

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Issues of war and peace within an international system of sovereign and self-interested nation-states, emphasizing military strategy, have historically dominated debates on International Security within the field of International Relations, as it is the state's responsibility to ensure the safety of its citizens.¹ The term "security" refers to the condition of an individual rather than a mental state. Also, the liberty and security of individuals are the most important criteria for the expansion of public wealth. Security can also be defined as the absence of dread of an imminent and violent assault on one's person or property.²

In today's uncertain and scary world, many people feel unsafe. When natural disasters, wars, armed conflicts, ongoing poverty, health epidemics, global terrorism, and sudden economic and financial downturns happen, there is not much chance for long-term prosperity, peace, and security. These kinds of situations are complicated and pose a wide range of safety risks. The United Nations (UN) states that when anxieties compound, they may devastate whole neighborhoods, spread across borders, and affect every aspect of people's lives. Most of the development and humanitarian problems we face today have their roots in a web of causes that reinforce one another. Addressing individual

¹ Blanchard, Eric M. 2003. "Gender, International Relations, and the Development of Feminist Security Theory." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 (4): p. 1289. <https://doi.org/10.1086/368328>.

² Smith, Adam. 2002. *Adam Smith: The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Edited by Knud Haakonssen. Cambridge University Press, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511800153>.

problems is not sufficient, as all forms of insecurity need a concerted, all-encompassing response. Thus, people know their rights and dignity are completely honored, have enough money, and feel secure in all aspects of their life. Only then will they be able to experience human security, and a more impactful and long-term plan to close the most difficult peace and development gaps.³ In 1994, the Global Human Development Report (HDR) introduced the human security approach, which consists of seven various types, including; economic insecurity, food insecurity, health insecurity, environmental insecurity, personal insecurity, community insecurity, and lastly, political insecurity.⁴ People, mostly immigrants and laborers, play a significant role in human security. This thesis topic focuses predominantly on two types of insecurity, namely economic and community insecurity among Mexican immigrants, and how these factors lead to the expansion of the United States (the US)-Mexico border wall.

The construction of a border wall between the US and Mexico has been divisive, and its impacts on the economic and community security of Mexican immigrants may be nuanced and multidimensional⁵. On the one hand, in an economic security context, Mexican immigrants who depend on cross-border trade and employment may see a direct impact from the construction of a border wall on their financial stability. The wall would obstruct the exchange of products

³ United Nations Trust Fund For Human Security. 2016. "Human Security Handbook," 112. <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/h2>.

⁴ Gómez, Oscar, and Des Gasper. n.d. "A Thematic Guidance Note for Regional and National Human Development Report Teams." Accessed on June 12, 2023. https://repub.eur.nl/pub/50571/Metis_195152.pdf.

⁵ Best, Steven. "The costs of a wall: The impact of pseudo-security policies on communities, wildlife, and ecosystems on the US-Mexico border." *Like an animal: Critical animal studies approaches to borders, displacement, and othering*. Brill, 2021, 265.

and services between the two nations, which might have a severe impact on the Mexican economy and, consequently, on the living conditions of Mexican immigrants ⁶. On the other side, the border wall may also influence the safety of Mexican immigrants living in border towns. Potentially raising tensions between the US and Mexico, the wall may result in more crime in border towns.

In this sense, it is seen that economy security is defined as when there is a lack of financial stability or predictability, it can be difficult for people or communities to satisfy their fundamental requirements, including those for shelter, food, healthcare, and education ⁷. Economic insecurity can be caused by a number of things, including unemployment, poor pay, growing living expenses, and a lack of access to opportunities and resources. In contrast, community insecurity refers to a feeling of unease or anxiety among neighbors, when people may feel uncomfortable or exposed to dangers like crime, violence, or social upheaval ⁸. Community security contributes to several variables, including economic disparity, a lack of cohesiveness, bad infrastructure, and weak governance.

The relationship involving neighboring countries is inevitably characterized by alternating periods of conflict and cooperation. Therefore, the US and Mexico are no exception. Unfortunately, the history of US-Mexican ties is full of contradictions that are challenging to be understood. The source of the disagreements involving the US and Mexico may lie in the simple but core fact

⁶ Heyman, Josiah McConnell. "The shadow of the wall: violence and migration on the US-Mexico border". University of Arizona press, 2018, 101.

⁷ Popov, E. V., and K. A. Semyachkov. "Problems of economic security for digital society in the context of globalization." *Ekonomika Regiona = Economy of Regions* 4 2018, 1088.

⁸ Kijakazi, Kilolo, Karen Smith, and Charmaine Runes. "African American economic security and the role of Social Security." *Library Catalog: www.urban.org*, 2019.

that this intense relationship exists within an imbalanced hierarchy of power. Since the start of the last century, even before Mexico gained its independence, the US has posed a risk to Mexico's security, whether actual or probable. During the nineteenth century, the disparity between the two widened when Mexico entered a period of economic decline and political turmoil in 1810. This crisis lasted for the next seventy years. Around the same time, the United States made strides forward and, after its terrible but relatively short civil war, successfully restored national unity. After the Second World War, Mexico was able to solidify its balance of power and narrow the relative strength gap between itself and the United States. Despite this, the gap continued to be significant.⁹

Throughout history, the evolving US immigration policy has had a significant impact on Mexican immigrants. Economic factors, national security worries, and changes in the political climate have all influenced these policies. To fully understand the problems that Mexican immigrants face in the US., it is necessary to trace the evolution of immigration policy. Due to a corresponding historical event, the traditional US. immigration policy after World War II took on an unfamiliar form. The first was the Holocaust, the attempted and nearly successful extermination of people based on their religious and ethnic backgrounds. International disapproval in its wake prompted the development of human security regulations, including those ensuring the safety of immigrants, which were subsequently guaranteed in protocols.

⁹ Meyer, Lorenzo. "The United States and Mexico: The Historical Structure of Their Conflict." *Journal of International Affairs* 43, no. 2 (1990), 71. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24356977>.

The Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act (EBSVERA) of 2002 represents a vital legislative response to the devastating impacts of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. This historic act aimed to strengthen national security by enhancing border defenses and revising the visa application procedure. In setting in place a long list of measures, EBSVERA aimed to stop people from sneaking into the U.S. illegally, find possible security threats, and improve the screening and monitoring of people who want to come to the US.¹⁰ Most of the people who moved to the US in recent years came from Mexico.

The 12 million people who reside within 100 miles of the border are immediately impacted by it, as well as how the United States defines its ties with Mexico in general¹¹. It will also have an impact on communities across Mexico and the United States in a few extremely significant ways that have not yet been acknowledged or appreciated. According to Levy (2019), the US and Mexico are a unique pair of countries because they are separated by a 2,000-mile border but have different ways of life. The trade between the US and Mexico has grown to become the US's second largest. Men of European ancestry who were born in the United States were more likely to be in places of power and make money than to be manual laborers¹². On the other hand, Mexican Americans were more likely to work in service industries. At first glance, this edge in the workplace seems to add

¹⁰ H.R.3525 - 107th Congress (2001-2002) - Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002." 2002. www.congress.gov. Accessed on May 14, 2002. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-bill/3525>.

¹¹ Brookings.Edu. (2023). The real costs of a barrier between the United States and Mexico. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-wall-the-real-costs-of-a-barrier-between-the-united-states-and-mexico/>.

¹² Levy, Daniel. *Mexico: Paradoxes Of Stability And Change--Revised And Updated*. Routledge, 2019, 15.

to the growing number of signs that second and third-generation Mexicans will continue to fall behind the children of earlier immigrants. In the United States, immigrants from low-income countries are overrepresented in jobs that are both dangerous and badly paid. Even though they did not have much access to school, most of those who stayed learned English in the end.

They were financially stable because they pooled their resources. Most of them kept their 9-to-5 jobs, but as time went on, they became more self-sufficient as poverty went down, income went up, and they bought their own homes. The way their economies came together was similar, and it happened around the same time. The most exciting thing was seeing how much their kids liked being on their own. There is no doubt that the children of immigrants live better and get a higher education than their parents did.¹³

Further, Mexican immigrants undoubtedly experience major socioeconomic impacts from the construction of the US-Mexico border wall. Due to the interruption of border crossings, Mexican immigrants who work in sectors that depend on cross-border trade and commerce, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and retail, may lose their jobs or have fewer employment possibilities¹⁴. There is going to be an increased unemployment and financial instability which may result from this. In addition, building a border wall would create social unrest and weaken social ties between Mexican immigrants and US

¹³ Katz, Michael B., Mark J. Stern, and Jamie J. Fader. "The Mexican Immigration Debate: The View from History." *Social Science History* 31, no. 2 (2007), 89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40267936>.

¹⁴ Bejarano, Cynthia L., and Jeffrey P. Shepherd. "Reflections from the US–Mexico borderlands on a “border-rooted” paradigm in higher education." *Ethnicities* 18.2. 2018, 294.

residents, increasing marginalization and discrimination of Mexican immigrants¹⁵. Lastly, because of how the wall would affect cross-border travel and educational exchanges, immigrants from Mexico may have less access to educational and training possibilities.

Following a concise explanation of the history of U.S. immigration policy and Mexico's position as the primary source of immigrants to the United States, this thesis examines the disadvantageous impacts of Mexican immigrants in the United States and analyzes the contributions of Mexican immigrants to various aspects of American society, including the economy. Therefore, the title of this thesis goes “**Analyzing the Social Economic Impact of Trump’s Immigration Policy**”. This chosen topic is important to be discussed further as it is relevant to the International Relations field of study, considering how human security is an integral aspect of the globalized world, plays a significant role in shaping international relations, and contributes to a broader understanding of global patterns.

1.2 Research Question

This research covers the study of human security, specifically economic and community insecurity among Mexican immigrants and the impact of the U.S. border wall on the citizens. The border wall referred to in this research was built during the Trump administration and is almost 727 kilometers in total. Therefore, the subjects of observation are limited to the United States, Mexico, other

¹⁵ Garcia, Angela S., Yunuen Rodriguez-Rodriguez, and Juan Contreras. “Violence Here and Violence There: How Compound Violence Drives Undocumented Mexicans’ Migration to and Settlement in the United States.” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 20.2. 2022. 270.

neighboring countries, relevant political figures, and citizens who acted as actors.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What policies and programs did Donald Trump implement to address the Mexican immigrants?
2. What are the impacts of Donald Trump's policies on the economic conditions of the Mexican immigrants?
3. What are the impacts of Donald Trump's policies on the issue of order and security of the Mexican immigrants?

1.3 Research Objective

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this thesis are as follows:

1. To examine the policies and programs that were implemented to Mexican immigrants on the border.
2. To find out the impacts of Donald Trump's economic policies of Mexican immigrants regarding the US-Mexico border wall.
3. To find out the impact of Donald Trump's security and order policies on Mexican immigrants regarding the US-Mexico border wall.

1.4 Research Significance

Based on the research questions and the research objectives, the research formulates the significances that the study may provide as follows:

1. It is important to grasp security concerns and the development of the human security concept to comprehend the impacts of many elements on

the economic and communal security of persons and communities. The human security concept emphasizes the need of addressing social and economic injustices that fuel insecurity and vulnerability in the context of the economy and also the community in general.

2. The study of the topic of immigrants from Mexico and how they now live in the US, particularly considering Donald Trump's proposal to build a border wall, is important for a number of reasons. First, the study can offer light on the precise number of immigrants living in the US and the volume of their economic contribution. Second, this study can shed light on the experiences of immigrants from Mexico, especially those who are illegal or work in low-paying positions. Third, this study can help put the planned border wall and its possible impacts on immigration from Mexico into context.
3. This study might contribute to a better understanding of the many interconnected variables that affect Mexican immigrants' well-being. Further, this study can help guide immigration and border security policy decisions. The study can also illuminate the impacts of the wall on human rights, notably in relation to the freedoms of employment, health, and non-discrimination.

1.5 Structure of Writing

This study is structured into five chapters. Commencing with the Introduction in the first chapter, it lays the groundwork by furnishing essential

background information, imperative for readers to grasp before delving into the thesis. This initial chapter not only outlines the research questions, objectives, and significance but also establishes a structural foundation that guides the ensuing discussions.

The second chapter, termed the Theoretical Framework, comprises two pivotal subchapters: the Literature Review and the Theory and Concepts. The Literature Review section aims to acquaint readers with existing academic discourse on the research topic, offering insights into ongoing debates and highlighting the research's unique contributions. Simultaneously, the Theory and Concepts subchapter delves into neorealism as an International Relations theory, elucidating its role in shaping the research along with the four conceptual frameworks employed to address the research questions.

Moving on to the third chapter, the Methodology delineates the research's methodological approaches. It explicates the chosen research approach, method, data collection technique, and data gathering strategy, justifying the appropriateness of this methodological amalgamation to effectively address the research questions.

The fourth chapter, the Analysis, serves as the core of this research endeavor. Here, relevant data is presented, analyzed, and leveraged to construct arguments that directly respond to the research questions within the framework of neorealism.