15, 1918; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* [1881-1989]), II8.

<sup>44</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, 51.

<sup>45</sup> Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History* (New York, Oxford University Press: 1995), 387-388, 539.

Mexican Revolution created an additional element of instability that provoked a military response from the United States in which the U.S. military forces were deployed to “secure” the border with Mexico.

As the relationship between the United States and Mexico progressed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the dynamic between the two nations changed from a hostile relationship between two near-peer competitors into a relationship between a heavily armed and economically successful United States and a Mexican state torn by revolutionary strife. Militarily, Mexico lost practically every military confrontation with the United States. Therefore, as time progressed, the perception of Mexico as a military threat to the United States lost credibility. Because perceptions of “threats, vulnerability, and (in)security are socially constructed,” as the U.S. entered WWI, United States policy makers de-securitized the idea of Mexico as a security threat and move toward a securitization of Mexican labor that could be utilized as a national security asset by the United States.<sup>46</sup>

### **C. WORLD WAR I AND *BRACEROS***

The Mexican Revolution and WW I marked a turning point in relations between the United States and Mexico. As it became more obvious that Mexico was not a German puppet bent upon attacking the United States, political and industrial leaders in the U.S. de-securitized Mexico as military threat and shifted their securitizing acts to frame Mexican labor as a national security asset for the United States. The new relationship was no longer based strictly on physical security in the military sense, but rather based upon security brought about by economic and social interaction. From 1917 to 1964, securitizing acts played a major role in shaping United States public policy toward the use of Mexican labor.

#### **1. Mexican Labor: A National Security Asset**

United States guest worker policies created to import and export Mexican labor as a national security commodity are illustrative of how policy can be shaped by securitizing

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<sup>46</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, 57.



acts. While the United States treated the U.S.-Mexico border consolidation of 1821–1917 as a physical security threat requiring the deployment of soldiers and paramilitary type forces, the entry of the United States into WWI reshaped the security dialog between the United States and Mexico. To deal with the increased labor demands of a wartime economy and to compensate for large numbers of able-bodied American males consigned to military service, the United States, in limited partnership with Mexico, initiated the *Bracero* program. The *Bracero* program was a legal framework that created a mechanism for bringing Mexicans as laborers into the United States in support of the war effort. A “test run” of recruited Mexican labor was implemented in California in 1917, while full implementation of the *Bracero* program began in June 1918 with the stated purpose of admitting Mexicans into the United States: “To Fill [labor] Shortage During the War.”<sup>47</sup> In 1918, while serving in President Woodrow Wilson’s cabinet as Food Administrator, future American President Herbert Hoover wrote: “all these restrictions [on obtaining Mexican labor] should be removed if possible in the immediate future. We need every bit of labor we can get and we need it badly...”<sup>48</sup> War-time necessity helped to de-securitize the military relationship between the United States and Mexico while securitizing actors reframed the national dialog to utilize Mexican labor as a national security asset.

The WWI *Bracero* program, which lasted from mid-1917 to December 1918, instituted a number of features that would be utilized in later programs.<sup>49</sup> First, the WWI program was always advertised as *temporary*, with extra emphasis that all of the contracted labor would be returned to Mexico at the end of the war, whenever that might be.<sup>50</sup> Second, in an attempt to dispel fears that Mexican labor would drive down the wages of domestic American workers, government officials emphasized that *braceros*

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<sup>47</sup> “Open Doors to Mexican Labor,” *Los Angeles Times (1886–1922)*, Nov 20 1917; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* [1881–1989]), II2. See also: “Mexico to Supply Labor: Aliens will be Admitted to Fill Shortage During the War,” Special to *The New York Times (1851–1922)*, Jun 17, 1918; Proquest Historical Newspapers (*New York Times* [1851–2009]), 8.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Mize and Swords, *Mexican Labor*, XXXIV.

<sup>49</sup> “Alien Labor Barred Out: Government to Stop Imports From Mexico and the West Indies,” *Washington Post (1877–1922)*, Dec 24 1918; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Washington Post* [1877–1996]), 6.

<sup>50</sup> “Mexico to Supply Labor: Aliens will be Admitted to Fill Shortage During the War,” Special to *New York Times*, 8.

would be paid the same prevailing wages as domestic workers. Third, *braceros* were to be admitted only for work in agriculture, mining, and railroad maintenance. Fourth, farmers were to garnish a portion of the wages earned by each *bracero* and deposit the funds into a saving account that could only be accessed when the worker returned to Mexico.<sup>51</sup> When taken together, these measures were designed to show the general public that the program was not only a wartime necessary, but also temporary with minimal impact upon domestic American workers.

The WWI *Bracero* program was sufficiently successful that a much larger *Bracero* program was initiated in 1942 to support the American wartime agriculture and railroad industries. Although it was designed to serve as temporary labor relief during wartime, the second *Bracero* program lasted into 1964.<sup>52</sup> From 1942 through 1964, the *Bracero* program recruited approximately 2 million Mexicans to perform manual labor in the United States, and according to some authors, laid the foundation for the current reliance of the U.S. agricultural upon cheap manual labor.<sup>53</sup> While the *Bracero* program was justified as a national security necessity during wartime, multiple securitizing actors created sufficient pressure to ensure the program continued until 1964.

#### **D. THE BRACERO PROGRAM: 1942–1964**

Securitization implies that extraordinary measures are implemented to deal with issues that are presented as existential threats to national security. The WWII *Bracero* program was a key piece of United States government policy that was enacted to deal with a perceived existential threat to the United States. As WWII was a total war for the United States, the war effort placed great demands on every sector of society and the securitization of Mexican labor in support of the war effort became an issue once again.<sup>54</sup> This raises the question: if the 1942 *Bracero* agreement was a wartime measure

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<sup>51</sup> “Mexicans and the Labor Situation,” Special to the Christian Science Monitor from its Washington Bureau. *The Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current file), June 20, 1918; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Christian Science Monitor* [1908–1999]), 5.

<sup>52</sup> Mize and Swords, *Mexican Labor*, 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Richard Craig, *The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 39.

temporarily implemented in response to a national emergency, how did the program continue all the way through 1964? In order to provide background information for further analysis, this section will describe the three main phases of the *Bracero* program: 1942–1947, 1948–1951, and 1951–1964.

### **1. The *Bracero* Agreement: 1942 to 1947**

As manpower intensive businesses in the American southwest grew increasingly vocal about their need for access to Mexican labor, agents of the United States government began to study the feasibility of utilizing Mexican labor as a stopgap measure during the national war emergency. First, in April 1942, the INS formed an interagency working group with representatives from the War Manpower Commission and the Departments of Labor, State, Justice, and Agriculture to create a plan for the recruitment and usage of Mexican labor in support of the war effort.<sup>55</sup> When Mexico joined the war against the Axis powers on 1 June 1942, the American attorney general immediately asked the state department to enter into negotiations with the Mexican government for an accord to bring Mexican labor into the United States. On June 15 1942, the American ambassador to Mexico met with the Mexican foreign minister “and urged, in the name of the war effort, Mexican approval of such a program.”<sup>56</sup> The Mexican government, having anticipated such a request, had already established a committee to study the implications of a guest worker program with the United States.<sup>57</sup> Formal negotiations for the accord commenced 13 July 1942 in Mexico city, and were quickly completed due to prior staff work, adroit negotiation skills from representatives of both governments, and the common urgency brought about by the pressures of WWII. The 1942 *Bracero* Agreement “was signed July 23 and made effective by an exchange of diplomatic notes on August 4, 1942.”<sup>58</sup> The 1942 *Bracero* agreement would serve as the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 39–40.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 42.

legislative foundation for the importation of Mexican labor into the United States from 1942 to 1947.<sup>59</sup>

The 1942 *Bracero* program upon four guiding principles. In return for access to Mexican labor, the United States agreed to the following: *braceros* could not be drafted into the U.S. military, *braceros* would be protected from discrimination, transportation back to Mexico would be provided by the U.S., and *braceros* would not be utilized to drive down the wages of U.S. domestic workers.<sup>60</sup> Mexicans were screened by at processing centers in Mexico, and then sent by rail to work in the United States.<sup>61</sup> Operating under these basic principles, the *Bracero* program was quickly implemented, with 4,000 Mexicans entering the United States as contract labor in 1942. By the end of the wartime emergency program in 1947, 219,546 Mexicans legally worked in the United States in support of the war effort.<sup>62</sup>

In many ways the 1942 *Bracero* agreement was an extraordinary measure afforded by the securitization of Mexican labor by the United States. First, unlike the WWI agreement, the WWII *Bracero* program was an accord between two governments, which was an extraordinary advance in relations between the United States and Mexico.<sup>63</sup> During WWI, the Mexican government had to deal with a cumbersome process of dealing with labor issues through diplomatic channels to address complaints against individual employers. Under the 1942 agreement, the employer of Mexican labor was the United States government through the Farm Security Administration, which greatly enhanced the ability of the Mexican government to address the grievances of its citizens employed under the *Bracero* agreement through direct government-to-government interaction.<sup>64</sup> Second, *braceros* were guaranteed three things that the United States government refused to guarantee its own citizens: employment, a certain minimal level of

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 42–43

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 43–44.

compensation, and adequate housing.<sup>65</sup> Considering that the 1942 *Bracero* Agreement was successfully negotiated and implemented by two nations that had previously shared a significantly strained relationship prior to WWII, the program was generally considered to be a resounding success.

## **2. The *Bracero* Agreement: 1948 to 1951**

The *Bracero* program from 1948 to 1951 is illustrative of the effects of de-securitization upon a previously exceptional program. Without an urgent securitizing factor (the wartime need for labor), securitizing actions lost their power to motivate stakeholders. First, in the United States, the legislative basis for the 1942 to 1947 *Bracero* program (United States Public Law 45) expired on 31 December 1947, and responsibility for the administration of the program reverted back to the Department of Labor from the Department of Agriculture.<sup>66</sup> From January 1948 to July 1951, the only legal basis for the continuation of the *Bracero* program was found in the 9<sup>th</sup> provision of section 3 of the Immigration Act of 1917, which allowed for the temporary employment of essential foreign workers.<sup>67</sup> Second, during 1948, many of the extraordinary guarantees that had protected Mexican workers during the WWII program were eliminated. Work contracts were no longer government-to-government; they were between individual workers and farmers. Wage stipulations, piecework price stipulations, and unemployment insurance for *braceros* were also eliminated.<sup>68</sup>

Compared to the highly successful WWII program, the *Bracero* program was a low point for three of the four participating groups. For the United States government, the program ran with little oversight due to a lack of legislative basis. With growers in the southwestern United States continuing to use the excuse of “drastic crop loss” as a reason for the postwar continuation of the program, and with a two-thousand mile border to patrol with only a small force, the American government decided that a program to

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 53–54

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 7, 53.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 54.

legally provide contracts for Mexican labor, no matter how poorly designed, was better than nothing.<sup>69</sup> For United States labor leaders, the continued use of Mexican labor represented an affront to organized labor in the United States, and labor leaders continued to view the program as a way for big business to drive down the price of native labor.<sup>70</sup>

The Mexican government was also displeased with the arrangement because the guarantees of the WWII agreement were eliminated during the 1948–1951 program, and they were displeased because the United States no longer served as the direct employer of the *braceros*. Despite a halt by the Mexican government to *bracero* contracting between October 1948 and August 1949, the Mexican government had little choice other than to continue the program due to the large cash remittances brought back to Mexico by the *braceros*, and by the realization that Mexican citizens would gladly enter the United States to find work illegally if no legal means was made available.<sup>71</sup>

Only American farmers who employed Mexican labor were generally happy with the 1948–1951 *Bracero* program. The 1948–1951 program removed pay stipulations and allowed farmers to directly recruit labor for themselves, which was a feature of the WWI program that the farmers had continued to lobby for.<sup>72</sup> Even the southwestern farmers managed to find parts of the 1948–1951 program to their disliking. Specifically, a U.S. government provision that required farmers to post a \$25 dollar bond to ensure that each *bracero* returned to Mexico drew heavy criticism from farm owners, with the farmers complaining that they had no way of ensuring that *braceros* returned to Mexico.<sup>73</sup>

Another unusual feature of the 1948 to 1951 *Bracero* program was the questionable practices utilized by United States law enforcement officials to recruit Mexican farm labors. From 1947 to 1949, approximately 74,000 *braceros* were recruited from the interior of Mexico. In the same time frame, 142,000 illegal Mexican immigrants who were already in the United States were “dried out” and allowed to sign *bracero*

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 57–60.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 55.

contracts. Effectively, Mexican workers could skip the cumbersome recruitment process in Mexico and go straight to the United States to find work.<sup>74</sup> With illegal immigration an increasingly important problem for both the United States and Mexico, it was in the best interests of both nations to complete a comprehensive reform the *Bracero* program.

### **3. The *Bracero* Agreement: 1951 to 1964**

Just as WWI had stimulated the design of a Mexican guest worker program and WWII cemented the process in place, another national security dilemma reinvigorated the *Bracero* program. The entry of the United States into the Korean War in June 1950 created another manpower “crisis” and a re-securitization of the manpower issue that was utilized to renegotiate the ailing *Bracero* program.<sup>75</sup> Mexican displeasure with the 1948 to 1951 agreement and the perceived need for Mexican labor in the United States led to significant renegotiation of the *Bracero* program. Negotiations led to the passage and implementation of Public Law 78 (PL78). PL78, signed into law 13 July 1951, added an amendment to the Agricultural Act of 1949 that institutionalized the *Bracero* program in United States law.<sup>76</sup> After the signature of PL78, the United States and Mexico quickly reached a new *Bracero* accord, which was activated on 11 August 1951.<sup>77</sup>

Similar to the 1942 to 1947 *Bracero* program, PL78 had several provisions to protect “native” United States workers from the affects of foreign contract labor. First, the secretary of labor had to certify that a shortage of American labor existed. Second, the secretary had to certify that American farmers had attempted to recruit domestic labor with wages and hours comparable to those offered to Mexicans. Finally, the secretary of labor had to certify that the use of *braceros* would not drive down the wages and working conditions of domestic American workers.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 4, 78.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 4.

PL78 granted the secretary of labor a number of extraordinary powers and responsibilities. A controversial element PL78 authorized the secretary to enroll illegal Mexican immigrants into the *Bracero* program if the immigrant had been in the United States for the proceeding five years. This measure, effectively the first “legalization” of illegal Mexicans in the United States, potentially served as a cost-saving method for the United States, as it allowed illegal Mexicans apprehended in the U.S. to be converted into legal labor through the signature of a *Bracero* contract. Aside from the issue of “national necessity” raised by securitizing actors, legalization of illegal Mexican workers through conversion to *braceros* was more a matter of cost and convenience for both the United States and Mexico. Legalization allowed the formerly illegal Mexican worker to be sent back to Mexico upon fulfillment of the work contract without additional costs for legal hearings. Effectively, legalization through the *Bracero* program provided an outlet that satisfied the needs of farmers, the U.S. government, and the government of Mexico. Farmers received workers who were conveniently already in the country, the United States was able to save on enforcement costs, and the Mexican government was able to reduce the number of Mexican migrants refusing to return to Mexico.<sup>79</sup>

Along with the authority to essentially legalize Mexican workers who had been in the United States for more than five years, the secretary of labor was granted the authority to establish reception centers in the United States, provide medical care, sustenance, and transportation for *braceros* from Mexico to the U.S., assist in contract negotiations, and guarantee contract adherence by American farmers.<sup>80</sup> Similar to the WWII program, the United States government provided Mexican workers rights and services that the government would not guarantee to its own citizens.

## **E. SECURITIZING ACTIONS AND ACTORS**

For a subject to become fully securitized, an existential threat must be established with sufficient credibility that the threat creates substantial political effects.<sup>81</sup> The

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 72–73.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>81</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, 25.



successful securitization of an issue is not decided by the securitizing actor, but rather through the acceptance, by the audience, that the security issue is an existential threat to a shared value or institution.<sup>82</sup> In order to utilize speech acts to analyze the securitization of an issue, the analyst must identify *referent objects*, *securitizing actors*, and *functional actors*. Referent objects are the “things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival.”<sup>83</sup> For example, when the survival of a nation is threatened, the nation is the referent object. Securitizing actors are the actors who use speech acts to declare a threat to a referent object.<sup>84</sup> If a politician declares that immigrants are a security threat to the nation, then the politician is the securitizing actor. Functional actors are actors that affect the dynamics of a sector and “significantly influence decisions in the field of security.”<sup>85</sup> If a securitizing actor declares that migrant labor is essential for national defense, then the businesses that utilize that migrant labor are functional actors. This section will identify the referent objects, securitizing actors, and functional actors that helped shape the securitization of Mexican labor from 1917 to 1964, and then analyze the effectiveness of the securitization process on shaping United States policy.

### **1. Referent Objects and Securitizing Actors**

The study of the military and economic aspects of securitization is especially useful for studying the creation of the Bracero guest worker programs. During both WWI and WWII, the *bracero* programs were repeatedly justified as necessary for the success of the United States war effort. For the United States, both world wars were fought against other nation-states. Therefore, when studying the securitization of Mexican labor from a military aspect, the referent object is the survival of the state itself. The study of the securitization of labor from a strictly military viewpoint is problematic because the *Bracero* program lasted well past the end of WWII and it is unlikely that labor shortages alone could be viewed as an existential threat to the state.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

The economic sector of securitization may add more insight into the securitization of Mexican labor. According to Buzan's framework of security analysis, one of the agendas that can be classified as economic securitization is: "The ability of states to maintain independent capability for military production in a global market or...the relationship of the economy to the capability for state military mobilization."<sup>86</sup> Proponents of the importation of Mexican contract labor argued that Mexican labor was essential to maintaining the ability of the United States to meet wartime agricultural production demands. If the government accepts the idea that a specific area of industry is necessary for the successful prosecution of a war, than that industry can be recognized as an economic referent object for securitization.<sup>87</sup>

Two major groups of securitizing actors influenced the use of Mexican contract labor from 1917 to 1964. The first group of securitizing actors is the United States government and business leaders who advocated for the use of Mexican contract labor as a matter of wartime necessity. Whether Mexican labor was securitized as a national security asset to help fight the wars or preserve the economic sector, the United States government played an essential role, as the government was the only group that could actually implement policy. The second broad group of securitizing actors was comprised of special interest groups who advocated against the use of Mexican labor for a variety of economic and societal reasons. By breaking down these securitizing actors into functional groups, it is possible to analyze how securitization can shape government policy.

## **2. Functional Actors and Government Politics**

Before the United States officially entered WWII in December 1941, farmers in the American southwest began to pressure their congressional representatives for unabated access to Mexican manpower for agricultural purposes. American born migrant farm workers, primarily from Arkansas and Oklahoma, traditionally filled the migrant worker needs of the southwest growers. Unfortunately for farmers in the American southwest, domestic American workers quickly found higher paying jobs in the rapidly

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 101.

expanding defense industry.<sup>88</sup> The passage of the Selective Service Act in September 1940 and the National Defense Act in March 1941 created an even greater scarcity of available labor.<sup>89</sup> By September 1941, California growers had become sufficiently concerned that they directly petitioned the INS for permission to directly contract 30,000 workers from Mexico. The INS denied the request on grounds that sufficient American labor was available to meet production standards.<sup>90</sup> The issue of whether or not sufficient “native” labor was available would continue to be a point of contention between agribusiness, labor leaders, and politicians during the entire *Bracero* program.

From the beginning of the *Bracero* program, proponents of contracted Mexican labor argued for the program as a national defense measure. California Governor Culbert Olson telegraphed the secretaries of labor, state, and agriculture: “Without a substantial number of Mexicans, the situation is certain to be disastrous to the entire victory program, despite our united efforts to in the mobilization of youth and city dwellers for emergency farm work.”<sup>91</sup> Governors of other agricultural states were not hesitant to join the effort to bring Mexican labor into the United States as an emergency measure. Governor Clark of Idaho illustrated his desire for emergency farm worker relief by personally hoeing sugar beet fields with his staff (with sufficient media coverage).<sup>92</sup> Agriculture was not the only business sector that requested the ability to recruit Mexican labor in support of the war effort.

Similar to the American experiment with contracted Mexican labor during WWI, the railroad industry also campaigned for access to Mexican labor as a wartime necessity. In July 1942, W.H. Kirkbride, chief engineer for the Southern Pacific railroad, told reporters that the railroad needed access to Mexican labor because: “The traffic on our railroad is the heaviest in its history...and it is imperative that our tracks be maintained at

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<sup>88</sup> Craig, *Bracero Program*, 37.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 39

<sup>92</sup> “Mexico Labor Use Backed: Wickard Tells Arizona and California He Will Aid Import Plan,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File), June 3, 1942; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* [1881–1989]), 6.

the highest degree to safeguard the movement of war materials and men.”<sup>93</sup> By appealing to the government for access to Mexican labor as a wartime necessity for the defense of the United States, business leaders moved the labor discussion out of the arena of normal political-business negotiation and into the realm of national security where extraordinary measures were more justifiable, as long as the extraordinary measures were in support of the national defense.<sup>94</sup>

### 3. Special Interests

From 1917 to 1964, the United States government faced pressure from a variety of special interests groups that frequently had contradictory positions on immigration, border security, and the use of Mexican labor. The massive expansion of irrigation and the resulting increase in land prices and requirement for cheap labor in the American Southwest in the 1920s coincided with the loss of European labor supplies, resulting in pressure from agriculturalists to maintain and increase the supply of Mexican labor.<sup>95</sup> When the U.S. Congress considered applying immigration quotas to Mexico in 1928, prominent Southwest Rancher Fred Bixby argued against the restrictions, stating: “We have no Chinamen, we have no Japs...and the white man will not do the work.”<sup>96</sup> The 1948 “El Paso” incident is even more illustrative of the pressure placed by the agricultural sector on public officials. Following an ongoing labor dispute between Mexico and growers in Texas, Mexico placed a restriction on the flow of *braceros* into Texas. Texas growers responded by petitioning the U.S. Border Patrol to open the border in violation of the bilateral agreement, which was a violation of the Border Patrol’s own policies. From 16 to 17 October 1948, the U.S. Border Patrol allowed 6,000 Mexicans into the United States at El Paso, and most of the workers went directly to Texas cotton

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<sup>93</sup> “Mexican Workers Wanted by Railroads: Southern Pacific Sees Vital Shortage of Labor,” *New York Times* (1923-Current file), July 21, 1942; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*New York Times* [1851–2009]), 28.

<sup>94</sup> Craig, *Bracero Program*, 39.

<sup>95</sup> Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 18.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

fields.<sup>97</sup> The El Paso incident exemplifies the extreme pressure that agro-business could place upon parts of the U.S. government, and the willingness of government agencies to support business interests.

While the U.S. Congress faced pressure to allow Mexican immigrants into the country from the expanding agricultural interests of the southwest, they also received pressure to stop immigration from the multiple sectors of society. Once again, the agricultural business sector was one of the key players attempting to influence the flow of Mexican labor. Congressman John Box of East Texas and Senator William Harris of Georgia introduced strong anti-immigration legislation that would protect cotton production in the southeast by eliminating the cheap Mexican labor that was driving cotton production in the southwest.<sup>98</sup> During the Great Depression, the U.S. government came under great pressure to remove Mexicans to open jobs for unemployed Americans.<sup>99</sup> Pressure to control the border even forced the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to take a contradictory enforcement position on Mexican labor. From 1947 to 1954, it was common practice for INS agents to apprehend illegal Mexicans and then allow those Mexicans to sign *bracero* contracts and remain in the United States. By “legalizing” the Mexicans through *bracero* contracts, the INS was able to claim that they were apprehending illegal workers while also satisfying the demands of employers by not removing the apprehended personnel from the U.S.<sup>100</sup> The “shell game” of crafting policy that satisfies both sides of the immigration and labor issue was a necessary reality due to the desire of the United States government to pacify the various special interest groups on both sides of the border debate.

#### **4. Mexican Labor: A Economic and Societal Threat**

The same Mexicans who were considered as essential national security assets during wartime and as essential cheap labor during economic boom-times were swiftly

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<sup>97</sup> Mize and Swords, *Mexican Labor*, 33.

<sup>98</sup> Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Betrayal*, 21.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>100</sup> Mize and Swords, *Mexican Labor*, 33.

rebranded as threats to the economic and social security of American when the economy performed poorly. Following the mass importation of Mexican agricultural labor during WWI, Mexicans were scapegoated for causing unemployment among American cotton workers during the recession of 1920–1922, and many Mexicans were deported en-mass.<sup>101</sup> Herbert Hoover, the food administrator who had lobbied for the mass use of Mexican labor during WWI, implemented the mass deportation of Mexicans during the Great Depression to open jobs for “real” Americans.<sup>102</sup> From 1930 to 1939, Mexicans constituted 46.3% of all of the people deported from the United States, despite comprising less than 1% of the U.S. population.<sup>103</sup> After WWII, the United States pursued a dual program of expanded use of *bracero* labor while also pursuing an aggressive deportation program. Under the 1954 “Operation Wetback,” United States Attorney General Howard Brownell appointed former Army Lieutenant General Joseph Swing to lead a task force to push Mexicans back over the border. While an estimated 1 million Mexicans were deported or returned to Mexico under the initiative, Operation Wetback, which occurred at the height of the *Bracero* program, illustrated the dual nature of American policy toward Mexican labor: “We want you as labor, but on our terms.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Dunn, *Militarization*, 11.

<sup>102</sup> Mize and Swords, *Labor*, XXXV.

<sup>103</sup> Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Betrayal*, 67.

<sup>104</sup> Mize and Swords, *Labor*, 35.

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### **III. EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNITED STATES BORDER SECURITY AND IMMIGRATION POLICY**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

While government actors create policy, organizations actually implement policy in the “real world.” The outcome of a government law or policy, therefore, can be seriously affected by how a particular institution implements the policy. In turn, the methods by which an agency implements policy can be influenced by organizational factors such as mission, resources, and incentives. By examining two significant events in the early development of the United States Border Patrol (USBP) and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), this chapter will analyze how organizational behavior influenced the implementation of United States border security and immigration policy. First, initial Border Patrol operations in the 1920s and 1930s were negatively affected by the lack of a clear mission and broad powers, which incentivized an organizational focus on the apprehension of Mexican nationals during the Great Depression. Second, mounting political pressure in the late 1940s and early 1950s to curb illegal immigration across the U.S.-Mexico border incentivized multiple changes in INS enforcement tactics.

#### **B. ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR THEORY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCENTIVES TO APPREHEND MEXICAN NATIONALS**

##### **1. Mission Development of the United States Border Patrol**

According to the Organizational Behavior model presented by Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, “government organizations have formal charters that specify their authorities, the arenas in which they are directed to operate, and activities that are forbidden.”<sup>105</sup> Problems arise, however, when a government organization is not given a clear mission and the organization is left on its own to develop with little guidance, as “organizations interpret mandates into their own terms.”<sup>106</sup> Once an organization has a

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<sup>105</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence*, 167.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*



mission statement, it is up to the members of the organization to create institutions capable of fulfilling the stated mission.<sup>107</sup> For the USBP, the lack of a clearly defined mission eventually led to an emphasis on the apprehension and deportation of Mexican nationals during the Great Depression of 1929–1939.

When the United States Border Patrol was created in May 1924 under Public Law Number 153 (PL153), the legislation was sufficiently vague that the Bureau of Immigration was unsure of the authority or mandate of the new patrol organization.<sup>108</sup> Even the Commissioner-General of the Bureau of Immigration was uncertain of the legal status of the new border patrol, writing on August 30, 1924:

If the Bureau is right in its understanding of the matter, the border patrols are without the slightest authority to stop a vehicle crossing the border for the purposes of search, or otherwise, nor can they legally prevent the entry of an alien in violation of the law. In other words, they possess no more powers than does the ordinary citizen, who can exercise police powers only at the request of a duly constituted officer of the law, or to prevent the commission of a felony.<sup>109</sup>

On 27 February 1925, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 502 (PL502), which granted the new Border Patrol broad law enforcement powers.<sup>110</sup> Specifically, PL502 gave Border Patrol officers the authority to “arrest any alien who in his presence or view is entering or attempting to enter the United States in violation of any law or regulation made in pursuance of law regulating the admission of aliens” and additional authority “to board and search for aliens any vessel within the territorial waters of the United States, railway car, conveyance, or vehicle in which he believes aliens are being brought into the United States.”<sup>111</sup> In less than one year from its creation by act of Congress, the Border

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> *The Statutes at Large of the United States from December 1923 to March 1925*, 68<sup>th</sup> Congress 1923–1925, Vol 43 Part 1 Public Laws (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.), 240.

<sup>109</sup> Kelly Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (University of California Press, 2010), Kindle Edition, 34.

<sup>110</sup> *The Statutes at Large of the United States from December 1923 to March 1925*, 68<sup>th</sup> Congress 1923–1925, Vol 43 Part 1 Public Laws (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office), 1014, 1049–1050.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 1049–1050. See also Clifford Perkins, *Border Patrol: With the U.S. Immigration Service on the Mexican Boundary* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1978), 90.

Patrol went from having no clear mission or law enforcement authority to being vested with sweeping law enforcement powers. Granted broad powers with limited guidance and little organizational history, the new Border Patrol was driven by organizational restrictions and incentives to interpret their mandate that ultimately resulted in a focus on the apprehension and detention Mexican nationals living and working in the United States. From 1927 through the end of the Great Depression, organizational incentives forced a shift in immigration enforcement strategy away from “expensive” immigration enforcement efforts directed at European and Asia immigrants towards the readily available yet cheap to deport Mexican immigrant population.

## **2. The Great Depression and an Increased Emphasis on the Apprehension of Mexican Nationals**

The 1930s are the only decade in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when more Mexicans migrated south back to Mexico than north into the United States.<sup>112</sup> During the Great Depression, Mexican immigrants in the United States were the subjects of numerous securitizing actions that portrayed Mexican immigrants as threats to the economic and societal security of the United States. A combination of factors forced and/or convinced an estimated 500,000 to 1 millions Mexican immigrants to return to Mexico during the 1930s.<sup>113</sup> Among those factors was an institutional shift by the Bureau of Immigration (later the INS) and the USBP away from the exclusion of Chinese and European immigrants towards a program of systematic Mexican apprehension and deportation. Examination of the organizational incentives to focus on the apprehension and deportation of Mexican immigrants in the 1930s illustrates how organizational behavior influenced the implementation of securitized policies.

Despite the institutional mission to prevent large-scale illegal immigration by Europeans into the United States, a lack of funding for the Bureau of Immigration and the Border Patrol, combined with the relative expense of deporting Europeans and Asians,

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<sup>112</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Mexican Migration to the United States: Policy and Trends*, by Marc Rosenblum et al., report no. R42560 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2012), 6.

<sup>113</sup> Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Betrayal*, 265–266.

forced a compromise in enforcement methods that would lead to an almost exclusive focus on the apprehension and deportation of Mexican nationals.<sup>114</sup> By 1927, the expense of immigration hearings and deportation costs for illegal European and Asian immigrants created budgetary shortfalls and forced the Bureau of Immigration to adopt a “Voluntary Return” (also referred to as the “Voluntary Departure”) program for illegal immigrants from Canada and Mexico. Under the Voluntary Return (VR) program, illegal immigrants apprehended by the Bureau could “voluntarily” waive their right to a deportation hearing. In return for agreeing to waive the deportation hearing, the illegal immigrant was returned to their native country without incurring a deportation record. In a further attempt to save money, the Bureau of Immigration broadened the Border Patrol’s authority and allowed the USBP to carry out their VR program without oversight by the Immigration Bureau. Essential, the Immigration Bureau and Border Patrol faced a paradox. The mandate of the Immigration Bureau and Border Patrol encouraged the apprehension of illegal European and Asian immigrants while the expense of deporting the Europeans and Asians discouraged the activity.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, Mexican nations were quick and cheap to deport, but farmers and industrialists along the southern border were unhappy with border patrol efforts that disrupted the labor supply.<sup>116</sup>

The cost of deporting illegal Chinese immigrants from the United States, specifically from 1930–1933, created organizational incentives for the Immigration Bureau and the Border Patrol to shift focus to the illegal Mexican population. From 1930 to 1933, anti-Chinese hysteria in Mexico resulted in the Mexican government deporting Chinese immigrants to the United States. The mass influx of Chinese from Mexico into the United States stretched the budget of the Immigration Bureau and the USBP to the breaking point. From January 1932 to December 1933, 53 percent of the immigration

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<sup>114</sup> The 1921 Quota Act and 1924 Immigration Act were focused on the limitation of European immigration to the United States in the aftermath of WWI. See Sharon Masanz, *History of the Immigration and Naturalization Service: A Report Prepared at the Request of Senator Edward M. Kennedy* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1980), 27.

<sup>115</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 76–77. See also Josiah Heyman, “Putting Power in the Anthropology of Bureaucracy: the Immigration and Naturalization Service at the Mexico-United States Border,” in *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 2, (Apr 1995, 261–287), 266.

<sup>116</sup> Ellwny Stoddard, “Illegal Mexican Labor in the Borderlands: Institutionalized Support of an Unlawful Practice” in *The Pacific Sociology Review* 19, no. 2 (Apr 1976): 185.

hearings in the U.S. District Court of Southern California were for people with Chinese names. The in FY32, the costs of deporting Chinese immigrants was so great that the Immigration Service furloughed its employees for thirty days and used the saving to pay for deportation costs.<sup>117</sup> Other tactics to save costs included extending the VR program and the parole of large numbers of Mexicans held in detention facilities. Essentially, low cost incentivized the creation of the VR system in a fiscally constrained environment while simultaneously minimizing the administrative burden of deporting Mexicans from the United States.<sup>118</sup>

While political actors securitized Mexicans as an economic and societal threat to the United States during the Great Depression of 1929–1939, organizational constraints and incentives encouraged the Immigration Service and USBP to focus enforcement on Mexican nationals working and living illegally in the United States. The high costs of deporting Europeans and Asians directly affected the livelihood of the law enforcement agents, and the streamlined processes initiated to save money occurred at a time that securitizing actors in the United States called for the deportation of Mexicans to protect the American economy. As a result, the percentage of Mexicans as a total of illegal immigrants apprehended and deported increased from 28.2 percent in 1931 to 52.7 percent in 1939.<sup>119</sup>

### **C. “OPERATION WETBACK” AND MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS.**

In August 1953, United States Attorney General Herbert Brownell stated that the growing number of illegal Mexican immigrants in the United States was: “a social, economic, political, and moral problem of the first magnitude.”<sup>120</sup> State Attorney General Brown of California voiced a similar concern in 1954, calling illegal immigrants a “grave social problem, involving murder, prostitution, robbery, and narcotics

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<sup>117</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 79. The expensive of returning Chinese immigrants to China as part of the Chinese Exclusion Acts was a reoccurring issue. See Perkins, *Border Patrol*, 26.

<sup>118</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 80.

<sup>119</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 81. See also Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Betrayal*, 67.

<sup>120</sup> Craig, *Bracero Program*, 127.

infiltration on a giant scale.”<sup>121</sup> By 1954, the 309,033 legal *braceros* in the United States were vastly outnumbered by 1,074,277 known illegal immigrants.<sup>122</sup> To make matters worse, many farmers were happy to avoid the cost of hiring *braceros* by hiring illegals instead, and some farmers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley physically opposed the efforts of USBP agents to apprehend illegal Mexican workers.<sup>123</sup> In addition, American labor leaders were angered by the use of cheap Mexican labor to the detriment of domestic workers.<sup>124</sup> By 1954, special interests from all corners of the societal, economic, and political world were deeply concerned with the issue of illegal Mexican labor. The response to the multiple concerns over the use of illegal Mexican labor in the U.S. is a useful example of how securitization of an issue can force an organization to produce a “solution” that is really no solution at all.

The idea for a massive “final” operation to clear the border of illegal immigrants originated in 1953 with “Operation Cloudburst.” In July of 1953, the head of the USBP, Harlon Carter, met with active-duty General Joseph Swing, USA, and California National Guard Adjutant General Jones to discuss the use of military troops to assist the USBP in a large operation to seal the border and remove the majority of illegal Mexican immigrants from the United States.<sup>125</sup> General Swing enthusiastically agreed with the plan, and Mr. Carter appealed to President Eisenhower for a special presidential order to allow the military to participate in a civilian law-enforcement operation. President Eisenhower never gave the special order and Operation Cloudburst never took place, but the President Eisenhower did allow General Swing to retire from the Army in February 1954, and promptly appointed him as commissioner of the INS in May 1954.<sup>126</sup>

As securitization of an issue implies that extraordinary measures must be implemented to address a threat, the appointment of General Swing as commissioner of

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<sup>121</sup> “Bracero-Wetback Problem is Serious,” *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, Jan 28, 1954, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Los Angeles Times* (1881–1989), A4.

<sup>122</sup> Masanz, *History of the INS*, Tables 29 and 30, 65.

<sup>123</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 152

<sup>124</sup> Craig, *Bracero Program*, 127.

<sup>125</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 182

<sup>126</sup> Masanz, *History of the INS*, 88.

the INS indicated a new militarization of the U.S. immigration enforcement effort.<sup>127</sup> Within a month of taking charge, Commissioner Swing announced a new program similar to Operation Cloudburst that would lead to a secure border and end the problem of illegal Mexicans in the United States once and for all. Commissioner Swing temporarily re-assigned hundreds of USBP agents from Florida and the Canadian border to assist in the effort. Operations commenced 10 June 1954 with roadblocks in California and Arizona. After apprehending 10,917 illegal Mexicans in 8 days, the USBP agents switched tactics and reformed into special task groups that raided factories, restaurants, and any place that large numbers of illegal Mexican immigrants tended to gather.<sup>128</sup> USBP agents worked from north to south in California and Arizona before moving into Texas.<sup>129</sup> In three months, the “Operation Wetback” task forces moved through California, Arizona, Texas, Illinois, and the Mississippi delta. By October 1954, Commissioner Swing declared that Operation Wetback had been a resounding success, with over one million illegal aliens removed from the U.S.<sup>130</sup>

While it seems that the securitization of the illegal immigrant issue generated an extraordinary response, it is important to note the organizational factors that contributed to Operation Wetback. Organizational Behavior Theory indicates that: “each organization’s operational objectives emerge as a set of targets, flanked by constraints, that define performance of the critical task.”<sup>131</sup> In regard to Operation Wetback, the operational target appears to have been the previously estimated 1 million illegal aliens living in the United States prior to the start of the operation. It is interesting to note that prior to Operation Wetback, the U.S. government was estimated that slightly more than one million illegal immigrants resided in the United States, and Commissioner Swing claimed to have apprehended almost that exact same number. It seems that Commissioner Swing felt that he had a mandate to take extreme action, and he may have “forced” the

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<sup>127</sup> Mize and Swords, *Mexican Labor*, 37.

<sup>128</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 184, 186.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 184, 187.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>131</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence*, 168.

apprehension numbers to match expectations. The 1,035,282 persons reported apprehended by the USBP in 1954 were for *fiscal year* 1954. As Operation Wetback commenced 10 June 1954, only 20 days of the operation occurred during fiscal year 1954.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, the number of apprehensions attributed by Commissioner Swing to Operation Wetback mostly occurred before the operation commenced.

Once the organizational “goal” of removing the one million aliens from the U.S. was met, constraints placed upon the continued success of the INS and USBP could be quantified in the number of apprehensions after Operation Wetback. The apprehension numbers did fall dramatically after the conclusion of Operation Wetback, giving some credibility to Commissioner Swing’s claims to have ended the threat of illegal aliens from across the southern border. However, the drop in apprehension numbers after 1954 was accompanied by a shift in tactics that Commissioner Swing did not mention. After the conclusion of Operation Wetback, the USBP reorganized from a Special Task Force organization designed to apprehend large numbers of illegal in “sweep and clear” operations and shifted back to 2-man teams patrolling the physical “line” of the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>133</sup> The so-called “line patrols” were historically less productive than the large sweep and clear operations. By a simple change in tactics, Commissioner Swing ensured the continued “success” over illegal immigrants by utilizing less effective tactics that resulted in fewer apprehensions. Clearly, the securitization of illegal Mexican immigrants in the early 1950s created room for extraordinary measures, but the organizational behavior of the USBP and INS shaped and limited the effectiveness of their response.

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<sup>132</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 154. See also Masanz, *History of the INS*, 66.

<sup>133</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 190.

## IV. CONSEQUENCES OF SECURITIZATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR FOR THE BORDERLANDS

### A. SECURITIZATION: SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

Was the consumption of Mexican labor successfully securitized by the United States from 1917 to 1964? From 1917 to 1964, securitizing actors from widely varied parts of U.S. society portrayed Mexican labor in the United States alternately as a necessary and useful tool to be utilized as a national security asset during times of war; or as an existential threat to the American economy and society during economic downturns. These two different narratives, Mexican labor as an asset or as a threat, were *securitizing moves*. As previously discussed, an “issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such.”<sup>134</sup> In regard to the consumption of Mexican labor in the United States, the audience was never completely convinced of the necessity to utilize Mexican labor in times of war or the necessity to expel Mexican labor during times of crisis. Specifically, leaders of organized labor in the United States fervently disagreed with the implementation of WWII *Bracero* program.<sup>135</sup> Post-WWII, opposition from groups concerned with the social consequences of the contractual use of Mexican workers united with labor leaders to end the *Bracero* program in 1964.<sup>136</sup>

Similar to the mixed opinions on the necessity of utilizing Mexican labor as a national security asset, the American public did not fully accept that the Mexicans posed an existential threat to the economic and societal existence of the United States during the Great Depression. Social groups were created to support the Mexican community in the United States, and societal leaders publically advocated integration of the Mexican

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<sup>134</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, 25.

<sup>135</sup> “Harvest Aid Hit by A.F.L: Importing of Mexicans to Relieve Farm Labor Shortage Opposed” *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, Sep 1, 1942; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* [1881–1989]), 22.

<sup>136</sup> Ruben Salazar, “Quick End to Bracero Use Urged: Sociologists Asserts System is Causing Multiple Harm,” *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, Apr 7, 1963; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* [1881–1989]), B. See also Harry Bernstein, “AFL-CIO Asks End to Bracero Program,” *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, Jul 22, 1962; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* [1881–1989]), F1.



population instead of deportation.<sup>137</sup> Once again, despite public dissent towards the deportation and repatriation of Mexicans living in the United States, deportation programs proceeded throughout the country. In both cases; the use of Mexican labor as a national security asset and the deportation of Mexican nationals during economic crisis; public dissent by the audience did not stop the implementation of extraordinary securitizing measures.

According to Buzan's securitization framework, the securitization of Mexican labor in the United States was not successful because the audience did not entirely accept the argument, but the securitization process was *effective* in that the securitizing actors were able to create sufficient political capital to implement extraordinary policies without the complete support of all actors. This phenomenon raises a further question: does a securitizing action need the support of every actor to be considered successful, or just the support of enough actors to implement policy despite the objections of weaker parties?

In regard to the securitization of Mexican labor in the United States as a national security asset, the primary securitizing actors were agriculturalists in the American southwest, politicians from those same states, and government leaders in Washington, D.C., American labor leaders were the major actors who did not accept the securitizing program. The failure of labor leaders to override the securitizing program is an indication of their relative to the power of the securitizing actors. Essentially, the actors who favored the securitization of Mexican labor as a national security asset were in position to make decisions and implement policy, while the opponents of the use of Mexican labor were not in positions powerful enough to stop the process. It appears that the acceptance of securitizing acts *by the audience with the power to make and implement policy* is a more important determining factor than the acceptance of securitizing acts by a society as a whole.

The deportation and repatriation of Mexicans from the United States to Mexico during the Great Depression from 1929 to 1939 is another example of the relative power of securitizing actors. During the Great Depression, some American politicians and social

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<sup>137</sup> "Mexicans Held Here to Stay," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File), Jun 28, 1929; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* [1881-1989]), 13.

groups securitized Mexican immigrants as a economic and societal threat to the United States, while other groups constructed a counter-narrative that promoted Mexicans as hard working and invaluable members of U.S. society.<sup>138</sup> Specific states implemented their own deportation programs, and rampant acts of intimidation against Mexican immigrants by a variety of members of American society convinced significant numbers of Mexicans to “self-deport.”<sup>139</sup> While vocal members of society disagreed with the securitizing speech acts that labeled Mexicans as a threat, the securitizing actors *with the power to make and implement policy* were able to overcome opposition. It seems that for a securitizing act to be effective, consensus among the audience is not required, as long as the audience with the power to actually make policy agrees with the need to take the extraordinary actions implied by securitization acts.

## **B. LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE SECURITIZATION OF MEXICAN LABOR**

The major long-term consequence of the short-term securitization of Mexican labor was the establishment of persistent patterns of Mexican immigration to the United States. From 1955 to 1959, approximately 450,00 temporary *Bracero* workers and 50,000 permanent residents entered the United States from Mexico each year while apprehensions of illegal aliens dropped year over year from 1954 to 1960.<sup>140</sup> Due to the exemption of Mexico from immigration quota restrictions and relatively easy access to legal entry into the United States via the *Bracero* program, Mexican workers developed persistent cycles of migration in which they alternated between periods of work in the United States and then returned to Mexico to await the next work season. Until the end of the *Bracero* program in 1964, the cyclical nature of Mexican labor in the United States was supported by a legal process, and was therefore a matter of limited public concern.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> “State’s Labor Status Viewed: Farm-hand Shortage Laid to Decrease in Mexicans,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File), Jan 7, 1930; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* [1881–1989]), A1.

<sup>139</sup> Balderrama, *Betrayal*, 121.

<sup>140</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!*, 201. See also Douglas Massey and Karen Pren, “Unintended Consequences of U.S. Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge from Latin America” in *Population and Development Review* 38(1): 1–29 (March 2012), 3.

<sup>141</sup> Massey and Karen Pren, “Unintended Consequences,” 3.

In 1965, two changes in U.S. law disrupted the cyclical flow of Mexican labor in the United States and resulted in a massive long-term increase in the illegal migration of Mexican labor in the United States.

On 31 December 1964, Public Law 78 authorizing the *Bracero* program expired and was not renewed, effectively ending the legal use of seasonal Mexican labor in the United States.<sup>142</sup> The *Bracero* program took three years to phase out, with zero new contracts issued in 1968.<sup>143</sup> The end of the *Bracero* program coincided with the passage and implementation of Public Law 89–236 (the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965). PL89–236 imposed the first immigration visa limit on countries in the Western Hemisphere, consisting of a 120,000-visa cap on countries in the Western Hemisphere to be implemented in 1968. In a further restriction on legal immigration from Mexico to the United States, Public Law 94–571 imposed a further limit of 20,000 visas per year per nation in the Western Hemisphere starting in 1977. Compounding the effect of the new laws on the cyclical Mexican labor force in the United States, PL89–236 prohibited unskilled and seasonal labors from receiving employment-based Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) visas.<sup>144</sup> Left with few legal methods to continue the season work cycle in the United States, Mexican laborers once again resorted to illegal immigration.

As the “massive circular flow of Mexican migrants had become deeply embedded in employer practices and migrant expectations,” the lack of a legal mechanism for Mexicans to work in the United States post-1965 created a rapid rise in illegal immigration.<sup>145</sup> From a low of approximately 40,000 apprehension in 1965, the number of illegal aliens apprehended tripled from 1965 to 1970, with the proportion of Mexicans apprehended rising from 50% in 1965 to 80% in 1970.<sup>146</sup> By 1976, there was a 300,000-visa backlog for Mexico alone; equaling approximately a 2 ½ year wait for qualified visa

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<sup>142</sup> Craig, *Bracero Program*, 150.

<sup>143</sup> Massey and Pren, “Unintended Consequences,” 3.

<sup>144</sup> CRS, R42560, 8.

<sup>145</sup> Massey and Pren, “Unintended Consequences,” 5.

<sup>146</sup> CRS, R42560, 8. See also Massey and Pren, “Unintended Consequences,” 5.

applicants.<sup>147</sup> On the border, apprehension numbers continued to rise in the 1970s, peaking at 460,000 alien immigrants apprehended per one thousand Border Patrol agents in 1977.<sup>148</sup> Ultimately, the elimination of the *Bracero* program and the passage of quota laws limiting previously unlimited Mexican labor migration to the United States criminalized established patterns of behavior without providing a legislative solution for the legal usage of Mexican labor in the United States

### **C. ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR: LONG-TERM IMPACTS ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

While it appears that the acceptance of the securitization/de-securitization dynamic of Mexican labor by relevant actors from 1917 to 1964 created long-term consequences for the continued consumption of Mexican labor in the United States, organizational behavior by the agencies tasked with implementing border security and immigration control significantly contributed to the long-term problem. First, due to the local nature of early recruits, lack of resources, and an unclear mission, organizational behavior of the USBP in the 1920s contributed to the creation of persistent seasonal work cycles of Mexican agricultural labor in the United States. Second, in an attempt “end” the problem of illegal immigration in 1954, INS Commissioner Joseph Swing implemented tactics that made the illegal immigration problem “disappear,” while actually creating policies that encouraged long-term labor cycles.

Although the creation of the Border Patrol in 1924 ended the days of casual border crossings by Mexican nationals, the Border Patrol of the 1920s was too small and ineffective to present a major deterrent to border crossings. The small size of the Border Patrol and the local nature of many of the Border Patrol’s recruits, especially in Texas, led to the “flexible” enforcement of the use of illegal Mexican labor, creating employment patterns that were extremely difficult to break. In much of the Lower Rio Grande Valley from the 1920s into the 1940s, the Border Patrol largely served to prevent the movement of illegal Mexican labor from the area, thus ensuring that local farmers had

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<sup>147</sup> CRS, R42560, 9.

<sup>148</sup> Massey and Pren, “Unintended Consequences,” 5.

access to cheap labor without worries about wage competition from outside markets.<sup>149</sup> Not until 1944, when the Border Patrol received additional resources, a new generation of recruits from outside of the borderlands, and increased pressure from the United States government, did the USBP begin to crack down on the use of illegal Mexican farm labor in Texas.<sup>150</sup> Once again, opposition from farmers forced the USBP to make organizational accommodations that further strengthened the long-term usage of Mexican labor in the southwest.

By 1944, the old days of “flexible” border enforcement came to an end, changing a once-complimentary relationship between farmers and the Border Patrol into a relationship based on confrontation. Without the accommodating policies of the early border patrol, Texas farmers began to actively resist the Border Patrol by planting booby-traps, creating early warning systems to spot USBP raids, and by vigorously filing complaints with local judges and politicians. New Border Patrol tactics, which focused on coordinated raids on farmers’ fields, resulted in large increases in apprehension rates of Mexican nationals. In 1953, the Border Patrol apprehended 839,149 illegal immigrants, and 96 percent of forced removals from the United States were Mexican nationals.<sup>151</sup> Facing increased pressure from the U.S. government to find a “solution” to the problem of illegal immigration on the southern border and also needing to end the resistance of farmers to the enforcement of immigration laws, the organizational response of the INS to these issues contributed to the development of long-term Mexican labor networks in the United States.<sup>152</sup>

Post-1954 Operation Wetback, apprehension rates of illegal liens along the southwest border dropped dramatically. As previously discussed, part of this drop was due to a shift in INS/USBP tactics, but another reason for the drop in apprehensions was a new program started by the INS to facilitate the use of *Braceros* by Texas farmers.

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<sup>149</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 54–55.

<sup>150</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 116–117, 142. See also Stoddard, “Illegal Mexican Labor,” 200.

<sup>151</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 153.

<sup>152</sup> Josiah Heyman, “Putting Power in the Anthropology of Bureaucracy: the Immigration and Naturalization Service at the Mexico-United States Border,” in *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 2, (Apr 1995): 267

Prior to 1954, farmers in Texas had mostly refused to participate in the *Bracero* program, relying instead on cheap and plentiful illegal Mexican labor. After years of increasing resistance to USBP enforcement efforts, Commissioner Swing implemented the I-100 program to make the *Bracero* program more appealing to Texas farmers by granting them increased control over recruitment. The I-100 program provided *braceros* that had successfully completed a contract in the U.S. with an identification card that allowed them to enter into new *bracero* contracts without returning to recruitment centers in the U.S. In addition, in 1954 the INS declared that workers with I-100 cards would be given preference for *bracero* contracts over workers without the cards. By allowing direct recruitment through the I-100 program and by removing the necessity for Mexican workers to return to Mexico after every contract, the program increased incentives for farmers to utilize legal *bracero* labor by reducing transportation costs, increasing control over workers through direct recruiting, and also reduced the incentive for Mexicans to avoid the difficult recruiting process. Motivated by the massed raids of Operation Wetback and the positive features of the I-100 program, *bracero* contracts in Texas increased from 168 in July 1953 to 41,766 in 1954.<sup>153</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

From 1917 to 1964, the securitization of Mexican labor by relevant actors in the United States had long-term consequences for the borderlands. By arguing for the use of Mexican labor in the United States as a national security necessity, U.S. policy makers were able to implement extraordinary policies that would have been significantly more difficult to justify outside of a security context. Similarly, functional actors were able to take the extraordinary action of deporting Mexican nations from the United States during the Great Depression by securitizing Mexican labor as a threat to the economy and society of the United States. In both cases, not all relevant actors in the United States were convinced by the securitizing arguments, yet the extraordinary policies were implemented over the objections of some members of society. Therefore, it seems that to be deemed successful, securitizing acts need only convince actors with the power to

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<sup>153</sup> Hernandez, *Migra!* 188.

actual implement policy of the need to take extraordinary action instead of convincing society as a whole.

Even when securitizing actors convince the audience of the necessity of extraordinary actions, the organizational behavior of the agencies tasked with implementing those actions has long-term consequences. Lack of funding, training, and supervision allowed Border Patrol agents to develop “flexible” enforcement procedures that accommodated the increased use of illegal Mexican labor, especially in Texas. In 1954, facing pressure to remove estimated 1 million illegal aliens in the United States; INS Commissioner Joseph Swing implemented Operation Wetback. Commissioner Swing reported the operation to be a success, even though he purposefully changed INS/USBP enforcement tactics to ensure that the apprehension numbers of illegal aliens dropped after the conclusion of the operation. By bowing to organizational incentives to create a public policy “success,” Commissioner Swing helped to ensure the development of persistent labor immigration without helping the U.S. government to form policy to effectively and honestly deal with the long-term consumption of Mexican labor. As always, short-term solutions, both in the securitization of Mexican labor and the enforcement of security policy for the borderlands, have very long term implications.

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