

The Co-Production of an Apparatus of State Coercive Necropower: Understanding the Relationship between the Department of Homeland Security and Border Civilian Patrol Group “Arizona Border Recon”

Kristen Petrone

Undergraduate Honors Thesis

Department of Sociology

University of Colorado, Boulder

Spring 2025

Defended on March 21, 2025

Honors Committee Members:

Chair: Molly Todd, Ph.D., Department of Sociology; International Affairs Program

Honors Council Representative: Amanda Stewart, Ph.D., Department of Sociology

Outside Reader: Jessica Ordaz, Ph.D., Department of Ethnic Studies

ABSTRACT

This thesis combined two theoretical frameworks of Achille Mbembe's Necropolitics and Antonio Gramsci's understanding of Cultural Hegemony and applied them to examine the relationship and negotiation between state and nonstate actors at the border. My thesis sought to analyze how interests around "securing" the border between state actors within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), specifically Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and nonstate actors of border civilian patrol groups, specifically the group Arizona Border Recon (AZBR), may intersect and/or diverge. I leaned on Alfonso Gonzales' (2014) application of Gramscian theory to DHS actions and his larger argument situating "anti-migrant hegemony" as the current-day ideological leadership in the US. Policy and media analyses were performed to analyze this relationship. I found that the interests of state and nonstate actors both intersect and diverge but display more sites of intersection than divergence. Interests between the groups intersect around perceived missions/goals as protection of a "way of life/worldview" and around perceptions of the US as in a state of crisis, while a divergence of interests can be seen in behavioral discrepancies between actors, such as promptness of reporting migrant bodies. These intersections in light of the formal partnership between these groups should be used to consider how DHS and AZBR use this shared framing to deploy an apparatus of state coercive

necropower against all who do not consent to notions of common sense. This is important as this co-produced apparatus of state necropower impacts everyone in society in differential ways. My findings may be used by various scholars, such as those in disciplines of immigration, border politics, international affairs, and sociology, or additionally by NGOs or governmental agencies such as CBP.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	6
INTRODUCTION.....	7
Preface.....	7
Brief Overview.....	8
Note on Language.....	10
Chapter 1: METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS.....	13
I. Introducing Mbembe’s Necropolitics.....	14
II. Introducing Gramsci’s Theory of Cultural Hegemony.....	16
III. Combining Theories of Necropolitics and Gramscianism.....	24
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	28
Policing Borders.....	28
The Role of Nativism and Conceptions of “Whiteness” in the Production of “National Threats” from the Nineteenth to Twentieth Centuries.....	29
I. Nativism – Ideology and the Production of National “Threats”.....	29
II. U.S. White Supremacy – The Foundations of the Construction of “Whiteness”.....	31
The Power of Social Imaginaries.....	33
I. Social Imaginaries.....	33
II. Uses of “Frontier” and “Pioneer” Imaginaries in Constructions of non- Anglo Populations.....	35
III. Evolving Social Imaginaries around non-Anglo Populations through the Twentieth Century.....	39
IV. Theoretical Applications.....	44
Connections Between Expansions of Border Militarization and the Rise of Current-Day Border Civilian Patrol Groups.....	45
I. Border Militarization – Reaching Scholarly Consensus.....	46
US Civilian Patrol Groups.....	52
Chapter 3: DATA AND METHODS.....	59
Subjects.....	59
Study Design.....	60
Limitations.....	66
Positionality.....	68
Chapter 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	70
Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, and Other State Actors.....	70
I. Policy Analysis: The Homeland Security Act of 2002.....	71
II. CBP Interactions with Nonstate Actors.....	80
Border Civilian Patrol Organizations and Other Nonstate Actors.....	85
a. Congressional Understandings of Border Civilian Patrol Groups.....	86
Arizona Border Recon (AZBR).....	90
Group Website.....	90

Group Facebook and YouTube.....	95
Group Instagram.....	98
Bannon’s War Room Podcast Appearance.....	106
The Protection Project Podcast Appearance.....	109
Cartel Land.....	112
Chapter 5: CONCLUSION.....	117
Obscuring Formal Partnerships.....	117
Main Takeaways.....	125
Final Thoughts.....	126
REFERENCES.....	128

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Great care, dedication, and time from many people have allowed me to complete this project.

I would first like to thank the members of my committee. Thank you to my honors council representative, Dr. Amanda Stewart, for your encouragement throughout this project. Thank you to my outside reader, Dr. Jessica Ordaz, for thoughtful conversations, insights, and book recommendations. And to my chair, Dr. Molly Todd – Thank you, the many hours you have invested in me and my project do not go unnoticed or unappreciated. Researching immigration enforcement apparatuses and people who subscribe to anti-immigrant sentiments, especially during this timeframe, has been emotionally, mentally, and morally challenging. Our conversations have continually served as a site of grounding.

Those I met at Whitman College and Front Range Community College's Westminster campus (FRCC) have played foundational roles in my growth as a scholar. From my time at Whitman College: Thank you to Dr. Aaron Strain, whose instruction on the 1917 Bath Riots initially sparked my interest in the topic of US immigration enforcement apparatuses. To Allison Carney and Craig Wollam, I extend an endless thank you for opening your hearts and home to a random struggling student in the midst of a global pandemic. From FRCC, thank you to my friends in Sociology Club from 2021-22 for providing a community that fostered academic and personal growth.

Thank you to my friends whom I hope to share many more conversations with, including but not limited to: Maya Beck, Akasha Gabrieloff-Parish, Sylas Fox, Kate Archer, Genevieve Glimp, Ray Blons, Ariadne Williams, Matthew Willetto, and Phoebe Brock-Dolas.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Kristina Kahl, my friend and first Sociology professor, who recommended I write an undergraduate thesis. Your friendship and guidance are hugely valued.

INTRODUCTION

Preface

Researchers have documented the rise of the current-day US border civilian patrol movement which began in the late 1970s and culminated in the 1990s (Vina et al. 2006; Strickland 2022). In the twenty-first century these groups have come to incorporate the internet and mass media into their efforts. In this thesis I will demonstrate how state and nonstate actors concerned with immigration enforcement relate to and negotiate with each other's presence.

Historically, the state has made efforts to curb border civilian patrol group practices (Fernandes 2007; Strickland 2022). However, Patrick Strickland (2022) noted that Trump's resurgence on the political stage in the mid 2010s energized the militia movement, with many border civilian patrol group members and leaders, such as those in Arizona Border Recon (AZBR), associating with Trump. This documented overlap between ideologies of Donald Trump and border civilian patrol groups illustrates the importance of my project. Through alignment with harmful narratives around immigrants spurred by his network of influence and funding, Trump has positioned himself as an anti-immigration president. Indeed, Card et al (2022) analyzed over 140 years of presidential and congressional communications around immigration and found that Trump has been the president that has displayed the most anti-

immigration viewpoints in 140 years. Thus understanding the relationship between state and nonstate actors at the US-Mexico border is important because as the US political climate changes, understandings, relations, and negotiations between state and nonstate actors at the US-Mexico border are additionally liable to change, especially under an administration that may and has already began promoting and pursuing punitive immigration enforcement practices.

Brief Overview

Chapter 1 begins with individual discussions of theoretical frameworks of Antonio Gramsci and Achille Mbembe, then combines the two frameworks and applies them to actions at the US Mexico border. This combined theoretical framework will serve as a tool and be referenced throughout my literature review and analysis to form my argument.

Chapter 2 discusses literature relevant to my topic and is split into three sections. Section one discusses how ideologies of nativism and white supremacy have historically functioned in relation to issues of immigration and border civilian patrol group activities. Section two examines the role that “frontier” and “savage” imaginaries have played in the legitimization of necropolitical settler colonialism practices and other US enforcement practices at the border.

Section three highlights connections between border militarization and the rise of the current-day border civilian patrol group movement through the 1990s.

Chapter 3 discusses my data and methods, noting the two groups I am studying, my positionality as a researcher, and limitations I faced over the course of this project. This chapter additionally discusses my study design and states my rationale for choosing to pursue policy and media analyses when approaching these two groups.

Chapter 4 is my data results and discussion. I begin with a discussion of state actors, performing a policy analysis on the official 2002 Homeland Security Act, as well as covering additional relevant information pertaining to DHS' interactions with nonstate actors, including their Explorers Program. My second discussion is of nonstate actors, specifically performing a media analysis on the online activities of border civilian patrol group AZBR and its leader Tim Foley.

Chapter 5 is my conclusion, where I discuss my understandings of the relationship and negotiations between state and nonstate actors at the US-Mexico border, ultimately arguing how these groups' interests in "securing" the border both intersect and diverge.

Note on Language

This section is meant to provide clarity and to operationalize terms that will be used throughout my thesis.

I am using the language of “current day” to refer to the present day. I choose this language over terms such as “modern” or “contemporary” due to these terms loaded histories – The term “modern” is particularly associated with a colonial history, seen used as a kind of discursive tactic to create and sustain dichotomies such as modern/savage that legitimized settler colonial practices. Aníbal Quijano wrote that “it is the instrumentalisation ... of colonial power ... which produced distorted paradigms of knowledge and spoiled the liberating promises of modernity” (Quijano 2007, p.177). Thus to avoid this historic association to notions of colonial power, I am choosing the language of “current-day.” However, I use the term “contemporary” when discussing Achille Mbembe’s work as his work is concerned with the “contemporary era.”

I will use the term “border civilian patrol groups” throughout my work. Using this term highlights that the efforts of the civilian patrol groups I am discussing are concentrated on issues pertaining to immigration, and their actions are specific to the US-Mexico border. Other scholars have used different terms when discussing border civilian patrol groups. For instance, Strickland (2022), Ramos (2024), and Costley (2020) used the terms “vigilantes,” the “vigilante

movement,” and “vigilantism.” Congressional researchers have used the term “civilian patrols,” additionally noting that many smaller civilian patrol groups resent the label of vigilante (Vina et al. 2006). The term “militiamen” has also been used (Strickland 2022). In my media analysis, it is revealed that AZBR’s leader, Tim Foley, would prefer to see himself and his group labeled as either a vigilante or extremist. Highlighting these variations in term usage, I am using the term “border civilian patrol groups” because this term accurately describes the function and action of these groups.

My thesis will distinguish between state and nonstate actors. Despite using Gramsci’s theoretical framework, which discusses the relationship between two superstructural levels of the state and civil society, I am not choosing to use these provided terms throughout the body of my work because they can become complex. Indeed, Gramsci notes that these two superstructural levels shouldn’t be conceptualized as completely distinct: “civil society—which is ‘State’ too, indeed is the State itself ... one might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.531-532). To abide by Gramscian conceptualizations, I would need to distinguish between political society and civil society actors in my work and drawing this distinction may be challenging, especially in light of Mbembe’s comments on the contemporary society, finding that politics become masked

by a series of processes while militarism becomes unmasked, and additionally that a “patchwork of overlapping and incomplete rights to rule emerges, inextricably superimposed and tangled (Mbembé & Meintjes, 2003 p.31; Mbembe 2016). Thus, framing my conversation around state and nonstate actors will hopefully minimize confusion around what does and does not compose the state. I make the distinction between state and nonstate actors in terms of the historic affordances these actors have to enforce law, particularly immigration law, that have been constructed as legitimate within US society.

Chapter 1: METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS

This thesis combined Achille Mbembe's theory of Necropolitics and Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony as maintained through deployments of state coercive power. Building on understandings of the relationship between CBP and the border civilian patrol group AZBR illuminates how the groups coproduce discourses around security and threats and deploy violence against immigrants. I also drew on the works of Neo-Gramscian and Neo-Gramscian (NNG) scholars to account for traditional criticisms of Gramscian understandings of hegemony. For instance, Babatunde Obamamoye summarized several scholars' criticisms who identified Gramscian and Neo-Gramscian analyses of hegemony as top-down theories with an "inability to provide a framework for casting light on the realities beyond the structural processes and mechanisms" (Obamamoye 2023, p. 120). However, Obamamoye found that Gramscian and neo-Gramscian analyses can provide a central lens in which to understand how hegemony is maintained through both coercive practices and additionally through "hidden structural incentives that perpetuate the dominant way of thinking" (Obamamoye 2023, p. 119). I hope that drawing on other scholars' works will provide a more well-rounded application of Gramscian theory.

I. Introducing Mbembe's Necropolitics

Cameroonian historian Achille Mbembe introduced the concept of necropolitics in his 2003 essay by the same title. Mbembe's 2016 book *Necropolitics* built on that work. I leaned on Mbembe's understanding of Necropolitics throughout my thesis, which he defined as: "the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides ... in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die ... To be sovereign is to exert one's control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power" (Mbembe 2016, p.66). Mbembe additionally highlighted that politics are masked by a variety of forces and processes, such as war, resistance, and security, with the "murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective" (Mbembé & Meintjes 2003, p.12). Mbembe drew on Foucault's conception of biopower as a racialized process with racism functioning as a technique. Foucault further argued that under a biopower economy, mechanisms of biopower and the sovereign right to kill are constitutive elements of modern state power (Mbembé & Meintjes 2003, p.17). In an analysis of the development of new spatial relations, or "territorialization," Mbembe identified territorialization as inseparable from the production of a series of cultural imaginaries that collectively give "meaning to the enactment of differential rights to differing categories of people for different purposes within the same space" (Mbembé & Meintjes, 2003 p.26). Mbembe additionally identified the

contemporary era as the “globalization era,” in which the right to kill is “no longer the sole monopoly of states,” and that the “‘regular’ army is no longer the unique modality of carrying out these functions” (Mbembé & Meintjes, 2003 p.31). In this new era, establishing authority within a given political space becomes challenging – a “patchwork of overlapping and incomplete rights to rule emerges, inextricably superimposed and tangled (Mbembé & Meintjes, 2003 p.31).

Mbembe (2016) also noted that the contemporary era has a desire for both apartheid and the enemy. In this era, previous enemies become humanity’s enemies, and humanities enemies functions become two-fold: the enemy of the contemporary era is positioned as both a social and ontological need – “to be deprived of an enemy ... means being deprived of the kind of relation of hatred that authorizes the giving of free reign” (Mbembe 2016, p.48). Mbembe noted that this enemy is “more dangerous by being everywhere: without face, name, or place ... each time his apparition threatening the annihilation of our way of life, our very existence” (Mbembe 2016, p.49). This conceptual positioning of the enemy allows the justification of any use of force to eliminate this enemy (Mbembe 2016). Mbembe (2016) noted that in the twenty-first century, war is global, permanent, and responses to threat require extramilitary operations and psychic resources. Mbembe identified this contemporary desire for the enemy as a sign of the

“depressive period in the psychic life of nations” (Mbembe 2016, p.48). In highlighting this “depressive period,” he noted the desire for apartheid and the enemy as a kind of “contemporary brainwashing” in which democratic regimes act like they’re inebriated. This new functioning of the democratic regime gives rise to populations that “thrive on a vision of the world that is threatening ... one that grants primacy to logics of suspicion, and indeed to all that which is secret, or pertains to conspiracy” (Mbembe 2016, p.48). Mbembe (2016) concluded that this “depressive period in the psychic life of nations” leads to a desire to destroy.

II. Introducing Gramsci’s Theory of Cultural Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci was a theorist and Marxist philosopher whose work on ideological leadership and cultural hegemony is recorded in his *Prison Notebooks*, a book composed gradually when he was imprisoned under a fascist Italian state. Gramsci’s ability to tangibly grapple with Marxist texts was limited by conditions of imprisonment (Martin 2023), and may have subsequently limited his analysis. Gramsci’s understandings of hegemony are contextually situated in an interwar Italy. However, Gramscian understandings of hegemony and the relationship between the state and civil society are still useful to understand and apply to

differing political situations and socio-political and cultural contexts, such as the current-day US.

Gramsci (1999) identified two “superstructural levels” he saw operating in society: Civil society and the State. He provided a succinct definition for the state later in his work as political society (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.209), a combination of dictatorship and hegemony (p.497). He wrote of the state as “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.504). He then identified the functions of society’s two “superstructural levels”: Civil society is the masses that provide “‘spontaneous’ consent ... to the general direction imposed on social life” by the dominant fundamental group, while the state and its “apparatus of state coercive power” functions to discipline groups that do not consent (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.145). However, he stressed that these two superstructural levels should not be conceptualized as completely distinct: “civil society—which is ‘State’ too, indeed is the State itself ... one might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.531-532). This conceptualization of the state makes visible how those perceived

as “nonstate” actors are often intertwined with the state, and how these actors co-produce and maintain hegemony in tandem with the state.

Gramsci conceptualized hegemony as a type of ideological and cultural leadership within a society, one that positions a given group’s understandings as dominant over those of other groups. For Gramsci, hegemony designates a “historical phase in which a given group ... aspires to a position of leadership in the political and social arena” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.20). Gramsci further noted the society’s affinities to dominant group frameworks, arguing that the modern world is under a continual state of expansion where, since the development of a democratic-bureaucratic system, many functions now are not able to be justified “by the social necessities of production,” but are now justified by “political necessities of the dominant fundamental group” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.146). The dominant fundamental group within a society effectively develops and maintains hegemony within the society through an equally-balanced “combination of force and consent,” with force rested on public opinion – “the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.248). This maintenance of hegemony additionally “supposes an intellectual unity and an ethic in conformity” within society (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.642).

Neo-Gramscian scholar Obamamoye (2023) noted how consent is gained within a society: the dominant fundamental group's central mechanism for garnering the consent of non-hegemonic groups and subsequently maintaining and reproducing the hegemonic order within a society is "common sense." Obamamoye identified a point of consensus among Gramscian theorists that the dominant group maintains hegemony and order within a society by "remodelling its ideological vision into common sense" (2023, p.119). Common sense thus should be understood as the ideology of the dominant fundamental group, including this group's promoted values, beliefs, and behaviors, that become internalized into society at both interpersonal and institutional levels, becoming taken-for-granted. Common sense is not universally understood but rather is "a given social stratum's 'popular science'—its 'common sense' or traditional conception of the world" (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.430). A specific group's ideology as "common sense" reestablishes widespread consent within a society and further works to ensure the conformity of non-hegemonic groups. However, Obamamoye (2023) highlighted a lack of universal conformity to notions of common sense within the society, identifying non-dominant groups within society as subaltern groups/non-hegemonic groups whose lack of consent should be understood as a presentation of resistance to the dominant group's use of common sense and general state of cultural hegemony.

Gramsci wrote of two types of intellectuals, organic and traditional intellectuals, as important actors in societies that help maintain cultural hegemony and ideological leadership within a society. These intellectuals determine and communicate the political necessities, goals, and aspirations of the classes they are associated with, they “disseminate philosophical ideas and ideologies within a culture,” and represent “the dominant group’s ‘deputies,’” with a goal of linking their own class to “certain sectors of the traditional intelligencia” (Hoare & Smith 1999 p.138). Organic intellectuals are “the thinking and organizing element of a particular fundamental social class” while traditional intellectuals include individuals like literary scholars and scientists, those whose “position in ... society has a certain inter-class aura about it but derives ultimately from past and present relations and conceals an attachment to various historical class formations” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.131). Gramsci (1999) found that for these intellectuals of varying class backgrounds to play a role in maintaining ideological leadership, they first need to be assimilated or “conquered” into dominant groups. Similar to how common sense operates, anthropologist Kate Crehan (2016) wrote that “the intellectuals’ ‘knowledge’ is always, and in fundamental ways, shaped by the beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes of wide worlds in which those intellectuals live ... to a significant degree they are products of their time and place” (Crehan 2016, p.19). Building on Gramsci, Crehan noted that the intellectuals’ value

is less from the fact that they think in a way that aligns with societal dominant understandings of “common sense” and more in the fact that their role ultimately situates these individuals as “considered to have a certain weight and authority” in society (Crehan 2016, p.27).

Alfonso Gonzales (2014) extended Gramscian theory and the concept of organic intellectuals to a study of Latino migrant politics in relation to state enforcement practices from 2001-2012. Gonzales (2014) argued that the political climate in this timeframe had an “anti-migrant hegemony,” a type of ideological leadership which naturalized the idea that the US should adopt authoritarian solutions to an “immigration crisis” within state and civil society. Gonzales understood this anti-migrant hegemony as a form of consensual domination, the lynchpin of the modern state system of migration control that effectively “conceals the racial politics of this migration control, guarantees the reproduction ... of the homeland security state” (2014, p.5). He further noted that contextually shifting discourses around migrants and criminality acted as the “ideological glue” contributing to the maintenance of anti-migrant hegemony within US society (2014, p.6). The state’s organic intellectuals maintain hegemonic orders with the goal of advancing the Homeland Security state while providing their respective social groups a sense of group awareness and homogeneity (Gonzales 2014). Gonzales (2014) named various organic intellectuals contributed to anti-immigrant sentiments and the

development of an anti-migrant hegemony as the dominant fundamental framework of immigration, including: Academics, TV and radio personalities, elected officials, and state personnel.

In section two of his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci (1999) discussed the relation between the state and civil society and particularly noted the role of patrol groups in this relationship. In this section, he identified three types of wars that are “fundamentally of a military character, but mainly fought on the political plane,” these being a war of movement, a war of position, and underground warfare. Gonzales summarized the war of position as: “How groups seeking to become hegemonic must struggle over a prolonged period to create the political conditions for implementing their agenda” (2014, p.25). Gramsci further commented on this war of position, identifying that it “demands enormous sacrifices by infinite masses of people. So an unprecedented concentration of hegemony is necessary ... which will take the offensive more openly against the oppositionists and organise permanently the ‘impossibility’ of internal disintegration. ... in politics the ‘war of position,’ once won, is decisive definitively” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.495). In respect to underground warfare, Gramsci noted that it involves secretive preparation and accumulations of weapons, combat troops, and commando tactics and troops. These commando forces were identified as “simple tactical units” that “presuppose an army

which is not very effective—but not one which is completely inert” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.484). These commandos are “a sign of their [state troops] passivity and relative demoralisation” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.484).

Gramsci related commando forces to patrols, noting: “the art of organising patrols contained the germ of modern commandos. This germ was contained in siege warfare more than in the war of movement: more extensive use of patrols, and particularly the art of organising sudden sorties and surprise attacks with picked men” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.485). Gramsci furthered this finding, making note that the deployment of commandos are a feature of a weakened state and in this, function to ensure the state stays within bounds of legality: “A weakened State structure is like a flagging army; the commandos—i.e. the private armed organisations—enter the field, and they have two tasks: to make use of illegal means, while the State appears to remain within legality, and thus to reorganise the State itself” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.485). At the end of this section, Gramsci identified that despite the role of the military, politics plays a larger role in creating conditions of these three types of war: “to fix one’s mind on the military model is the mark of a fool: politics, here too, must have priority ... only politics creates the possibility for manoeuvre and movement” (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.486).

III. Combining Theories of Necropolitics and Gramscianism

Reading across and relating a theory of necropolitics to the works of Gramsci allows me to conceptualize how these theories function in collaboration to produce ideas around maintenances of state sovereignty and security. Gramsci's idea of those who do not consent to common sense being met with deployments of state power can be tied to Mbembe's understanding that politics are masked by a series of processes, but the objective of politics is the murder of the enemy (Mbembé & Meintjes 2003, p.12). Gramsci noted the function of the "apparatus of state coercive power" as disciplining groups that do not consent, but that "this apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis ... direction when spontaneous consent has failed" (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.145). This illustrates that this state apparatus is constructed to be deployed in moments when consent cannot be established, these moments identified as "crisis."

If Gramsci saw the inability to secure and establish consent as the crisis of society, such a crisis that state coercive power is constructed to be deployed in these instances specifically, then a lack of consent can be seen as a major facilitator of this "crisis" that needs to be intervened in by state functions. This means state functions identify lacks of mass consent as *the* problem of the society. If Gramsci understood state power as specifically deployed to deal

with this crisis, a lack of mass consent can be seen as the enemy of the state. If an inability to procure mass consent within a society inhibits developments of a state of hegemony, and if state apparatuses of coercive power are set up to promote mass consent through disciplining those who do not consent, then a lack of consent means that the state cannot function how it is designed to, and will need to recoup some consent to put force and consent back into some state of balance in able for the dominant fundamental group to continue to maintain a state of hegemony. Mbembe found that the objective of politics is the murder of the enemy (Mbembé & Meintjes 2003, p.12). If a lack of mass consent can be conceptualized as the enemy of the political society/state in Gramscian understandings of maintenances of hegemony as they prevent a balance of force and consent, then one can apply Mbembe's identified objective of politics to the Gramscian state. Thus, the identified objective of politics in the Gramscian state can also be seen as the death of the enemy, this enemy as those who do not consent to common sense that functions to maintain the dominant fundamental group's cultural hegemony over the society.

Gramsci's understanding of uses of patrol forces as a tactic of siege warfare not divorced from the state, but as a collaboration between state and civil society when a state's military apparatuses are weak and/or demoralized, can be applied to Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics. Mbembe identified the contemporary era as the "new age of global mobility, ... the

globalization era” (Mbembé & Meintjes 2003, p.31). In this globalization era, armies and “war machines” are co-produced, and “war machines” are situated both internally and externally to the state: “military operations and the right to kill are no longer the sole monopoly of states, and the ‘regular’ army is no longer the unique modality of carrying out these functions” (Mbembé & Meintjes 2003, p.31). The appearance of these “war machines” alters the very act of war in globalized societies: war is now “waged by armed groups acting behind the mask of the state against armed groups that have no state” (Mbembe 2016, p.35).

Mbembe’s understanding of the globalization era producing a war machine that functions partially externally to the state overlaps with Gramsci’s ideas around the conditions under which uses of patrols that are deployed by the state yet separate from formal state armies become more extensive. Both theorists highlight the outsourcing of state military actions to private actors and see this outsourcing as a signal of the proper functioning of either the contemporary war machine (Mbembe) or the political society/state (Gramsci). Gramsci particularly understood this outsourcing to occur when the state/political society is in a moment of crisis – it cannot establish consent, and its troops are “demoralized” and weak.

Gramsci and Mbembe’s understandings of the uses of private actors in state deployments of power can be applied to the actions and practices of current-day border militia

groups, specifically the group AZBR. I argue that the state and AZBR coproduce an apparatus of coercive necropower which targets all who do not consent to common sense. The deployment of this apparatus functions to maintain an anti-migrant hegemony within US society.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Policing Borders

Borders are dynamic sites constructed and understood through a series of social, political, ideological, and economic processes and enacted by societal actors (Golash-Boza 2015; Laine 2016; Luke 2013). The US-Mexico border is no exception. My thesis builds from the work of scholars that have argued that the US-Mexico border ultimately functions to regulate and control binational flows across borders, using racialized processes to achieve this function (with the US national interest particularly interested in the regulation and control of flows of flexible labor sources) (Díaz-Barriga & Dorsey 2020; Gonzales 2014; Hernández 2018; Luke 2013; Nevins 2010). I argue that this function is achieved through a necropolitical hegemony that the state has historically maintained and reproduced within US society.

US Border Patrol (now Customs and Border Protection (CBP)) and its agents have managed this flow of movement since 1924 (Nevins 2010; Painter & Singer 2024; Rivera 2015). Scholars have noted that since 1924, the strategies and tactics utilized by CBP and other immigration enforcement apparatuses have led to the US-Mexico border and DHS enforcement practices becoming increasingly militarized (Díaz-Barriga & Dorsey 2020; Gonzales 2014; Hernández 2018; Luke 2013; Nevins 2010; Ticktin 2022), producing inhumane consequences.

Policies such as the 1994 Prevention Through Deterrence strategy ultimately resulted in more violence and death at the US-Mexico border (Davis 2016; Díaz-Barriga & Dorsey 2020; Gonzales 2014; Luke 2013; Nevins 2010).

US border civilian patrol groups are an example of nonstate actors whose actions at the US-Mexico border represent a unique relationship to the topic of immigration. US border civilian patrol groups that have historically organized around immigration have been operating since the mid-nineteenth Century. Border civilian patrol group ideologies and practices are linked to the concept of nativism, which I define in the next section. Looking at historical developments of border civilian patrol groups is important to understanding their role in the current-day US landscape and how this role functions in relation to state apparatuses and actors concerned with immigration.

*The Role of Nativism and Conceptions of “Whiteness” in the Production of “National Threats”
from the Nineteenth to Twentieth Centuries*

1. Nativism – Ideology and the Production of National “Threats.”

Border civilian patrol groups first emerged in the nineteenth century as nativist groups. Nativist groups align with the political policy and ideology of nativism, whose goal is maintaining and reinforcing the status and benefits of “native-born” individuals in comparison to those who are born outside of a given country or its given citizenry (European Center for Populism Studies n.d.). Joseph Nevins (2010) wrote that generally, nativism is an ideology that is produced through a combination of material factors and political symbolism. Specifically, the ideology of nativism in the US originated in the English Colonial Period as white settlers used nativist ideologies to communicate and promote anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Mexican beliefs and practices, dichotomizing a white rationality against perceived “savage” and “uncivilized” populations in attempts to legitimize colonizer presence and colonial settler projects in New World lands (Nevins 2010). Scholars have found that the earliest US nativist civilian patrol groups organized in the mid nineteenth century around issues of increased immigration affecting “native” wages and began arranging efforts to regulate the flow of immigrant labor as a response (Abramitzky & Boustan 2017; Nevins 2010; Romo 2005). The efforts of these early civilian patrol groups primarily concentrated on south and eastern European populations, as well as Chinese populations, and their practices were not geographically concentrated at the US-Mexico border. In the late nineteenth century these demographics of

immigrants were the focus of conversations around national security and economic prosperity and subsequently became identified as “threats” to US National interests (Abramitzky & Boustan 2017; Card et al 2022; Nevins 2010; Romo 2005).

II. US White Supremacy – The Foundations of the Construction of “Whiteness.”

Ideas about whiteness and who counts as white have changed over time. Historian David Roediger (2006) found that until the 1920s, conceptions of whiteness in the US generally extended to individuals who were from north and northwestern European countries, while new south and eastern European immigrant populations were effectively in a “state of in-betweenness,” only becoming white through actions and practices that represented commitments to white supremacist ideals, such as through the internalization and reinforcement of anti-black and anti-Indigenous ideologies within their respective communities. The 1907 Congressional Dillingham Commission ultimately erected new quotas on immigrant arrivals by country of origin, as well as implementing restrictions on individuals deemed “illiterate,” and in these practices identified upticks in south and eastern European immigrant groups as a national threat to labor market competition (Abramitzky & Boustan 2017).

The Chinese Exclusion Period in US American history from 1882-1943 also reflected the logics of white supremacy. This exclusion period was primarily justified by nativist arguments that identified economic tensions and labor market competition as the site of contention with Chinese immigration into the US, formalized with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that enacted a 10-year ban on Chinese laborer immigrants (National Archives n.d.). The nativist justifications of the enactment of this exclusion period echo what occurred at a similar time with South and East European populations – the first portion of this exclusion period coincided with the targeting of South and Eastern Europeans as national threats based on arguments of labor market competition. Card et al. (2022) analyzed 140 years of US political speeches and found that until 1943, Chinese immigrants were perceived in congressional and presidential communications as threatening, immoral outsiders that served as a cheap source of labor, and that today, this same framing is the dominant frame used to conceptualize Mexican immigrants within governmental communications. This illustrates that the US’s designation of “National Threats,” or of their “enemies,” have varied in their demographic application yet have always been centered on arguments along the lines of labor market competition, economic strain, and the maintenance of white supremacy.

These examples show how white supremacist ideologies functioned in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to relegate and marginalize all non-Anglo populations as well as those who do not subscribe to white supremacist ideals. This point highlights how every part of state and federal action regarding immigration generally, and at the US-Mexico border specifically, has always been contingent upon the identification of an “other,” one that is non-white and that threatens the US national interest, an identification that has been historically variant in its application (Anzaldúa 1987; Card et al 2022; Gonzales 2014; Luke 2013; Murray & Marx 2013; Nevins 2010; Ticktin 2022). Tanya Golash-Boza (2015) noted that US interest in preventing Mexican and Central American migration spiked in the 1990s while enforcement practices against other Latin American and Caribbean populations would peak at the start of the twenty-first century.

The Power of Social Imaginaries:

1. *Social Imaginaries*

The historic designation of non-Anglo culture, experience, and bodies as suspect and undesirable acts to reinforce the understanding of non-Anglo populations as national threats in

the US social imaginary. James and Manfred (2013) defined social imaginaries as “patterned convocations of the social whole. ...provide largely pre-reflexive parameters within which people imagine their social existence” (p.23). Further, these scholars found that social imaginaries occur once a discourse becomes dominant within a given society (2013). Charles Taylor conceptualized social imaginaries as “what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society” (2002, p.91). Following these understandings, the roots of the prevailing US social imaginary and hegemonic discourses around the border and groups of Mexican descent can be traced.

Scholars have named a variety of imaginaries that have historically functioned to relegate non-Anglo communities and subsequently identify these groups as national threats (Díaz-Barriga & Dorsey 2020; López 2024; Nevins 2010; Romo 2005). Of these, I have specifically found “frontier” social imaginaries and those situating white settlers as “pioneers” to be the most useful for tracing the establishment of an anti-migrant hegemony as the dominant US social imaginary around immigrants. This section traces these select social imaginaries over time starting with nineteenth century understandings, but draws on and points back to ideologies, logics, and practices first introduced in the Americas through colonization processes enacted by various European powers. I argue that approaching the development of US social imaginaries through a *longue durée* is important as it highlights the continuities of colonial logic and

practices that exist in current social imaginaries, illustrating how colonial and imperialist actions and ideologies function and assume new forms in the present day.

II. Uses of “Frontier” and “Pioneer” Imaginaries in Constructions of non-Anglo Populations.

The production of US imaginaries around non-Anglo populations in the Americas and subsequent marginalization of these groups can be seen dating back to the colonial presence and subsequent land-grabs by various European powers in North America beginning in the fifteenth century. These designations have acted to reinforce and have been used to reinscribe the status of Latinx and particularly Mexican populations as national threats in US society.

Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) highlighted that initial sixteenth-century Spanish settler practices which erased many cultural and religious aspects of Azteca-Mexica existence would be continued by US settler colonial practices. She noted that at the start of the nineteenth century, the Texas Revolution legitimized settler colonial practices and the physical erasure of native populations as whites illegally entered Texas, driving out Tejanos and Indigenous groups (Anzaldúa 1987). The Texas Revolution gave rise to the Texas Rangers. Ben Proctor (2023)

wrote that the Texas Rangers initially operated as an informally contracted group of ten men as early as 1825 but were formally established as a division by state lawmakers in 1835 to systematically drive Mexican and Indigenous populations out of Texas and promote Anglo colonization efforts. As a result of these practices, Anglo populations in Texas would come to identify all Mexicans with a “cowardly and villainous character,” and would use these understandings to further legitimize imperialist takeover and understandings of a white “civility” (Anzaldúa 1987). This monolithic characterology of non-Anglo groups, specifically of Mexicans, would expand with the Mexican-American War.

The Mexican-American war began in 1846 and concluded with the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Joseph Nevins (2010) found that this treaty was made off inaccurate maps as the US tried to justify pushing the border further south to retain control of more of Mexico’s railroads and mines. The treaty effectively pushed the border 100 miles further south, ceded 55% of Mexican lands to the US (these lands would later house 10 new US states), and drew the US-Mexico border at the Rio Grande (Anzaldúa 1987; Cantú 2018; Nevins 2010; Painter & Singer 2024; Trist et al. 2022). This treaty additionally meant that the US absorbed 100,000 Mexicans and 200,000 Indigenous individuals in these newly-ceded lands (Nevins 2010). By the conclusion of the Mexican-American War and through the remainder of the nineteenth century,

Anglo-Mexican tensions, especially in the new Southwestern U.S., were mounting as Anglo land seizures and state-supported Texas Ranger expeditions displaced Mexican and Indigenous communities, forcing them into a state of definite marginalization (Hernández 2018; Nevins 2010; Romo 2005). Hernández (2018) found that immediately following this treaty, vigilante presence at the border would sizably increase, employing social imaginaries to frame their actions around securing the “frontier” from “hostiles.”

Roberto Hernández (2018) additionally noted that the social imaginary of the “frontier” became a place that the American character defined themselves in opposition to. In the late nineteenth century, the frontier was seen as offering a promise of free land, a “savage” space that needed to be brought under control by aforementioned “pioneer” white settlers (Hernández 2018). This understanding can be compared to Genevieve Carpio’s (2019) conception of an “Anglo fantasy past.” Carpio (2019) argued that this conception was coproduced with the idea of the border region as a “frontier,” functioning to legitimize and reproduce settler colonial practices. In this “Anglo fantasy past,” white settlers are postured as “pioneers”, and their status is situated as a heroic defense of the borderlands (imagined as a “frontier”) while all other demographics are negated (Carpio 2019). Carpio (2019) wrote that this “pioneer” imaginary

became institutionalized and can still be seen in legitimations of US military practices today, for instance in Air Force and Naval pilots being called “pioneers.”

These two understandings, US social imaginaries of the “frontier” and those of white settlers as heroic “pioneers,” situated as engaged in spatial defense against presumed “savage” opponents, reflect longer patterns of coloniality. They demonstrate what Gonzales (2014) referred to as “historical amnesia,” that negates and infantilizes Indigeneity in the Americas, which continues today. For instance, Díaz-Barriga & Dorsey (2020) discussed how mass media promotes the idea of the frontier as a vast, desolate, empty expanse of land, one that is identified as “uninhabited,” effectively obscuring the histories of Mexican and Indigenous existence in these areas. Additionally, Philip French (1974) identified the role that frontier imaginaries play in film portrayals of the now Western US: ““The rituals are enacted ... in a timeless world where it is always high noon in some dusty cow town west of St. Louis ... populated by children who refuse to grow-up, fugitives ... marauding Indians and menacing bands of pirates”” (1974, p.12). These imaginaries continue to inform US understandings of the border region and have been reinforced in the US public imagination. As part of larger imperial discourses, these social imaginaries obfuscate the long histories of Mexican and Indigenous existence and lifeways in the Americas and additionally render invisible the violent and dispossessing nature of settler colonial

practices, allowing their reproduction without public scrutiny or attention to the public's complicity in these practices (López 2024). In the nineteenth century, social imaginaries used to identify Mexican and other Latinx populations as threats largely employed ideas of "frontier" defense by "heroic" Anglo "pioneers" justified settler colonial expansion. These social imaginaries would diversify in the twentieth century.

III. Evolving Social Imaginaries around non-Anglo Populations through the Twentieth Century.

The uses of social imaginaries to designate non-Anglo populations as threats, or enemies, in the twentieth century expanded on nineteenth-century ideas of "frontier defense," further shaping perceptions of these populations generally, and by the start of the twenty-first century would ultimately brandish Mexican immigrants specifically as a group of violent drug-smuggling terrorists. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Anglo-Mexican tensions in the US Southwest were vehement. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and David Dorado Romo (2005) noted that there was a country-wide string of lynchings of individuals of Mexican-descent from 1911-1920. Though some official accounts list the death toll at 124 individuals, historians

understand this number to be woefully underestimated and posit an estimation range between 300 to a liberal 5,000 estimated lynchings in this period (Romo 2005).

Following WWII, the language used to describe immigrants perceived as posing a threat to the US became less outwardly race-based (Card et al. 2022; Golash-Boza 2015; Gonzales 2014; López 2024). Card et al (2022) found that from 1880-1934, language revolved around control and a question of “what’s dangerous,” while later communications revolved around themes of legality and crime, addressing a question of “what/who is terrorist?” (Card et al. 2022). Card et al. (2022) additionally found that immediately following WWII, a combination of post-war and administrative efforts to portray the US as a “country of immigrants” led to a more positive framing of immigration within government communications. The researchers noted that Donald Trump represents the sole exception to this 140-year trend towards neutral language regarding Mexican immigrants in federal communications (Card et al. 2022). Some scholars observed this move toward outwardly race-neutral language in identifications of national threats in civilian understandings as well: Gonzales (2014) found that as nativist groups resurged in the 1980’s following the civil rights movement, these groups additionally started using race-neutral language. Gonzales (2014) further noted that race-neutral language is the tactic of choice today for discussion of immigrants by CBP and other state actors as it makes it

“easy” and “dutiful” for border patrol agents, immigration judges, and other governmental actors to act and identify their job as “just about the law.” Golash-Boza (2015) argued that this federal embracement of “race-neutral” language further systematizes white supremacy into law as laws appearing as race-neutral become race-based through disproportionate enforcement practices, illustrating the salience of white supremacist ideals in the US imaginary.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, social imaginaries around immigrants perceived as threatening became vested with ideas around drug smuggling and invasion-related metaphors. The Nixon and Reagan administrations’ attention to the war on drugs fueled these associations. Nevins (2010) wrote that though the INS had banned the language of “wetbacks” in their formal communications in the early 1960s, and the Nixon administration banned uses of the term “illegal alien” the following decade, Nixon-nominated INS Commissioner Leonard Chapman played a large role in the initial development and public internalization of racialized ideas around immigration. Nevins (2010) argued that Chapman played an influential role in US conceptual associations of undocumented immigrants with groups of Mexican descent, with Chapman once making the blatantly false claim that over 90% of undocumented immigration was composed of Mexican populations. Nevins (2010) found that following Chapman’s comments drawing these rhetorical links, the 1970s would see escalations of politicians and

public officials (including the US Attorney General and CIA Director) uses of “invasion” metaphors and identifications of undocumented immigrants as security threats that continue to be reproduced today. Additionally, in 1969 the Nixon administration formally announced Operation Intercept in efforts to compel Mexico to cooperate with US anti-drug efforts, greatly diminishing binational crossing at the US-Mexico border in efforts to lessen flows of illegal drugs, notably marijuana, into the US (Luke 2013; Nevins 2010). Operation Intercept aided in constructing an association between Mexican immigrants and drug smugglers into social imaginaries in the late twentieth century that would be further reinforced with the formal announcement of the US war on drugs in 1971. This association is constructed in DEA historical sources that discuss a White Paper report recommendation that “that agents [of the DEA and then U.S. Customs Service] focus on Mexico, a source of both heroin and dangerous drugs, rather than on domestic posts, such as Miami, where they were more likely to ‘make a cocaine or marijuana case’” (DEA n.d.).

The events of 9/11 expanded the US anti-migrant social imaginary, specifically portraying undocumented immigrants as terrorists. Following 9/11, DHS and CBP would be established, assuming the authority of the previous INS. In this establishment, the INS’ initiative to deter undocumented migrants was redefined, and the new DHS was additionally tasked with

preventing terrorism. This mission redefinition resulted in the conceptual combination of ideas of smuggling, terrorism, the border region, and immigration (Nevins 2010). Leo Chavez (2013) analyzed the salience of the “Latino threat narrative” in political discourse in the twenty-first century, noting the role of the media in this narrative. The “Latino threat narrative” is one in which Latino populations, specifically Mexicans, are portrayed as an invading force, incapable of assimilation, with a goal of a Reconquista and “destroying the American way of life” (Chavez 2013, p.3). Golash-Boza (2015) found that the war on drugs and the war on terror were in mutual relation as the processes of mass incarceration and mass deportation that they produced both target populations perceived as expendable. Populations perceived as expendable are those whose bodies are available to be made dead.

In today’s culture, through the internet and mass media, these historically loaded imaginaries are re-rehearsed and continually reproduced in the homes of millions. Chavez noted the role that media coverage plays in constructing who is a legitimate member of society: “through the media, politicians desiring to restrict immigration have been able to represent undocumented immigrants as undeserving criminals and possible terrorists” (2013, p.10). Since the first settler colonial actions in the Americas, various social imaginaries have been strategically constructed, overlapping one another like a sort of punitive Russian nesting doll, to

conceptualize all non-Anglo immigrants and to justify their exclusion by identifying certain non-Anglo groups, as well as those who don't consent to white supremacist ideals, as national threats.

IV. Theoretical Applications

Discussed ideologies (of nativism and white supremacy) and imaginaries (of the “frontier” as well as a dichotomized “pioneer/savage” existence) can be tied to my combined Gramscian and necropolitical theoretical framework. These ideologies and imaginaries have played a historic role in the initial construction of notions of common sense. Mbembé identified the dual role of cultural imaginaries and productions of territorialization, the two collectively giving “meaning to the enactment of differential rights to differing categories of people for different purposes within the same space” (Mbembé & Meintjes 2003, p.26). Nevins (2010) conversation around how nativist understandings dichotomized a white rationality against perceived “savage” and “uncivilized” populations and Roediger's (2006) conversation around how “becoming white” meant subscribing to white supremacist ideals point to the production of a necropolitical US common sense. “Frontier” imaginaries would largely rely on notions of both nativism and white supremacy, further illustrating the US's establishment of common sense

during settler colonial times. Thus Gonzales' (2014) coined "anti-migrant hegemony" can be seen in relation to longer colonial histories that acted to relegate the existence of those who did not consent to US nativist and white supremacist common sense.

Connections between Expansions of Border Militarization and the Rise of Current-Day Border

Civilian Patrol Groups:

Expansions of militarization at the US-Mexico border have occurred alongside processes of globalization and neoliberal political and economic restructuring (Golash-Boza 2015; Gonzalez 2014; Hernández 2018; Laine 2016; Nevins 2010). Further, Golash-Boza (2015) noted the many scholars that cite the phenomenon of mass global migration as itself produced through these two processes.

1. *Border Militarization – Reaching scholarly consensus*

Since implementations of processes of globalization and neoliberal economic restructuring reforms in the 1980's, the border has become undisputably militarized (Golash-Boza 2015; Gonzalez 2014; Hernández 2018; Laine 2016; Nevins 2010).

As a general understanding, border militarization is defined by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights as a “systematic intensification of the border’s security apparatus, transforming the areas from a transnational frontier to a zone of permanent vigilance, enforcement, and violence” (NNiRR n.d.). Among scholars, there exist several different understandings of when militarization at the US-Mexico border began. Some scholars have argued that border militarization originated with colonial conquest practices and the development of a “white rationality” that denied Indigenous and Mexican communities their experiences, knowledges, and lifeways (Schaeffer 2022). Other scholars, such as Luke (2013), found that militarization at the border first started in the mid twentieth century as the US and Mexico were beginning to expand their binational economic ties and were intensifying cultural interactions. Hernández (2018) wrote that many view border militarization as originating in the 1990s. By contrast, Díaz-Barriga & Dorsey (2020) found that militarization of the border originated with the construction of walls and that this militarized understanding of the border permeates national

media today, while Nevins (2010) found that border militarization began in the Reagan administration and developed through a series of neoliberal Reagan-era policies related to immigration that both promoted collaborations between immigration and law enforcement apparatuses and expressed increases in federal interest around drugs, targeting undocumented migrant populations and linking immigration to the war on drugs. Iván López (2024) succinctly analyzed the various understandings among scholars of the initial development of militarization at the US-Mexico border and identifies the establishment of the US Border Patrol in 1924 as a point of consensus.

The unprecedented uptick in agency resources and funding that has been allocated to US Border Patrol since the mid 1990's is often considered to be linked to and promoting the phenomena of the border becoming indisputably militarized. This can be seen in Border Patrol budgetary allocations: in 1992, US Border Patrol received a \$326 million annual budget (Martínez et al. 2020), and by Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, DHS's total annual Appropriations budget was over \$91.5 billion, up from FY23's \$82 billion (Senate Appropriations Committee n.d.), with just under \$20 billion allocated specifically for CBP in FY24 (House Appropriations Republicans 2024). Additionally, as of 2020, it was found that US taxpayers funded CBP to the tune of \$18.2 billion annually (Martínez et al. 2020). These increases may also be seen in agent staffing

numbers through the same period: in 1992, US Border Patrol employed 4,139 agents stationed across its land and sea borders, and by 2019 this number was 19,648 agents, a near 5-fold increase in 27 years (Martínez et al. 2020).

Nevins (2010) described the various policies and initiatives introduced in the 1990s under the Clinton administration that contributed to the development of an indisputable state of militarization at the US-Mexico border as a “boundary build up.” This “boundary build up” was instituted by the Immigration Naturalization Service (INS) and subagency of Border Patrol, the predecessor to the DHS apparatus that houses the CBP agency today. The “boundary build-up” began with the enactment of state-specific policies such as El Paso’s 1993 Operation Hold the Line, California’s 1994 Prevention Through Deterrence (PTD), and Nogales, Arizona’s 1995 Operation Safeguard (Nevins 2010). Of this “boundary build-up,” exploring the origins of 1994 PTD is important to understanding because this DHS strategy changed the agency’s approach, changed migrant flows, and is still the “cornerstone” of CBP policy today (Doty 2011).

PTD was developed in response to the high volume of migrants crossing at the San Ysidro-Tijuana Port of Entry (POE), then composing the majority of undocumented crossings into the US. PTD replaced Border Patrol’s previous strategy of apprehending migrants post-crossing, and was created following recommendations from nuclear weapons manufacturer

Sandia National Laboratories (a Lockheed Martin subsidiary), which argued that increasing enforcement and patrol at the most trafficked POEs at the US-Mexico border was the best way to deter future migrants from crossing (Martínez et al. 2020). The deterrent underlying this policy was death. Following this recommendation, the first public discussions around PTD's implementation would occur in July 1994 (Nevins 2010). Nevins (2010) found that following its implementation, public opinion of PTD was almost universally characterized by US residents as a "worthwhile" and "integral" endeavor. Congressional officials wrote of PTD as an effort to concentrate resources at major POEs to establish control and force traffic to more difficult terrain (Painter & Singer 2024). Nevins (2010) found that this concentration of resources included increases in BP agent numbers, new uses of surveillance technologies, and support infrastructure, and that ultimately, PTD acted to achieve unprecedented levels of enforcement at the US-Mexico border, pushed migrant traffic further East, and led to unprecedented numbers of migrant deaths that continue to this day. Strickland (2022) noted that changing migrant traffic flows and increasing enforcement at POEs means that since the establishment of PTD, undocumented immigrants now tend to cross the border in more remote areas, including crossing through private property at higher rates than pre-PTD. Many scholars have noted the dehumanization

present in PTD and CBP's documented chronic mistreatment and mishandling of migrant bodies (Cantú 2018; De León 2015; Doty 2011; López 2024; Miller 2014; Nevins 2010).

In this PTD strategy of deterrence, the physical landscape of the borderlands aids in deflecting federal responsibility for productions of mass death. For instance, Jason De León (2015) named this production of mass death at the US-Mexico as necroviolence, arguing that "PTD is necropower operationalized" (2015, p.58). In his argument, De León defined necroviolence as "violence performed and produced through the specific treatment of corpses that is perceived to be offensive, sacrilegious, or inhumane by the perpetrator, victim (...or their cultural group...) or both," further noting that necroviolence is "specifically about corporeal mistreatment and its generative capacity for violence" (2015, p.69). De León listed different types of corporeal mistreatment included in this definition, finding that the most "complex and durable form" of corporeal mistreatment is complete bodily destruction, as it "allows perpetrators plausible deniability," prevents funerary rites, mourning, further complicates grieving processes, and provides individuals a complete lack of closure (2015, p.69). De León (2015) found that CBP leaving bodies in the desert to be scavenged, spread across the landscape by desert scavenging animals such as vultures, and left to decompose meets this definition of the most "complex and durable form" of corporeal mistreatment associated with necroviolence. De

León argued that the “hybrid collectif of border enforcement” should thus include nature and scavenging animals as they represent the final stage of deterrence in PTD – these animals effectively destroy evidence with no witnesses, and this destruction of evidence is identified as obscuring and erasing the “human cost of federal policy” (2015, p.80). “Postmortem effects on migrant bodies in the desert is necroviolence largely outsourced to nature and the environment, but is tied to PTD, territorial sovereignty, and exceptional states inscribed on unauthorized migrants” (2015 p.69).

Roxanne Doty shared De León’s understanding of how the federal government uses the physical landscape of the borderlands to their advantage. Doty (2011) noted that spaces generally are implicated in and are products of systems of power. In this, she saw that the spatial landscape of the US-Mexico borderlands has been essential to the state since the start of PTD, and by making it possible to identify migrant deaths as “natural cause” related, “have functioned to provide a moral alibi for any responsibility on the US” (2011, p.130). Doty (2011) further argued that PTD was not intended to eliminate undocumented migration, and notes that migrant deaths rising as apprehensions drop is evidence that the result of PTD hasn’t been deterrence, just productions of death on mass scales. García Hernández (2019) noted a survey of over 600 Mexican migrants in which just 55 respondents said that immigration enforcement practices

deterred them from trying to cross the border, pointing to the credibility of Doty's argument that PTD's goal has never been deterrence. Finally, Doty (2011) noted that PTD is alive and well in current CBP policy, being expanded on with the Secure Border Initiative, still representing the "cornerstone" of US border enforcement policy.

US Civilian Patrol Groups

US civilian patrol groups have operated since the nineteenth century and have arisen in response to a variety of issues, including immigration. An example of one of the earliest US civilian patrol groups concerned with issues of immigration was the Native American Party. This party was founded in 1845 by newspaper owner Lewis Charles Levin (Strickland 2022). Strickland (2022) noted that within a decade, the Native American Party had rebranded to the "Know Nothings Party" (when a member of the group was asked about the group's existence or their membership in it, the member was expected to reply that they "knew nothing"). Lorraine Boissoneault (2017) noted that the party was also originally known as the American Party. This group initially became interested in the topic of restricting immigration following a wave of Catholic European immigrants into the country from 1820 to 1845 (Nevins 2010). Strickland found that this party gained substantial visibility through the 1850s, sweeping city elections in

the US North East in cities such as Salem, Boston, Philly, and DC, gaining massive public support: “Within months, the party’s membership swelled from tens of thousands to over a million” (2022, p.27). Meanwhile, on the west coast, San Francisco established a “so called vigilante committee” for a brief three-month period in 1851 over fears of increasing crime following a wave of Australian and Irish immigration, with group actions including hanging four migrants, patrolling, detainment, and forced deportation practices, with a second committee with similar functions arising in the city in 1856 (Strickland 2022, p.30). Strickland (2022) noted that San Francisco additionally had anti-Chinese immigration civilian patrol groups present through the 1850s that focused on labor restrictions for Chinese immigrants.

Strickland highlighted that civilian patrol groups specifically functioning at the US-Mexico border arose in the 1850s. The earliest border civilian patrol groups focused on returning formerly enslaved African Americans that fled to Mexico as well as on restricting the entry of undocumented Chinese immigrants (Strickland 2022). Early border civilian patrol groups included the El Paso Mounted Guards, a 75-person horseback patrol of the border from Texas to California in search of Chinese undocumented immigrants crossing the border. This group was noted to have collaborated with both the Texas Rangers and the US military (Strickland 2022).

Strickland (2022) highlighted that anti-immigration sentiment crystallized in US political discourses through the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. He noted that during this time, “anti-immigrant movements cropped up from time to time, some more militant than others” (2022, p.39).

The 1960s would see the rise of the social movement Posse Comitatus. Strickland wrote of the movement as “a far-right social movement that ... overlaps with the white supremacist Christian Identity movement ... the Posse Comitatus played a pivotal role in the growth of the militia movement in the 1990s” (2022, p.73). Group members, understanding themselves as “sovereign citizens,” are predominantly white, spread conspiracy theories with antisemitic themes, and do not believe Federal law applies to them (Strickland 2022). Strickland (2022) further noted that in 2011, the Southern Poverty Law Center estimated that there were around 100,000 “sovereign citizens” in the US. As of 2023, the SPLC noted that there were over 80 groups aligned with this movement active in the US, with members of the movement distancing from the title “sovereign citizen” due to its associations with violence, coming to prefer the term “American State Nationals” (SPLC n.d.). In combination with this social movement, the Civil Rights Movement of the mid twentieth century would spur the rise of a

“new crop of far-right militants” focused on issues of immigration that would grow starting in the 1970s (Strickland 2022, p.39).

Civilian patrol group activities at the border began increasing in the 1970s. The 1977 “Klan border watch” from San Ysidro, CA, to Brownsville, TX, that happened under Knights of the KKK head David Duke was the “most immediate incantation” of the resurgence of the current-day border civilian patrol movement (Strickland 2022, p.xv). In the 1990s, more well-organized civilian patrol efforts would begin in Arizona. In the late 1990s two Arizona ranchers signed an informal proclamation that they would provide security for their ranches if the government couldn’t. The ranchers claim to have apprehended 12,000 migrants in their civilian patrol history and have since been identified as impersonating federal agents (Fernandes 2007; Vina et al. 2006). Other civilian patrol group activities in the 1990s and early 2000s included those of groups Ranch Rescue and Civil Homeland Defense, operating out of Texas and Arizona respectively (Vina et al. 2006). The establishment of the Minutemen Project in 2005 as a partnership between James Gilchrist and Chris Simcox led to the 2005 Minutemen patrols in which hundreds of volunteers flocked to the Arizona border. The Minutemen Project claimed to be enacting this patrol event due to drops in apprehension levels in Arizona and that their presence helped assist in the apprehensions of 349 individuals, but congressional researchers

noted that USBP contested the claim, noting that any changes in apprehension patterns were due to changes in activities of Mexican authorities, and says the patrol effectively disrupted operations by tripping sensors, forcing agents to respond to false alarms (Vina et al. 2006).

Fernandes noted that even though this patrol event was justified on false pretenses, “following the ... patrols ... it was reported that some forty Minutemen-inspired groups in eighteen states had sprung up and into action” (2007, p.234).

The increase in border civilian patrol group activities from the 1970-1990s can be tied to the simultaneous rise and mainstreaming of anti-immigrant activism in the US. Fernandes, in her book *Targeted* (2007), discussed the anti-immigration public activist John Tanton and his links to the rise of current-day civilian patrol groups. Tanton initially founded the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) in 1979 and his anti-immigrant network grew from there. Thirteen organizations are now recognized as part of Tanton’s powerful and well-funded anti-immigration network, including funding for the border civilian patrol group American Patrol/American Border Patrol/Voices of Citizens together led by Glenn Spencer (SPLC 2010). Tanton additionally sat on the advisory board of this border civilian patrol group (Fernandes 2007). Fernandes highlighted that Tanton’s anti-immigration network has been successful in that it builds “a public case for a certain immigration enforcement strategy, thereby moving it from a

place where it has marginal support to a place where it has enough mainstream backing to pass into law” (2007, p.221). Fernandes noted that from 2005-2006, legislative priorities for many of the organizations in Tanton’s network and those of “many of the white supremacist groups,” including border civilian patrols, were “almost identical” (2007, p.229-230). This illustrates an overlap between the rise of influential anti-immigrant activism networks and the rise of civilian patrol group activities at the US-Mexico border: “the anti-immigration movement has latched on to border vigilante patrols” (Fernandes 2007, p.233). Paola Ramos (2024) furthered Fernandez’s argument that Tanton’s network has mainstreamed anti-immigration attitudes in US society in her book, noting that narratives underpinning Tanton’s 1970s anti-immigration network were present in Trump’s 2020 campaign and later presidential agenda, have been echoed on major cable TV networks during both Trump and Biden presidencies, and that today, armed border vigilantes have become physical manifestations of ideologies promoted by the Tanton network starting in the 1970s.

The relationship between the federal government and civilian patrols has historically been tense. Strickland (2022) and Costley (2020) similarly noted that for decades the federal government wanted to stamp out these groups and tended to avoid interactions with them.

Fernandes (2007) revealed that the early Bush administration was unsure on how to approach the

activities of civilian patrol groups, at first refusing to condemn their actions, then gradually refining their position and identifying these groups as “vigilantes.” Though Federal law regarding civilian patrol and CBP interaction reads that civilian patrols should not impersonate Federal immigration enforcement officials or attempt to engage in actions that may be identified as impersonation (Vina et al. 2006), interactions between CBP and civilian patrol groups at the border are not uncommon, and these interactions are highly variant. Legal understandings of the roles that civilian patrol groups are authorized to play in respect to immigration enforcement will be further analyzed in my analysis section.

Chapter 3: DATA AND METHODS

Subjects

My research project examined the relationship between two groups in US society: state actors, specifically DHS and CBP, and nonstate actors, specifically civilian patrol groups.

Pursuing a primary and secondary data analysis using preexisting data allowed me to trace the relationship between these groups over a longer period than the immediate present. Interactions between these groups are worth examining as both are both understood to have played a historical role in defining attitudes around immigration in America (Hernández 2018; Nevins 2010; Ramos 2024). Understanding the interactions between CBP and border civilian patrol groups reveals a relationship amongst these groups that is important to consider when understanding how border security is produced.

DHS has a history of releasing inaccurate reports and findings. Additionally, the varied conceptualizations and processes of violence that CBP engages in are organizationally-engrained and have become obscured (López 2024; Rivera 2015). DHS is organizationally structured and defines its political objectives around obscuring actions it takes and information that it collects (Cantú 2018; López 2024; Miller 2018; Rivera 2015). Therefore, pursuing a primary and secondary data analysis is an ideal method to manage data produced by this institution with a

more careful eye. This will allow me to compare CBP policies, initiatives, reports, statements, political objectives, and actions from multiple of their own sources.

The second group I analyzed is border civilian patrol groups. With expansions of the accessibility of the internet and social medias in the twenty-first century, many of these groups use mass media today as a tool to communicate, network, advertise, recruit, fundraise, issue press releases, collect resources, and mobilize (Vina et al 2006). Several civilian patrol groups use online media resources to approach their goals, and many of these groups have acquired substantial following bases that support them through donations of money and items, follow the group's actions and conversations on public pages and private servers, and leave supportive comments on posts.

Study Design

I completed a primary data analysis and used secondary sources when necessary. Data for each group was presented and analyzed individually, then discussed in relation to one another. Pursuing both policy and media analyses was valuable and necessary. I decided to combine these two methods of analysis because I wouldn't have been able to get necessary information on both groups if I were to just choose one method. For instance, performing a

media analysis on state actors may be limited, not providing a full picture of their stated actions, while border civilian patrol groups' involvement in legislative and policy-making processes is limited, and thus their voices would not be as well represented in a policy analysis. I brought these analyses together to provide multiple angles from which to understand these groups that are constructed as being from "different" sectors of society.

Regarding DHS and CBP, I performed a policy analysis using various pieces of policy and initiatives as my sources. For instance, sources I used in my discussion of how CBP interacts with the public included CBP's Youth Explorers Program. I performed a policy analysis on specific sections of the 2002 official version of the Homeland Security Act as well as the 2023 unofficial version, selecting sections that were relevant for detailing the relationship between state and nonstate actors. Because DHS does not use the language "nonstate actors," I identified relevant sections as those mentioning departmental interactions with the "private sector."

Performing a policy analysis on the department's founding document is important as this policy discusses basic functions and features of the DHS and its relation to private sector activities. Performing a policy analysis on the founding document of a government agency that has strategically used government policy to influence the lives of hundreds of millions of people is apt for my project. Additionally, policy analysis is a valuable tool to use for a sociological

investigation into CBP specifically. Eugene Bardach wrote of the value of this form of analysis:

"Policy analysis, properly done, requires you to think not only about the technical aspects of governmental action but also about its institutional aspects—that is, the institutions that implement policy" (2012, p.151). Comparing this statement to Durkheim's understanding of sociology as "the science of institutions" illustrates that a policy analysis is appropriate when approaching documents produced by governmental agencies from a sociological perspective (Durkheim 1982, p.5).

In terms of border civilian patrol groups, I performed a media analysis using mass media produced by these groups and specifically narrowed my discussion to a conversation of the relationship between CBP and a specific border civilian patrol group – Arizona Border Recon (AZBR). In my media analysis, I used sources such as AZBR's group website, Facebook, and Instagram. I additionally used passages of commentary from two podcast appearances and a movie that the leader of AZBR has been featured in.

The WayBack Machine website was a valuable resource for my analysis of AZBR's online activities. The website was created by the Internet Archive in 1996, allowing the public to archive other websites by taking and uploading screenshots of them, amassing over 916 billion uploads over its history (WayBack Machine n.d.). It is an important public resource and was

utilized as a valuable tool in understanding AZBR's history. However, the WayBack Machine presents a limitation in that it only provides publicly archived information. This means that for websites without much public interest, there is little archived evidence. In this way, the WayBack Machine provides an incomplete picture of AZBR's website's evolution, with substantial gaps in coverage notably from 2011 to the start of 2016, which should be noted. Additionally, the WayBack Machine has less available material for the group's YouTube and Facebook pages, having material first available for these sources in late 2022 and spring 2016 respectively, thus using the WayBack Machine is most applicable for and solely used in discussion of AZBR's main website.

As civilian patrol groups increasingly use social media to perform a variety of activities, a media analysis is an important approach to examining this social media use. David Altheide and Christopher Schneider wrote that with the rise of the prominence of the internet:

“It became apparent that traditional approaches to understanding many documents, such as the mass media, were inadequate in dealing with newer information and perspectives about how documents were constructed and the ways in which media were being shaped and used by claims makers, journalists, and different audiences. This has especially become the case with the emergence and expansion of social media. ... an awareness by many researchers that simply studying the content of the mass media was not enough; it was also important to be aware of the process, meanings, and

emphases reflected in the content, including discursive practices” (2013, p.2).

Scholar Katherine Cross also presented a unique understanding of the value of media analyses that can be applied to analyzing works from border civilian patrol groups. Cross (2024) highlighted the various intersections of social media, online activism, and politics in current-day US society. She noted that social media both shapes our approach to the world and functions as a medium of images, aspiring to reduce all to images (Cross 2024). Cross argued that because the internet was created around the idea that we should be liberated from an embodied humanity, this contributes to a situation where the internet becomes “fundamentally dissociative,” with people not receiving consequences for their actions, thus producing more displays of a “dissociative imagination.” Cross found that this dissociation reinforces fear and terror within users, producing the illusion of “the panopticon ubiquity of bad news,” which creates “illusions of inevitable doom for those already living under threat, closing off any hope of a life worth living” (2024, p.124).

As border civilian patrol groups today use mass media, social medias, and release images and videos of their actions at the US-Mexico border to large audiences who are more geographically-distanced from the border, they become actors, drawing on and reinscribing historic ideologies and imaginaries that have shaped the border region. In drawing on Cross’s

application of the role of images, I extend this idea to videos published on social media as well, including podcast episodes and movies, seeing these forms of media additionally as sites in which ideas around threats and “securing” the border become reinscribed and reproduced, ultimately producing “illusions of inevitable doom ... closing off any hope of a life worth living” (Cross 2024, p.124). Understanding not just photographs and videos but also movies and podcasts as sites of reinscription allows me to analyze media produced by border civilian patrol groups and connect it to larger social narratives and imaginaries.

I collected data for my project from September 2024-January 17, 2025. Due to the presidential administrative change and the assumption of Donald Trump to office for a second term on January 20, 2025, the online activities of border civilian patrol groups such as AZBR are liable to change. In conversation with my program director I have decided to stop data collection prior to the Trump Administration’s ascent to office. As I will discuss in this thesis, the border civilian patrol group AZBR has at least since 2021 been formally identified by the Arizona State Supreme Court to be in direct partnership with DHS and the group identifies themselves as being in partnership with CBP on their group website as early as 2013, therefore suggesting a longer relationship. Thus, once this new administration, hellbent on unleashing federal enforcement apparatuses onto immigrants, takes office, I do not know what this authorized state/nonstate

partnership will morph into, presenting a limitation of my study discussed in further detail below.

Limitations

Challenges I faced with these analysis methods included not having access to certain civilian patrol group information and data. For instance, though many of the online platforms that border civilian patrol groups use are publicly accessible, certain platforms, such as Telegram and Discord, have invite-only policies for channels and servers, making these sources less accessible and less publicly visible. Some border civilian patrol group members and supporters use these servers to record day-to-day information, such as the group Veterans on Patrol (VOP). Author Freddy Cruz (2021) discussed his investigation into VOP's Telegram server, in which he found that this server is used to fundraise, communicate developments to supporters, and share pictures and videos of what the group is doing. Thus, some work that border civilian patrol groups engage in is hidden from the public, taking place on these essentially private servers. Border civilian patrol groups have garnered attention and criticism by journalists, NGOs, and Congressional researchers (Cruz 2021; Cruz 2021; Vina et al 2006; Western States Center 2022). Additionally, some of the members of these groups have faced legal repercussions such as arrests

(Leon 2019; Strickland 2022) and federal lawsuits (SPLC n.d., for unapproved settlement findings see: Gómez & MacDonald-Evoy 2019; MacDonald-Evoy 2020; Strickland 2022). Thus, border civilian patrol group communications occurring on private servers may illustrate a desire to avoid additional public scrutiny. My research will not focus on data from private servers, and thus this limitation is not directly relevant to my project, but is important to note as border civilian patrol groups use private online channels to not only sustain online followings but, as Cruz has noted, grow networks through strengthening collaborations and “coalitions” with other border civilian patrol groups. This finding is worthy of further academic investigation.

Some border civilian patrol content is less available than in previous years. Strickland (2022) highlighted the impact of Summer 2020 and later 2021 federal and company crackdowns on QAnon-related social media accounts on the online presence of border civilian patrol groups, noting the disappearance of VOPs Facebook and Twitter resources following these efforts, which remain inactive. This limitation prevented me from accessing media from some groups.

Additionally, stopping data collection before the Trump administration takes office means that the data produced by both DHS apparatuses and border civilian patrol groups may change rapidly in a short period of time, presenting an unavoidable limitation. I thus must acknowledge the limitation of my inability to collect data on this relationship through the

assumption of the Trump presidency, though I am hopeful that additional sociological attention will be paid to the collaborations of these groups throughout this presidency and into the future.

Currently, the group AZBR is given marginal scholarly attention, mentioned only briefly in dozens of academic books, the most substantive of coverage being in journalist Patrick Strickland's book *The Marauders* (2022). There is one other sociological study pertaining specifically to the border civilian patrol group AZBR (Costley 2020). AZBR is extensively covered by journalists in the mass media, interviewed by cable TV networks (FOX News 2024), discussed by Congressional researchers, is featured on podcasts of important political figures such as Steve Bannon's *War Room*, and is featured in a 2015 international multi-award winning and Academy Awards nominated film *Cartel Land*. I am hopeful that in future years closer academic and specifically sociological attention will be paid to AZBR, their formal partnership with CBP, and how the groups may co-produce violence and ideas around security at the US-Mexico border in this partnership.

Positionality

I embarked on this project as a cisgender white woman living in the US with US citizenship. I am an outside member of both of the groups I analyzed. Besides previous work and

my relationship with the non-profit organization Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN) where I primarily worked on revisions to the 2019 the Keep Washington Working Act (KWW), providing economic and PPE resources for undocumented agricultural workers in Washington state in the summer of 2020, I have minimal connections with migrant networks connected to the Americas.

I have more extensive connections with migrants from countries of India and Germany, and thus most of the knowledge I have gained throughout my life around topics of immigration and how US immigration policy affects the lives of migrants has been associated with Indian and German immigrant groups. Much of my childhood was spent in the homes of first and second generation American Indian immigrants, where over the years I became more aware of the challenges that these communities face in respect to negotiation with immigration apparatuses, bureaucratic limitations, and the lengthy process of acquiring citizenship.

My positionality as a researcher is important to address as this provides an understanding of my privilege in relation to the topic of immigration generally, and in relation to immigration enforcement specifically. Understanding my positionality may aid in reducing biases within my research project.

Chapter 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, results from policy and media analyses of primary and secondary data sources are discussed to gain a better understanding of the relationship between state and nonstate actors at the border. This section will begin with a discussion of CBP, as well as other state actors, and communicate information on state actors specifically. The second section will look more closely at nonstate actors, specifically border civilian patrol groups. Following this, a discussion of the two groups in relation to one another will provide a clearer picture of the relationship between state and nonstate actors in “securing the border.”

Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, and other State Actors:

In my data results I discuss relevant sections of the 2002 Homeland Security Act (HSA), the founding document of the governmental department DHS and of the subagencies of CBP and USBP. A policy analysis of this document, specifically focusing on various sections within the Act that pertain to agency relations with the private sector, is of use to my project and illustrates what DHS initially viewed as legitimate and authorized practices and collaborations with nonstate actors. These findings will be applied to current DHS and CBP practices in relation

to the private sector and can be used to further clarify governmental understandings concerning the relationship between CBP and border civilian patrol groups in current-day US society.

1. *Policy Analysis: The 2002 Homeland Security Act (HSA).*

The 2002 Homeland Security Act (HSA) is the founding document for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This document jointly established Customs and Border Protection (CBP), growing out of the newly formed department. By paying attention to its formation and the approaches this document takes to security, I aim to show how the DHS initially viewed its roles, functions, and approaches to security in its founding document. There are two versions of the document available to the public, an official 2002 version and an unofficial, updated 2023 version. I primarily used the official version, though cross-referenced sections with the unofficial version as this 2023 version was created to “ensure the accuracy of its [The 2002 HSA’s] contents” (*Homeland Security Act of 2002*, 2023). Due to the document’s length, with the official Act having 189 pages and the unofficial having 471 pages, I am narrowing my discussion to relevant sections within the Act, determined as those pertaining to DHS’ relationship to the private sector. Sections 204, 313, 318, 525, and 884 of the HSA cover DHS’ relationship to the

private sector but are not directly relevant to my analysis of the relationship between border civilian patrol groups and DHS and thus are not included in my policy analysis.

Sections are discussed chronologically by appearance for organizational purposes, moving from the earliest to latest sections in the Act that concern these relations.

Section 101 of the act outlined the establishment of the DHS and transfer of authorities from the INS, noting the mission of the department. This section read differently between the 2002 and 2023 editions of the HSA – the 2023 edition has an added subsection (G):

TITLE I—DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

6 USC 111.

SEC. 101. EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT; MISSION.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established a Department of Homeland Security, as an executive department of the United States within the meaning of title 5, United States Code.

(b) **MISSION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The primary mission of the Department is to—

(A) prevent terrorist attacks within the United States;

(B) reduce the vulnerability of the United States to terrorism;

(C) minimize the damage, and assist in the recovery, from terrorist attacks that do occur within the United States;

(D) carry out all functions of entities transferred to the Department, including by acting as a focal point regarding natural and manmade crises and emergency planning;

(E) ensure that the functions of the agencies and subdivisions within the Department that are not related directly to securing the homeland are not diminished or neglected except by a specific explicit Act of Congress;

(F) ensure that the overall economic security of the United States is not diminished by efforts, activities, and programs aimed at securing the homeland; and

(G) monitor connections between illegal drug trafficking and terrorism, coordinate efforts to sever such connections, and otherwise contribute to efforts to interdict illegal drug trafficking.

FIG 1: Section 101 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 Official Version (2002)

- (A) prevent terrorist attacks within the United States;
- (B) reduce the vulnerability of the United States to terrorism;
- (C) minimize the damage, and assist in the recovery, from terrorist attacks that do occur within the United States;
- (D) carry out all functions of entities transferred to the Department, including by acting as a focal point regarding natural and manmade crises and emergency planning;
- (E) ensure that the functions of the agencies and subdivisions within the Department that are not related directly to securing the homeland are not diminished or neglected except by a specific explicit Act of Congress;
- (F) ensure that the overall economic security of the United States is not diminished by efforts, activities, and programs aimed at securing the homeland;
- (G) ensure that the civil rights and civil liberties of persons are not diminished by efforts, activities, and programs aimed at securing the homeland; and
- (H) monitor connections between illegal drug trafficking and terrorism, coordinate efforts to sever such connections, and otherwise contribute to efforts to interdict illegal drug trafficking.

FIG 2: Section 101 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 Unofficial Version (2023)

Subsections G and H are particularly of interest. The subsection detailing “the civil rights and civil liberties of persons” is only present in Section 101 of the unofficial 2023 copy of the HSA (2023 p.13). This illustrates a state desire over the 21 years between these documents to include this subsection. DHS ensuring the “civil rights and civil liberties of persons” is vague language, suggesting that the department envisions this to apply to all people, including noncitizens. DHS’s implementation of this part of their mission statement has not ensured the civil rights and liberties of undocumented or documented immigrants, Legal Permanent

Residents (or LPR's/Greencard holders), or US citizens. García Hernández (2019) noted that having permission to be in US doesn't guarantee one's freedom, LPR's are both deported and in immigration prisons. A 2020 report from the Center of Migration Studies (CMS) discussed findings from various social science data sources pertaining to the treatment of migrants by CBP from 1999-2020, revealing that physical abuse rates were from around 11-16%, while verbal abuse rates sat around 20-34% (Martínez et al. 2020). The researchers (2020) found that CBP's treatment of minors doesn't align with federal, court, or CBP agency standards, with over half of minor migrants encountering CBP enforcement reporting they didn't know what they signed, while 7% were threatened with a weapon. Regarding formal complaints, the CMS report revealed that of the 809 complaints against agents filed from 2009-2011, 97% of cases resulted in no action taken. Following this abysmal record of addressing formal complaints, CBP's Office of Internal Affairs was issued a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request by the American Immigration Council. In September of 2014, then-DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson made efforts to remedy this situation, and a follow up regarding formal complaints was made between 2012-2015 where it was found that no action was taken 96% of the time (Martínez et al. 2020). This illustrates that even when the DHS Secretary is personally involved in trying to remedy this inability to pursue action regarding formal complaints lodged against members of the agency of

CBP, the agency is unable to change this pattern, reflecting a larger, structural problem within the agency. As CBP continues to harm people and deny their “civil rights and civil liberties” while dismissing formal complaints against their agents, this part of their mission statement will not be met, bringing into question how migrant life and death is conceptualized by the agency.

CBP’s inability to “ensure the civil rights and civil liberties of persons” as well as the poor track record around formal complaints within the agency can be tied to necropolitics and Gramscian theoretical frameworks. Mbembe noted that in the contemporary era, there is a co-construction of territorialization and various cultural imaginaries that act to collectively give “meaning to the enactment of differential rights to differing categories of people for different purposes within the same space” (Mbembé & Meintjes 2003, p.26). In this era, “little by little, a terror that is ... allegedly defensive is seeking legitimation by blurring the relations between violence, murder, and the law” (Mbembe 2016, p.7). My literature review focused on how historic ideas and imaginaries would use dehumanizing language to discuss non-Anglo and undocumented immigrant populations. These discursive manipulations act to further blur “the relations between violence, murder, and the law,” coming to “dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe 2016, p.66) and may be compared to the HSA’s language in this section. The section not addressing *whose* civil rights and liberties are ensured by their practices is thus

revealing and illustrates an overlap with Gramscian understandings that argue cultural hegemony largely functions through the reinforcement and reproduction of common sense. I argue that this subsection of the unofficial 2023 HSA illustrates the state's notion of common sense, promoting those who feel threatened.

Subsection G of the official HSA and H of the unofficial HSA is the same. This subsection allowed DHS to “monitor connections,” “coordinate,” and “otherwise contribute to” efforts related to undocumented drug trafficking. As it reads, this section does not restrict the ability to utilize private sector networks, infrastructure, and actors in these efforts. Additionally, DHS's ability to “coordinate” these efforts is of interest. As I will show in the next section of my analysis, DHS is partnered with private actors, notably the leader of AZBR, in issues concerning trafficking.

Section 471 formally abolished the INS, noting that the DHS may reorganize, but not recombine, entities and agencies now under its authority (Homeland Security Act, 2002). Section 411 established Customs and Border Protection (CBP) as an agency under the DHS and subsection E of this section specifically created the US Border Patrol (USBP), which is housed within CBP (*Homeland Security Act of 2002*, 2002).

Section 317 only appeared in the unofficial 2023 HSA, serving a similar purpose to the 2002 HSA's Section 313. Section 317 concerned the establishment of the International Cooperation program, in which international allies may partner in research, studies, conferences, training, field exercises, and uses of labs to support US homeland security efforts. Line two of subsection C provided information on "foreign partners," detailing a list of five Industrialized countries that include Israel, the UK, Canada, Australia, and Singapore. Following this, the subsection additionally noted "and other allies in the global war on terrorism as determined to be appropriate by the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State" (*Homeland Security Act of 2002*, 2023 p.77). This note on "appropriate" foreign partnerships for an International Cooperation program being determined by the DHS Secretary and Secretary of State is of interest, as it identifies these two state positions as holding an important role. The power to designate what may be considered an "appropriate" partnership with a nonstate entity means that one possesses the power to designate an "inappropriate" partnership as it pertains to the opinion and policy of the DHS and US state.

The ability of the DHS Secretary and Secretary of State to designate what is/is not considered an "appropriate" partnership between US state and private entities highlights Gramscian theoretical understandings of common sense as the central mechanism used by

dominant fundamental groups to establish consent among nonhegemonic actors and reproduce the hegemonic order (Obamamoye 2023). The HSA embodies Gonzales' (2014) identification of anti-migrant hegemony as the type of ideological leadership employed by the dominant fundamental group in current-day US society. Gonzales (2014) noted anti-migrant hegemony as the lynchpin of the modern state system of migration control which effectively conceals the racial politics of migration control and guarantees a reproduction of the "homeland security state." In this section, I apply Gramscian understandings of common sense generally as a way to gain consent and reproduce a given (necropolitical) hegemonic order, and specifically Gonzales' situation of current-day US anti-migrant hegemony as central to the modern state system of migration control, to the HSA. This act can then be read as functioning to use notions of current-day US common sense to legitimize DHS authority over issues of immigration and their ability to designate "appropriate" and "inappropriate" partnerships the agency may engage in. The fact that partnered countries are likely to be those allied with the US in the "global war on terrorism" is equally revealing of the roles that Gramscian understandings of "common sense" play in governmental understandings and distinctions of "appropriate/inappropriate" partnerships. Overall, this section of the HSA shows how common sense is employed by state actors to legitimize and further reinforce and reproduce dominant fundamental group practices, ideologies,

imaginaries, and interests such as those of the DHS Secretary and Secretary of State possessing the legitimate authority to determine appropriate partnerships the department may engage in.

Section 519 concerned prioritizing uses of “national private sector networks” in emergency management. This section is only four lines long, stating that national private sector networks and infrastructure shall be utilized by the department “To the maximum extent practicable ... for emergency response to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or explosive disasters, and other major disasters” (*Homeland Security Act of 2002*, 2002 p.81). This section provides an example of how DHS has come to implement reforms associated with neoliberal restructuring, such as privatization, into their department generally, and specifically in times of emergency. Times of emergency can also be read as a state of crisis. Gramsci and Mbembe’s discussions of states of crisis in their works inform how DHS formally outlines their collaborations and deployments of private sector personnel, equipment, and infrastructure for national security aims. Both theorists see the crisis of society as fundamentally about a struggle against an enemy. Additionally, both theorists highlight the outsourcing of state military actions to private actors and see this outsourcing as a signal of the proper functioning of either the contemporary war machine (Mbembe) or the political society/state (Gramsci). Gramsci particularly understands this outsourcing to occur when the state/political society is in a moment

of crisis – its troops are “demoralized” and weak. These theoretical understandings of the outsourcing of state military actions to private actors as a proper functioning of the state in its ability to maintain hegemony within a society demonstrate how the HSA illustrates DHS’ understandings regarding their relationship to the private sector.

This policy analysis has discussed sections of the Homeland Security Act that pertain to the department’s understandings of its legitimate abilities to interact with the private sector and nonstate actors. DHS’ ability to interact with nonstate actors as outlined in the HSA has been compared to theoretical understandings and will be further tied to the relationship between the state and AZBR. This analysis illustrated the DHS’ communicated notion of common sense as in protection of populations that feel a sense of crisis or threat. The next section highlights how DHS envisions themselves as “selling a worldview” of protection from this perceived crisis/threat.

II. CBP Interactions with Nonstate Actors

CBP interacts with the public beyond what is formally outlined in the 2002 HSA. Today, CBP interactions with the public include their Explorers Program and Citizens Academy

Programs, but the agency has had a long history of public engagement that began in its predecessor of the INS.

Todd Miller found that US immigration enforcement apparatuses history with public engagement, and particularly attempts to appeal to youth, date back to the mid 1950s and included INS efforts such as the establishment of Junior Patrol Clubs which promoted Border Patrol's tactics and "goodwill" in communities (2014, p.72). Miller (2014) additionally highlighted the initial PTD designer, Silvestre Reyes's, many efforts around public engagement, including: a December 1993 "Operation Santa Claus," in which the sounds of a BP helicopter landing at a community center where a "BP Santa" handed children presents drowned out an El Paso border rights coalition meeting, volunteer work at local schools, and feeding the poor around Christmas. Miller identified Reyes' actions in these public engagement efforts as effectively "selling a worldview" (2014, p.61). In Gramscian terms, this "selling of a worldview" is part of constructing and reinforcing common sense. Miller (2014) noted that CBP have been present at school show-and-tells, schoolchildren get to name the agency's new horses, and the agency has many hands-on programs such as "shop with a cop" for young children in need. Beyond Silvestre Reyes' actions with the public, I will argue that all of CBP's interactions with the public are in pursuit of "selling a worldview" (Miller 2014, p.61).

CBP's website notes that the Border Patrol Law Enforcement Explorers Program was created in 1973, writing of the Explorers Program as:

“a volunteer program designed for young men and women ages 14 to 20 to receive experience in and exposure to law enforcement careers within CBP. The program is chartered through Learning for Life (LFL), which is a subsidiary of the Scouts of America, and serves as an educational and career development resource with CBP as the sponsoring agency. It provides applicants the option to participate in either the United States Border Patrol (USBP) Explorer Program or the CBP Officer (CBPO) Explorer Program. ... you will participate in real-life law enforcement scenarios” (U.S. Customs and Border Protection n.d.).

Morley Musick wrote for *The Nation* (2020) of the difficulties in acquiring information from either CBP or Learning for Life on the program, specifically mentioning that CBP's rationale for poor response rates was short staffing, then once they scheduled a meeting with Musick, “dropped the ball after numerous further requests.” Musick (2020) wrote that recruits train at the Basic Explorer Academy where they learn:

“physical fitness, CPR, drills, and conducting vehicle stops. It also offers courses in radio communications, public speaking, report writing, and ‘ethics and integrity’ and introduces the youths to criminal, juvenile, immigration, and Fourth Amendment law. Finally, the budding Explorers learn the history of the Border Patrol, along with the nuts and bolts of how the agency

operates. When it comes to patrolling, the techniques they learn vary by geography.”

Each Explorers post is self-funded, and how each post fundraises is highly variant. Musick (2020) highlighted that the Explorers program unit he was interviewing fundraised by selling used bullet casings, while Todd Miller (2014) noted the El Paso Explorers Post that he interacted with fundraised by selling chocolate bars at gas stations. Miller further noted that CBP’s Niagara Falls Citizens Academy Program which was formed to "encourage the people of Niagara Falls to be the Patrol’s ‘eyes and ears’” represents the adult-version of the Explorer’s Program (2014, p.300).

I argue that The Explorer’s Program and adult-version of the Citizens Academy Program demonstrate Gramsci and Mbembe’s arguments and additionally illustrate how the state works to engage and bring the public, including youth, into an apparatus of state coercive necropower. The CBP Explorer Programs and its adult equivalent of the Citizens Academy Program can be seen as an instance where common sense becomes supplanted over various actors within a society and is used to establish consent, or in Miller’s words, to “sell a worldview” (2014, p.61). This situates the agency’s goals and can be connected to Miller’s discussion of USBP’s May 2012 1,000th graduating class, in which the ceremony identified these

new graduates as embarking into a career concerned with “protecting a way of life” (2014, p.23). These ideas of CBP’s goals extending beyond the protection of groups of people (Protection of a US citizenry, for example) and into the protection of a “worldview” or “way of life” highlight Gramscian ideas of how the agency uses common sense to establish consent and can be further connected to Mbembe’s necropolitics. Mbembe situated the “enemy” of the contemporary era as: “A disconcerting figure of ubiquity, the enemy is henceforth more dangerous by being everywhere: without face, name, or place ... each time his apparition threatening the annihilation of our way of life, our very existence” (2016, p.49). Mbembe’s identification of the contemporary era enemy as threatening a “way of life,” can be tied to CBP communicated understandings around their public engagement practices as well as graduate ceremonies as about the protection of a “worldview” and “way of life.” In my combination of Gramsci and Mbembe’s theories, I argued that the US deploys an “apparatus of state coercive necropower” to discipline nonconsenting groups. DHS and specifically CBP can be seen playing an important role in the deployment of an “apparatus of state coercive necropower” that has those who do not subscribe/consent to DHS’ communicated “way of life” as its targets. This illustrates that the agency’s concerns do not lie in protection of a US citizenry or in defense of a US nation/physically prescribed territory, but rather in the maintenance and reproduction of

common sense as a dominant group ideology, situated within a larger social imaginary that stresses the protection of a “way of life,” this “way of life” as that of the dominant fundamental group. This explains why the US has detained and deported citizens and non-citizens alike (Strickland 2022), and why CBP combs through the documents of US citizens with differing ideological perspectives than the agency, causing problems for many (Miller 2014) – DHS’s main concern is garnering the consent of nonhegemonic groups, who include US citizens, through deployments of force. This consent is used to further supplant an anti-migrant hegemony over society that possesses the “power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die,” (Mbembé & Meintjes 2003, p.66), ultimately giving “meaning to the enactment of differential rights to differing categories of people” (p.26).

Border Civilian Patrol Organizations and Other Nonstate Actors:

This discussion is centered around current-day border civilian patrol groups, a historic background can be found in my literature review. I situate current-day border civilian patrol groups as those that have risen in response to 1990s then INS policies such as PTD, though several scholars have argued that the rise of “modern” border civilian patrol groups is tied to the

mainstreaming of anti-immigration narratives by John Tanton's network of influence (Fernandes 2007; Gonzales 2014; Ramos 2024). Congressional researchers have found that since the early 1990s, there has been a sizeable increase in the presence of border civilian patrol groups operating at the border (Vina et al 2006). This increase in border civilian patrol presence aligns with the enactment of various INS policies through the 1990s such as PTD that effectively pushed migrant flows to the East, away from more trafficked urban areas (Hernández 2018; Painter & Singer 2024; Nevins 2010). Today, border civilian patrol groups operate in all four states that touch the land border, illustrating how these groups have recognized and adapted to the shifting of migration routes produced by '90s INS policies.

a. Congressional Understandings of Border Civilian Patrol Groups

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) publishes research papers designed to inform US policymakers of various trends and topics that are relevant to making and revising US policies. A 2006 CRS paper discussed civilian patrol groups that were active at the US-Mexico border, finding that these groups have become increasingly visible since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Vina et al 2006). This paper is valuable because generally the CRS researches various topics and produces papers that are used by legislators and Congressional

officials to better understand the topics they make policy on (USAGov n.d.). This means that the information in this paper is essentially the US Congressional understanding of the rights afforded to border civilian patrol groups. Because the HSA does not directly discuss state actor opinions of current-day border civilian patrol groups, this document can be used to understand how state actors regard the functions and legality of current-day border civilian patrol groups specifically.

CRS noted that border civilian patrol groups in the twenty-first century range in size and levels of organization – some are ad hoc groups which are informal, lacking a formal organizational structure and tending to develop as local citizens reacting to impacts that migration may have on their property – while other groups are formally organized and are able to perform tasks such as recruiting members, fundraising, patrolling, and issuing press releases using their social media networks (Vina et al 2006). Despite this variance, it's noted that many current-day civilian patrol groups focusing on the border originate around a similar perceived lack of federal resources at the border and increases in undocumented entries into the US (Vina et al 2006).

CRS noted that the phenomena of civilian patrol groups at the border raised questions related to their legality and effectiveness, using their paper to outline legal rights that border civilian patrol groups may be afforded: These groups and actors within them are identified as

effectively operating as private persons, with no need for statutory authorization to conduct volunteer border activities (Vina et al 2006). Additionally, because these groups are regarded as private persons, they may act like volunteer neighborhood watches, and are afforded the rights to assemble, carry, report activity and protect themselves and their property (Vina et al 2006).

Moreover, CRS identified the combination of constitutional and common law rights that apply to these groups, including common and state law, offense, and civil damages. In terms of common law, border civilian patrol groups have the rights to defend themselves and their property against intrusion, as well as the right to make citizens arrests without a warrant for misdemeanors “amounting to a breach of peace” (Vina et al 2006, p.16). In terms of state law, those that may apply to border civilian patrol groups at the border include laws regarding carrying firearms, uses of self-defense and deadly force, and state militia laws (Vina et al 2006). Offenses that may be identified off state laws include assault, false arrest, trespassing, disorderly conduct, and manslaughter. Georgetown Law’s Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection (n.d.) discussed civil damages under state TORT principles that may apply to border civilian patrol groups which include: being met with lawsuits if the civilian patrol is found to have had the intent of assault, battery, infliction of emotional distress, etc. Additionally, the CRS saw a “reasonable amount of force” as a fact-sensitive question (Vina et al 2006).

CRS noted that border civilian patrol groups may present great legal challenges for courts, especially if they are doing more and engaged in different activities than what is reported. For instance, CRS highlighted that claims of self-defense can be called into question if border civilian patrol groups are interpreted as actively putting themselves in harms-way (Vina et al 2006). The researchers noted another legal challenge – Congress does not have the legal authority to deputize civilians, but this does not prevent civilian cooperation with law and immigration enforcement apparatuses. However, it is noted that CBP claims regarding uses of civilian volunteers are contradictory - officials indicate some support for uses of volunteers, then later say there are no plans to use civilians (Vina et al 2006). This legal ambiguity creates doubt around how border civilian patrol groups can both interact with the state and treat migrants. Finally, the CRS found that many civilian patrol groups introduce bills in Congress to authorize and expand uses of civilian patrols for immigration purposes (Vina et al 2006).

Arizona Border Recon (AZBR)

Group Website:

Arizona Border Recon (AZBR) is a current-day border civilian patrol group led by previous-California, now Arizona-resident Tim Foley that was formed in 2011. As previously noted, the WayBack Machine provided an incomplete picture of the evolution of AZBR's main website, with substantial gaps in coverage notably from 2011 to the start of 2016, these gaps in coverage reflecting a low public interest in and/or knowledge of the group online in its first five years. Additionally, the consistent uptick in available archival material of the website following Donald Trump's 2016 inauguration reflects an increase in public interest in the group following the assumption of the first Trump administration to office.

Consulting the WayBack Machine reveals that the group's website has been active since the year of the group's founding (*Arizona Border Recon* 2011). Additionally, by viewing the evolution of the group's website over a series of years, I found that the group has used several different terms to describe themselves and their relationship to DHS apparatuses. Starting in 2013 the group identified themselves as being in partnership with CBP "to provide intelligence and security services" (*Arizona Border Recon* 2013). In 2014 the group first

identified itself as an NGO, specifically “a border security and consulting organization,” one that is “not affiliated with any form of government, nor are we a militia” (*Arizona Border Recon* 2014). Despite first claiming the group as an NGO on their official website in 2014, Patrick Strickland noted IRS records indicating that Foley acquired 501(c)(3) nonprofit status in late 2018, registering the group as AZBR Vets Inc., with Foley listed as chairman of the board of directors (Strickland 2022). Starting in 2014 and continuing today, the AZBR group website has had these same confusing, mutually exclusive, phrases just lines from each other – that they are both in partnership with CBP and are not affiliated with any form of government. This highlights the group’s ambiguous relationship to state actors.

Today on their official website, the group writes of themselves as an “intelligence gathering organization” with a focus on “obtaining intelligence through reconnaissance operations” (*Arizona Border Recon*, n.d.). The group continues their decade-long tradition of writing of themselves as being in partnership with a state agency before explicitly disidentifying with this participation. The main website notes that the group has accounts on social media platforms YouTube, Facebook, and Rumble. Additionally, the group has Instagram and Twitter (X) accounts that were active as of early 2024, though these accounts are not listed on their official website and comments on their Twitter/X suggest that the group had a larger presence on

the platform prior to January 6, 2021. Strickland (2022) noted Foley's attendance at the Capitol insurgence on January 6 and the subsequent deleting of social media posts indicating his presence at this event. The group's most sizable social media platforms are YouTube and Facebook, with 91,400 and 25,000 followers respectively. In this exploration of AZBR's online history, I found several overlaps with the Republican Party and far right: Archival data reflects the likelihood that AZBR's main website had low rates of public visibility until Donald Trump assumed office in 2016, the group has an account on far-right social media page Rumble (Arizona Border Recon n.d.), AZBR's leader has appeared on FOX News (FOX News 2024), and has been interviewed by and co-produced social media posts with influential far-right public figures such as Steve Bannon (Bannons War Room 2023).

AZBR's presumed legal affordances, including information on how the group is supposed to adhere to law and what protocols they should follow, is outlined in their Rules of Engagement and Standard Operating Procedures. The AZBR website listed a Rules of Engagement document that outlined statues and laws to comply with, including "use of force in crime prevention," "method of arrest by private person," "Preventing Offenses, Aiding Officers," and "duty of private person after making arrest" (Arizona Border Recon n.d.). The document additionally covered appropriate actions in situations of private/citizen detainment: "Personnel

shall only detain subjects for a reasonable period of time. Arizona law dictates that a reasonable time period varies by situation, and cannot be dictated by policy for every situation encountered” (Arizona Border Recon n.d., p.3), and search and seizure: “Belongings, bags, totes, and the like shall not be searched without consent of the individual or by order of a law enforcement officer” (Arizona Border Recon n.d., p.3).

The group’s Standard Operating Procedures discussed several topics. Regarding public relations, the document read that “opinions, ideology, etc. shall not be discussed, and any conversations shall be restricted to the subject at hand. Inquiries, and other communicate from law enforcement or outside personnel shall be directed to AZBR command” (Arizona Border Recon n.d., p.3). Regarding uses of firearms, it was noted that AR15s, 12 gauge shotguns, and any pistol is allowed, while sights, scopes, and other devices for purposes of aiming are prohibited (Arizona Border Recon n.d.). The document additionally outlined appropriate interactions with visiting personnel: “Persons contacted outside of the organization’s personnel shall not be interviewed or questioned, photographed, or recorded in any fashion. Conversations are to be kept cordial and professional. Personal questions, opinionated questions and statements and other discussion is not authorized. Interviewing law enforcement officials, local residents or others is not authorized” (Arizona Border Recon n.d., p.6).

However, I noted instances where AZBR has departed from what is set out in their Rules of Engagement and Standard Operating Procedures. AZBR broke the Arizona law mentioned above concerning search and seizure that found belongings need to be searched with either consent or with law enforcement present. A June 2021 video posted to the group's Facebook page titled "AZBR Video Montage – Border Crisis 2016" showed Foley and a group of AZBR members in the desert coming across backpacks, empty water jugs, and several cans of food. Foley vocally counted the cans in groups of two, and continued discussing what he saw as he rummaged through what was exposed of the belongings, then started going through the backpacks, pulling various items out and commenting on them. Foley made the comment: "Isn't that nice? They leave their ...[undecipherable]... shoes behind. There you go, there's your Ebay shit. Ebay fuckin sell-sale items" (AZ Border Recon 2021, 5:56). The group's Rules of Engagement document also deserves scrutinization for its lax background check. AZBR claimed to have kicked Joshua Pratchard, convicted of 13 counts in February 2019 following an FBI investigation of operating a gun-making facility out of his San Diego home, out of the group for his expressed desires to detain migrants and because he showed up to an AZBR operation with a silencer, but Patrick Strickland notes that Pratchard had passed the AZBR application for prospective volunteers as well as their background check despite his prior felony convictions

(Strickland 2022). This oversight calls into question the application and enforcement of these documents. Additionally, AZBR's policies around detainment have presented challenges – Strickland interviewed a former AZBR member who noted: “no one had informed [group members] that they weren't legally allowed to detain people” (2022, p.115).

Group Facebook and YouTube:

AZBR's Facebook page is ran by Foley and mainly shares articles pertaining to immigrants and immigration, with a specific focus on undocumented immigrants. The account primarily discusses individual migrants or groups of migrants, legal cases against migrants, drug seizures, or generally shares far-right content. On their Facebook, the group speaks abhorrently of migrants, with frequent reference to “uneducated, unskilled illegals,” and calling children “POS.” These articles that AZBR shares to its 25,000-strong audience make up most of their Facebook content and further contribute to conceptual associations between migrants and criminality. Most of the articles that pertain to individual migrants and criminal charges (often pertaining to SA or drug charges) use the words attempted, accused, or arrested, and not convicted.

The AZBR Facebook page also has video and photo albums which include instances where some CBP and AZBR interactions are detailed. The group has many photo albums, including one for 12 “operations” they have engaged in, with their earliest operation documented on Facebook in 2014. Most of the pictures in these albums are of AZBR members at camp or in the field. For instance, under the photo album “11/2015 Operation ‘Big Bird,’” one finds photos of Foley shaking hands with a CBP officer through a truck window (Arizona Border Recon 2016), while the photo album “AZBR ‘Operation Stolen Lives #4’” pictures two CBP agents arresting a man beside an agency truck (Arizona Border Recon 2017). This album additionally shows the same photo of Foley shaking hands with a CBP agent mentioned in the 2021 Facebook video previously discussed. These photos illustrate that despite the ambiguity present in the relationship between the state and AZBR as understood by state actors, there is evidence of their communication.

AZBR’s YouTube provides evidence that Foley has differing motivations and feelings of promptness in his actions than CBP, which is an example of how the two groups diverge in respect to interests in “securing” the border. Facebook and YouTube videos produced by the group reveal that the practice of immediately contacting CBP to document and report any group findings is not uncommon – when the group comes upon drug loads, migrants, or body parts,

they always make note in their videos that they are calling in the location to CBP to investigate.

This motivation to report migrant bodies can be related to the findings of previous CBP agent now scholar Francisco Cantú, who discussed CBP's inaccurate reporting of migrant deaths. He cited journalist Bob Ortega's 2018 work that noted CBP's neglect in counting migrant deaths, failing to account for more than 500 deaths that had been reported by either medical examiners, landowners, or local law-enforcement over 16 years (Cantú 2018). Cantú (2018) additionally noted that in his experience as a CBP agent, when storms came in agents were told to leave bodies to retrieve the next day. This, in connection with a quote I drew earlier where Cantú cited the INS Commissioner from 1993-2000 saying that migrant deaths produced by PTD were "not a serious point of discussion," (2018, p.259), is evidence of CBP's poor treatment of migrant bodies and suggests a normalization of necropolitical understandings of migrant bodies. This treatment can be compared with an AZBR YouTube video from February of 2021 in which Foley comes across a skull in the desert, noting: "so we're gonna grid it, call the proper authorities, and let them, uh, come take a peek at it" (Arizona Border Recon 2021, 1:38). Foley's motivation and particularly his promptness to call in the skull to CBP marks his behavior as different to what is understood amongst in-field CBP agents.

This behavioral discrepancy between the actions of AZBR and the actions of CBP specifically concerning the reporting of migrant bodies can be tied to Gramscian understandings of instances of state deployments of private patrol groups. Gramsci found that the state's initial deployment of patrol units should be read as a sign of the state army's "passivity and relative demoralisation" (Hoare & Smith 1999, p.484). CBP's organizational culture which features displays of low levels of motivation amongst agents to promptly report migrant bodies which is widely understood within the agency can be tied to the Gramscian idea of the state's military apparatuses necessary prerequisite for the deployment of patrols being "relative demoralisation," this demoralization being in relation to border civilian patrol groups and specifically in relation to AZBR.

Group Instagram:

AZBR's group Instagram is not their most popular platform, with only 587 followers, ten posts, and no tagged photos, but its posts reveal an intersection between the interests of AZBR and publicly influential former federal officials. Three of the account's most recent posts, all posted within the same week in 2024, are coauthored by AZBR and several other accounts. The first two coauthored posts are from September 9, 2024 and September 11, 2024, and either

have four or five other accounts associated with the post. The accounts coproducing media with AZBR are right-wing journalists, as well as Radio talk show and podcast hosts with a substantial amount of followers (ranging from ~80,000-400,000 followers) that include Grant Stichfield who runs *Real America's Voice*, Ben Bergquam who directs *Frontline America*, and Jeremy R Herrell who founded *Live From America/LFA TV*. Foley's interactions with far-right media personalities is unsurprising. Patrick Strickland notes that since late 2018, Foley has traveled to various Republican events all over the country, for instance in Phoenix, AZ, Broken Arrow, OK, and Washington, D.C., making efforts to gather the support of local allies, right-wing politicians, and advocacy groups (Strickland 2022). What was surprising to me in these coproduced Instagram posts was the presence of Steve Bannon and his daughter, Maureen Bannon's, accounts.

Steve Bannon is an incredibly influential figure in the realm of American political life and a note on his influence and controversies is important. At the start of Trump's first administration, Bannon served briefly as White House Chief Strategist (dismissed mid-August) and on the National Security Council Principals Committee (dismissed early-April). PBS News noted Bannon's influence over Trump in those several months: "Steve's the main ideological mover of the administration ...' said Christopher Ruddy, the CEO of Newsmax and a friend of the

president. ‘I think the bond is their world view’” (PBS News 2017). On August 20, 2020, the Southern district of NY Attorney’s Office charged Bannon and three others with fraud, with the Attorney’s Office noting in a press release: "their roles in defrauding hundreds of thousands of donors in connection with an online crowdfunding campaign known as ‘We Build the Wall’ that raised more than \$25 million,” of which Bannon received over \$1 million and used this to in part to pay off personal expenses (United States Attorney’s Office 2020). Trump pardoned Bannon on his way out the door in 2021 (Brown et al. 2021). However, a BBC article noted “The president's pardon authority applies only to federal matters, and charges in the current case were filed by in a New York State court in September 2022” (Upadhyay 2025). Upadhyay noted that Bannon’s recent (2/11/2025) guilty plea in his fraud case saved him jail time in relation to this case, but that Bannon “served four months in a federal prison in 2024 after being found guilty in 2022 of contempt of Congress for refusing to comply with a subpoena to appear before the committee investigating the 6 January attack on the US Capitol” (Upadhyay 2025). A 2024 Politico article noted that when Bannon was in prison, his daughter Maureen Bannon communicated with him daily, “running her father’s media operation” (Wren 2024).

The Bannon family is important not only because of their political influence and relationship to AZBR, but also because their role as public figures can be tied to Gramscian

understandings of organic intellectuals. Gonzales (2014) argued that US “anti-migrant hegemony” is maintained within society through the functioning of an “anti-migrant bloc,” composed of various organic intellectuals and civil society-based organizations and institutions. Gonzales (2014) noted that specific to the Homeland Security state, organic intellectuals included academics, charismatic TV and Radio personalities, as well as elected officials and state personnel. Steve Bannon is an “organic intellectual” that effectively reproduces a homeland security state. Bannon’s experience in the White House, his political influence as the ““main ideological mover of the administration”” (PBS News 2017), and the fact that he has ran a popular podcast – *Bannon’s War Room* – for six years, situates him within Gonzales’ understandings of anti-migrant bloc organic intellectuals.

If Steve Bannon is to be understood as an organic intellectual, helping to maintain and reproduce dominant fundamental group common sense and hegemony, Foley’s presence on Bannon’s right-wing podcast is revealing. A 2021 CNN Politics senior reporter discussed incessant uses of misinformation on the podcast, such as “election-related ‘information’ that even Fox News avoids” (Dale 2021). The podcast was identified as one of the “most important promoters” of rhetoric responsible for inciting the January 6, 2021 Capitol insurrection, and was banned from several social media sites (YouTube, Spotify, and Twitter/X specifically) following

Bannon's calls to behead Fauci (Dale 2021). Despite these bans, the podcast surges in popularity, with over 29 million downloads in its first two years, an early 2021 Propublica report noted (DePillis 2021). I watched the podcast's November 3, 2023 episode featuring Foley on Rumble, previously mentioned as a far-right social media platform that AZBR has a very small following on (there are two accounts listed that go by either "Arizona Border Recon" or "ArizonaBorderRecon," each has under 50 followers). The episode was shared on the account "Bannon's War Room," an account with over a million followers. The podcast episode had over 18,000 viewers.

The ads that flashed on screen on Rumble before I watched the videos of Bannon's podcast were for products like Methylene Blue and for the company Byrna, who sells "non-lethal self defense [sic] products" such as CO₂-powered pistols that the company claims do not require background checks or state registration and are argued as being able to incapacitate a person for upwards of 30 minutes. The company's "About" page writes of the product as a "safe, reliable and effective non-lethal alternative to traditional firearms that will allow Byrna's customers to protect and defend ... without the need to resort to deadly force" (Byrna n.d.). The ads playing on Rumble reflect an ideology aligning with the Republican party – a 2022 Pew Research Center article noted that of the 20% of US adults who know of the website, 2% regularly get their news

there, with “roughly three-quarters of those who regularly get news from Rumble (76%) identify as Republicans or lean toward the Republican Party” (Ghosh & Stocking 2022). It’s incredibly irresponsible and dangerous to broadcast ads for nonconventional weapons with no background check or registration requirements right before a podcast episode featuring anti-immigration rhetoric and centering the leader of a border civilian patrol group who has been found to not only work with convicted felons such as VOP leader Michael “Lewis Arthur” Meyer, Joshua Pratchard, and Randon Berg, but also fails to provide sufficient preparation and training to AZBR members, as was detailed in interviews with anonymous former AZBR members (Strickland 2022). Not only is this irresponsible, but the Rumble website showing civilians ads of this nature before watching a piece of media that radiates anti-immigrant rhetorics can be tied to my earlier conversation in which CBP understands itself as more concerned with “protecting a way of life” and “selling a worldview” of a society under threat than it is in defense of a given territory or body of persons. These CBP understandings can be applied to Gonzales’ notion of anti-migrant hegemony that is maintained within the US society through organic intellectuals (like Bannon and arguably Foley himself, which will be touched on later) and civil society-based institutions and organizations (perhaps like Rumble and their ads). In this overlap, media produced by Bannon (and Foley) as well as ads pushed by Rumble contribute to “selling a

worldview” of a society in crisis. Through consuming this content, this constructed worldview is shared, allowing its reinforcement and reproduction by viewers.

Social media scholar Katherine Cross noted the differences between social media pro-gun movements promoted by leftists compared to movements promoted by the far-right, writing that far-right pro-Second Amendment gun activists tend to be more successful in their efforts because they are “not actually fighting the state. They’re fighting the state’s enemies and calling them tyranny ... that’s why they’re allowed to get away with so much” (2024, p.149). Cross’s discussion brings us back to Rumble, a social media site with millions of downloads, regarded as a far-right social media site, holding a majority republican user base, that shares ads for weapons with no legal regulations right before anti-immigration videos. By Cross’s argument, the ease with which Rumble is able to promote these ideas is because the ideology of the group that most commonly uses Rumble aligns with the ideology of the state and the state’s understanding of the “enemies” it is fighting – in Gramscian terms, this is because this group consents to notions of common sense and because of this consent faces no state deployments of coercive power or other challenges to their ideology – an ideology in which a “worldview” is shared, one of fear. On Rumble, 18,000+ users watch videos such as Bannon’s War Room podcast episode featuring Foley in which anti-immigration rhetorics are communicated, “manufacturing bogeymen” to

which ads for questionable non-conventional and non-regulated weapons give users an immediate, tangible outlet in which to dispel fears of these “manufactured bogeymen” (Mbembe 2016, p51).

This podcast episode, and throughout my exploration into AZBR’s Facebook, I wrote several notes to myself where I discussed how difficult it was to spend time with these sources. In regards to the AZBR group Facebook, I jotted “Being on here sucks. There’s nothing positive about this entire FB page,” while for Bannon’s podcast episode with Foley, I noted how I had been dreading and putting off watching the video, doing small tasks to keep myself busy every time I made time to sit down to watch it. I tied my feelings regarding these pieces of media to Katherine Cross’s discussion of social media when she asserted that social media’s promotion of hyper awareness of perceived threats creates “the panopticon ubiquity of bad news” (2024, p.124). This, combined with social media’s abilities in which it “crowdsources millions of scary stories and frightens millions more into thinking they’re next” (Cross 2024, p.140) ultimately produces “illusions of inevitable doom for those already living under threat, closing off any hope of a life worth living” (p.124). Cross further wrote that the realization of fear this situation produces can lead one down “one of the bleaker” roads, “the one that leads you into a backwoods shed full of AR 15s” (2024, p.143).

Bannon's War Room Podcast Appearance:

A discussion of Foley's interview on Bannon's War Room follows. About eight seconds in, Bannon infers he knows Foley when he says "I haven't had a chance to see Tim since we were building the wall down in El Paso" (Bannons War Room 2023, 00:08). Bannon starts the podcast episode introducing Ben Bergquam, who was previously mentioned as a coproducer of one of AZBR's Instagram posts, as a correspondent working for Bannon who traveled to Arizona to interview Foley for Bannon's podcast (Bannons War Room 2023). Everyone in the video consistently uses the terms "illegal immigration," "illegal immigrants," or just "illegals" when discussing undocumented immigrants. This consistent term use is part of an anti-migrant hegemony that includes the ideological construction of migrants as "illegals." The preferred language of organic intellectuals composes the dominant imaginary in dominant fundamental group common sense.

In the podcast episode, Bergquam identifies Foley's work as to be primarily concerned with "tracking the cartels" (Bannons War Room 2023, 2:19). Bannon identifies Foley as an 82nd airborne veteran (Bannons War Room 2023, 2:40), however, there is minimal credible information regarding Foley's military history generally (Strickland 2022). Lilyea (2015) stated findings from his FOIA request into Foley's military history, finding that Foley "was in the Army

for 19 months [1982-late '83] and it looks like a portion of that time he spent as a deserter and a military prisoner.” Strickland additionally noted personally contacting the FBI regarding records of Foley to which the FBI had “claimed to have no responsive documents regarding either Foley or AZBR” (2022, p.55-56). The difficulty with which journalists and concerned individuals have been able to find information regarding Foley’s military service, despite his frequent claims to be a veteran, raise questions about how Foley mobilizes that identity to establish himself as an organic intellectual within frameworks of security.

Around four minutes into the podcast, Foley discussed discrepancies he has claimed to have observed between Federal counts and his own counts of undocumented migrants that crossed the border. He noted: “we’re averaging, in my area, about a thousand a day in ‘got aways’ whereas the government’s saying, you know, they’re averaging a thousand a day across the whole southern border which is, the government ... but then, that’s the government. They’re always gonna squish the numbers down to look good” (Bannons War Room 2023, 4:03). About five minutes later Bannon asks him to back up this claim, to which he said:

““uhh, because what’s coming across the border basically, in the flatlands, is how the cartels do it. It’s a diversion. Border Patrol has to go pick up the poor women and children, yet, where we go, we can be out there for ten to

fourteen days and not see a Border Patrol agent ... just by looking at what's on our cameras'" (Bannons War Room 2023, 9:30).

Another instance where Foley discussed CBP is when he noted: "the high-ups in Border Patrol, they have a motto: 'arrests are up, it's working, arrests are down, it's working' so no matter what, it's working" (Bannons War Room 2023, 6:13). Foley later criticized CBP when he noted: "we do not have control of the border. The cartel has control of the border, on both sides" (6:54), as well as that "by Border Patrol's own estimates, 25-30% of Border Patrol is on the take," providing no sources (7:45). Foley's estimated percentages of CBP complicity with cartel organizations was a talking point he had repeated from two years earlier. Strickland noted that in Foley's appearance at the April 2021 Health and Freedom Conference in Oklahoma, he claimed without evidence that at least a quarter of border patrol agents were "on the cartel's take," making his job harder (2022, p.204). These quotes particularly reflect a divergence between state and nonstate actor interests in "securing the border." Foley's comments suggest that he views his interest in "securing the border" with more seriousness than CBP agents. He identifies himself as operating in places where Border Patrol does not frequent, though in Strickland's interview with a former AZBR member, this individual disclosed that they rarely saw drug scouts or runners in the areas Foley patrolled, arguing that the cartels probably adapted

to Foley's years-long presence in the Arivaca and Sasabe areas of Southern Arizona (Strickland 2022). Foley's identification of CBP as squishing numbers while they position themselves "on the cartel's take" additionally illustrates his divergence in ideas from that of CBP.

As the interview continues, Foley identified AZBR's work in the interview as "we're, actually, a licensed intelligence-gathering company in the state of Arizona" (Bannons War Room 2023, 4:45). Foley went on to note:

"my preferential [to what he would like to be referred to as] is either vigilante or, uh, domestic extremist, because if getting off the couch is extreme, then go ahead, call me an extremist and if you want to call me a vigilante, break it down. We're – 1st part is a vigil. We're doin' a vigil on the border, and then the 2nd part is ante. We're ante-up, do your part, so" (Bannons War Room 2023, 5:32).

Statements Foley made in this podcast appearance can be tied to ones made on another podcast.

The Protection Project Podcast Appearance:

AZBR's Rumble page featured a copy of Foley's January 25, 2024 interview on a small, right-wing podcast called The Protection Project hosted by Frank Jorje. Topics on Jorje's show mainly cover undocumented immigration from an anti-immigration stance, though some episodes relate to the election. I will share the most relevant commentary from this podcast

episode. As it began, I noticed that Foley was wearing an “FU46” hat in reference to the Biden presidency. Twenty minutes in Jorje asked Foley why he felt the federal government nor border patrol have done anything about undocumented immigration. Foley said:

Tim Foley (TF): “Listen, I deal with Border Patrol a lot and, uh, 99% of them are pissed off at what’s going on, it’s not the job-” [cut off by host]

Frank Jorje (FJ): “Well, I believe it, but they are bringing these people in, that’s a fact.”

TF: “Yes, well, it’s because of- the reason they’re doing it is, it’s like, they can’t say, well they could, but they’d be out of a job and have families to feed and...”

FJ: “Their [Border Patrol agents] savior would be a governor with the balls to chase them all off. ... ”

TF: “The savior would be the inept, useless Congress actually doing something instead of ...” [discusses why Mayorkas impeachment took three years, identify that this happened because it’s election year] “so they wanna go ‘look, we’re doing something,’ so, it’s all the way at the top”

(ArizonaBorderRecon 2024, 20:35-21:45).

In this exchange, Foley discussed his understanding of Border Patrol’s morale, finding that the problems that agents deal with are not a result of agent actions and practices, “it’s all the

way at the top,” but that agents are exhibiting low morale due to these problems nonetheless – “99% of them are pissed off.”

Around half an hour in, Foley commented on CBP’s morale again, this time in reference to law enforcement, noting: “Their [law enforcement’s] morale is down just like Border Patrol’s. They’re taking the wind out of the sails of any type of law enforcement. I mean look at the big cities, the roaming gangs of snatch-and-grab, you know, society is collapsing” (ArizonaBorderRecon 2024, 26:40).

Thirty minutes in Foley discusses the term ‘vigilante’ like he did on Bannon’s podcast. Foley mentioned: “I’ve been called everything in the book. Racist, nazi, freaking ‘vigilante,’ you know, and I tell media that this is not about race, it’s about sustainability” (ArizonaBorderRecon 2024, 30:09). These comments can be tied to my earlier conversation discussing DHS’s understanding of their work as “selling a worldview” of the world as under threat and “protecting a way of life” from this perceived threat. Foley noting that society is “collapsing” and that his work revolves around a question of sustainability distances Foley’s understanding from being in protection of a body of people or prescribed territory, ultimately situating himself as in defense of an idea – in this case the idea of sustainability. Statements Foley makes in both Rumble

podcast appearances can be tied to ones Foley made in the 2015 film *Cartel Land* that he was featured in.

Cartel Land:

Cartel Land is a one-hour-forty-minute 2015 film directed by Matthew Heineman which featured Foley. The storyline for the film on IMDb's page reads: "A physician in Michoacán, Mexico [José Manuel 'El Doctor' Mireles] leads a citizen uprising against the drug cartel that has wreaked havoc on the region for years. Across the U.S. border, a veteran [Tim Foley] heads a paramilitary group working to prevent Mexico's drug wars from entering U.S. territory" (IMDb n.d.). There are ten different services on which one can watch the film, and the film's IMDb page notes that it has received 38 award nominations globally, one Oscar nomination, and won three Emmys in 2016 (IMDb n.d.). An exploration into Foley's comments is incredibly important: Strickland noted that Foley's fame peaked with *Cartel Land*, with several former AZBR members highlighting in interviews that the film "later proved an unrivaled recruiting tool for the militia" (2022, p.62). Foley's comments in *Cartel Land* illustrate how AZBR's interests in securing the border both diverge and intersect with state understandings and further establish him as an organic intellectual that produces the border.

Foley is introduced about five minutes into the film, the first thing he said, which was also a soundbite used in the film's trailer, being "There's an imaginary line out there between right and wrong, good and evil. I believe what I am doing is good, and I believe what I am standing up against is evil" (Cartel Land 2015, 4:36). The "enemy," indeed, is evil. The film then shows a group of AZBR members patrolling the desert at the border and presumably tracking the movements of a cartel, with Foley whispering "They have more guns, they have more people. It's kind of like a David and Goliath s-story around here. We're David, they're Goliath" (Cartel Land 2015, ~6:45). These comments can be compared to Strickland's note of VOP's leader's escalation of rhetoric to a point of positioning himself as fighting a kind of "biblical war" against Satan. Foley went on to discuss the "vigilante" label he has been given similarly to how it was discussed in his interview on Bannon's podcast, but linked his understanding of "vigilantes" to historical understandings of the word. I tie this link to nineteenth century frontier imaginaries that functioned to legitimize US settler colonial expansions. Foley noted:

"Technically, we're vigilantes upholding the law where there is no law. But, the phrase 'vigilante,' its been given a bad name by the media. ... but, back in the day, vigilante wasn't a bad thing. Say the bandits was riding into your town, townspeople would all get together and, you know, defend their town. Now, when people hear that phrase, they think of vigilante as

somebody that's got white sheets over their head and they're gonna hang ... fuckin, people from trees. It's bullshit" (Cartel Land 2015, 7:40).
 "This is what I consider to be the wild-wild west. There is nothing down here. There's no law" (Cartel Land 2015, 8:29)

Foley's contextual situation of the term "vigilante" within a longer history is revealing. His mentions of "bandits riding into your town," townspeople engaged in town defense, and his conceptualization of the borderlands as the "wild-wild west" illustrates the salience of nineteenth century frontier imaginaries in his understanding of his actions as the leader of a border civilian patrol group. These understandings align quite cozily with the two narratives discussed in my literature review: Necropolitical US social imaginaries of the "frontier" and social imaginaries of white settlers as heroic "pioneers," situated as engaged in spatial defense against presumed "savage" opponents. Film critic Philip French's analysis of the role of frontier imaginaries within Western genre films is particularly helpful to understanding Foley's framing, where French found that these larger imaginaries are presented as rituals – "in a timeless world where it is always high noon in some dusty cow town west of St. Louis ... populated by children who refuse to grow-up, fugitives ... marauding Indians and menacing bands of pirates'" (1974, p.12). Foley's identification of himself being in the "wild-wild west" and dichotomizing his work as a distinction of good/evil ultimately situates him within this historic imaginary, positioning himself

as a heroic pioneer in a “timeless world ... populated by ... fugitives.” Despite his own conceptual positioning of his practices, he identified about twenty minutes into the film that “the Southern Poverty Law Center just declared us as a hate group” (Cartel Land 2015, 23:58).

Foley’s framing of his work as good and what he is working against as evil is an example of his interests in securing the border intersecting with those of the state. My earlier discussion drawing quotes from Miller regarding PTD’s designer Silvestre Reyes and USBP’s 1,000th graduating class ceremony, which situated DHS’s concern as to be with “selling a worldview” and “protecting a way of life,” can be directly tied to Foley’s understanding of his work as a kind of protection of good against evil. In this, both state actors (DHS, and agencies of CBP and USBP) and nonstate actors (current-day border civilian patrol group AZBR) see their goal as protection of a “way of life” more than a protection of a given body of people or a given territory. Another comment by Foley reveals that he leaves his views around border security ambiguous: “People that come down here have their own opinions on why the border needs to be secured. I don’t always agree with everybody’s views, but I’m happy to have the help” (Cartel Land 2015, 28:02). While Foley’s comment suggests he cares minimally about the reasons people may join AZBR, this lax positioning allows for ever more dangerous individuals with

checkered pasts to be involved in AZBR such as aforementioned felons Michael “Lewis Arthur” Meyer, Joshua Pratchard, and Randon Berg.

Around an hour in, more footage is shown of an AZBR patrol in which AZBR members come across a group of seven people in the desert. In this exchange, the AZBR members call Foley over. When he arrives, he learns that only one of the people in the group speaks English, immediately identifying this man as a coyote, to which the man informs Foley he is employed in Cancún. When the group of people was getting ready to head down the mountain with AZBR, Foley said in a soundbite that was also used in the trailer: “I’ll be up front. Anybody touches me, drop ‘em,” looking to a man in the group and raising his eyebrows, to which an AZBR member responded, “roger that” (Cartel Land 2015, 56:38). Foley then calls CBP to report this group and in this call addresses the agent on the other side of the radio by their first name. The ease in which Foley suggests killing any of the people in this group suggests a necropolitical approach to perceived threats. This exchange highlights AZBR’s aggression towards migrants as well as Foley’s degree of familiarity with CBP agents in his area. Foley’s comfortability with CBP agents that can be seen both in this instance and in his 2011 comments to a CBP agent that spurred multi-sited governmental investigations discussed in my conclusion can be tied to an Arizona State Supreme Court Case that was filed six years after this film.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

Obscuring Formal Partnerships:

A 2021 Arizona Supreme Court Case concerning the case of a Staci Burk regarding questions of election fraud provided evidence indicating an AZBR/DHS formal partnership. In the state Supreme Court Case, section E subsection B regarding “Common Affiliations of Scott Koch (Man Who Confessed to Illegal Ballot Fraud Scheme),” the report read: “Shawn Wilson, Scott Koch, and Tim Foley, and Mark Lamb, work closely with the Department of Homeland Security doing reconnaissance work with cartels and child sex trafficking at the Mexican border” (*Staci Burk v. Doug Ducey, Katie Hobbs, Clint Hickman, Jack Sellers, Steve Chucuri, Bill Gates, Steve Gallardo, Adrian Fontes*, p.22). Section 519 of the HSA noted that DHS would prioritize uses of “national private sector networks” in emergency management. This formal evidence of AZBR’s collaboration with DHS in a constructed time of emergency allows me to make the argument that Gramsci’s understanding of patrols as playing a legitimate function for the state can be applied to the current-day US and specifically to the relationship between DHS and AZBR. Despite AZBR’s four-year verifiable formal partnership with DHS, AZBR’s claims to have been partnered with CBP for 12 years are unclear and cannot be verified. There is a possibility of this being the case, there is just minimal public credible evidence suggesting so.

It is important to note an email exchange that Patrick Strickland recorded with CBP discussing the agency's views on border civilian patrol groups operating at the US-Mexico border: "Tucson sector Border Patrol does not endorse private groups or organizations to take enforcement matters into their own hands" (2022, p.61). Strickland does not identify what year this email exchange occurred, though his book covered a timeframe of 2015-2020 and thus the latest the email exchange would have occurred is in 2020. This finding can be compared to AZBR's partnership with DHS that has been formally identified as occurring since at least 2021.

The language of CBP not endorsing border civilian patrol groups taking "enforcement matters into their own hands" is interesting in comparison to this documented AZBR/DHS partnership because as it has been formalized, this grants AZBR some legitimate authority over immigration enforcement matters. In this situation of granted legitimacy, following CBP's own language, AZBR's enforcement practices are handed-off – from "their own hands" to those of the state. This formal partnership thus complicates state and CBP blanket-statement disavowals of border civilian patrol groups in public communications. The state's interesting relationship to AZBR can additionally be seen in a discussion in Strickland's book. Strickland had personally sent a FOIA request in 2020 to the FBI regarding Foley's 2011 comments to a CBP agent that he

had laced the desert with bombs and was told that “the bureau claimed to have no responsive documents regarding either Foley or AZBR” (2022, p55-56). The FBI claiming to have no responsive documents on a group that had been labeled a hate group by the SPLC, was known to have worked with felons that the FBI had investigated, and that the FBI had investigated the leader of, all prior to when Strickland sent in this FOIA request, should be highlighted and can be tied to a state tradition of obfuscation that I will discuss further.

Foley exhibits a larger theme that can be seen in the quotes I’ve provided of saying bad things about the government while directly working with them. This theme is interesting in relation to Gramscian understandings of state uses of patrols. Gramsci noted that the state deploys patrols in a moment of crisis when consent cannot be established and the state army apparatuses are “passive” or “demoralised,” further highlighting the dual function of patrols: “they have two tasks: to make use of illegal means, while the State appears to remain within legality, and thus to reorganise the State itself” (1999, p.485). In an analysis of the last 15 years of the vigilante movement, Costley found that modern vigilante groups see themselves as working in tandem with the state to control undocumented migration “while simultaneously positioning themselves as the state’s more effective (and thus necessary) counterpart” (2020, p.24). Specifically, Costley argued that AZBR “seems to both stand in for and supercede the

Border Patrol (despite the claim on its website that ‘we are not here to replace enforcers’))” (2020, p.25). Gramsci’s idea of the state’s use of patrols as a force to rebalance an equilibrium of force and consent and Costley’s argument that AZBR sees their efforts as superseding those of the state should be considered in relation to Foley’s understandings of the government. Foley’s comments (as well as those of many other border civilian patrol group leaders, as Patrick Strickland notes) about the federal government reveal a faltering consent that he has in the government (not necessarily in the state itself or the prevailing hegemonic order, however). This raises a question around the state’s ability to discipline and the patrol’s function to maintain the appearance of legality of the state if actors not only within but representing the patrols exhibit a faltering level of consent to the state government. Despite Foley’s comments indicating minimal consent for the US government, his ideological understandings still align with notions of common sense that maintain what Gonzales coined as anti-migrant hegemony, and he is formally partnered with the US government.

Mbembe’s understanding of the enemy of the contemporary era and his identification of the “depressive period in the psychic life of nations” can be applied to Gramscian understandings of the relationship between the state and civil society and further applied to the relationship between state and nonstate actors, particularly to the practices of DHS and AZBR at

the US-Mexico border. Mbembe found that the objective of politics is the murder of the enemy that is “without face, name, or place ... threatening the annihilation of our way of life” (2016, p.49). Connecting Mbembe and Gramsci’s ideas around the enemy, I argued that the identified objective of politics in the Gramscian state can also be seen as the death of the enemy, this enemy identified as those who do not consent to dominant fundamental group common sense that functions to maintain hegemony. Following my discussion of how both AZBR and DHS apparatuses such as CBP and USBP share an interest in framing their goals as “selling a worldview” and “protecting a way of life,” these conceptual frameworks they view their work through reinforce and reproduce the “depressive period in the psychic life of nations” that Mbembe wrote of. Mbembe found that in this “depressive period,” democratic regimes utilize contemporary desires for both apartheid and the enemy as a kind of “contemporary brainwashing” which allows the reproduction of narratives that situate the world as threatening and additionally “grants primacy to logics of ... all that which is secret” (2016, p.48). The current-day US’s understanding of threat can be seen through organic intellectuals’ arguments such as mainstreamed far right anti-immigration sentiments from organic intellectuals like John Tanton and Steve Bannon, in ads such as those on Rumble, as well as from Subsection 101 of the HSA and in the US president and his cabinet, who has framed immigration more negatively than

any president over the last 140 years (Card et al. 2022). My conversation of the US' history with immigration policy additionally illustrated the US's designation of "national threats" as historically varying in their demographic application yet largely remaining tied to issues of labor market competition, economic strain, and the maintenance of white supremacy. Thus, notions of the world as threatening become common sense, understood and reinforced by both state and nonstate actors. In this, this "depressive period" comes to life. Mbembe's understanding of a world under threat dovetailing with notions of a world granting "primacy to logics of ... all that which is secret" (2016, p.48) can be compared to the more-or-less secretive nature of the DHS/AZBR formal partnership, which was not publicly outlined anywhere and only revealed through a court case.

The fact that this formal partnership between state and nonstate actors is more or less covert reveals a practice of obfuscation on the part of the state and particularly on DHS. This obfuscation can be viewed in relation to other DHS actions such as in how PTD is discussed in formal federal communications (as rerouting migrant flows to less urban and trafficked areas) compared to how it is referred to informally by CBP agents (who identify specific parts of the Sonoran Desert as the "corridor of death" (Doty 2011)). Thus, DHS's obfuscation of its formal partnership with border civilian patrol group AZBR can be viewed as a part of the state's longer

history of obfuscation of its practices. As covered in my literature review, the federal government avoided interactions with civilian patrol groups for decades (Costley 2020; Strickland 2022). The CRS report outlining Congressional understandings of the legal rights afforded to these groups noted that at times their actions occupy a kind of legal liminal space (Vina et al. 2006).

Strickland's note that the FBI claimed to have "no responsive documents" on Foley in response to a FOIA request despite the bureau having previously had conducted an investigation on him is additionally revealing of this state practice of obfuscation. This historic avoidance of acknowledging and negotiating with border civilian patrol group presence, the current-day legal liminal space these groups occupy, and the FBI strategically disidentifying with knowing of AZBR's leader continues this tradition of obfuscation on the part of the state, rendering the legitimacy of border civilian patrol group actions unclear and further allowing for the coproduction of an apparatus of state coercive necropower using both state and nonstate actors. I argue that the state's reliance on a historic tradition of obfuscation in the situation of border civilian patrol groups is manifest as a dialectic manipulation of the state's role and function in relation to these groups. The fact that this partnership is essentially covert can be tied to Gramscian understandings of the function of patrols, in which patrols ensure that the state

“appears to remain within legality” (1999, 485), and Mbembe’s understanding of the contemporary society as one abiding by logics of “all that which is secret” (2016, p.48).

Ideology is a site of power, and larger imaginaries and narratives become reproduced and are liable to a certain evolution as they are intergenerationally passed down (Beetz et al 2021). In this power, shifting constructions of common sense legitimize the state’s ability to deploy an apparatus of coercive necropower against all who do not consent. Current-day practices like Bannon’s popular podcast producing episodes with border civilian patrol group leaders and ads shown before Rumble videos act to communicate and legitimize an understanding of the US as in crisis, ultimately promoting Mbembe’s understanding of the “depressive period in the psychic life of nations” in which the enemy is centered as effectively destroying a “way of life” (2016, p.49). This discursive presentation of the US that has become subsumed as common sense allows DHS’ formal partnership with AZBR to be deployed with legitimacy and explains why the two groups share an understanding of functioning to protect a “way of life” of a state in crisis against a nameless and faceless enemy that challenges this way of life.

Main Takeaways

This thesis applied a combined theoretical framework to media and policy analyses of secondary data to analyze the relationship and negotiation between state and nonstate actors' understandings of “securing” the border. In this section I summarized key findings from both my analyses.

My policy analysis of the publicly available copies of the HSA from 2002 and 2023 highlighted how state actors, particularly DHS, conceive of their role in “securing” the border. A conversation of Section 101 of the HSA and CBP’s youth Explorers Program highlighted how DHS’ mission can be read as protecting a way of life against a perceived threat. A discussion of Section 519 of the HSA was used to explain how state actors perceive of the state as in crisis. The HSA additionally illustrates how federal immigration policy and law is used to produce and reinforce Gonzales’ anti-migrant hegemony within US society.

My media analysis of existing AZBR online content highlighted how nonstate actors, particularly AZBR, understand their role in “securing” the border. AZBR’s Facebook videos revealed a divergence in state and nonstate actor understandings around behavioral discrepancies when coming across and reporting dead bodies. AZBR’s leader, Foley’s podcast appearance on *Bannon’s War Room* and the Rumble ads featured before the video highlight the role of citizens

in relying on historically loaded and necropolitical social imaginaries to reproduce an anti-migrant hegemony. A combined discussion of Foley's appearance on Frank Jorje's podcast and his role in the film *Cartel Land* illustrate how Foley's mission overlaps with that of state actors and should be read as protecting a way of life/worldview.

Final Thoughts

Overall, my thesis has found that state and nonstate actor interests in "securing" the border both intersect and diverge. In this relationship, sites of intersection outweigh sites of divergence. Despite marginal divergences in practice, such as in promptness of reporting migrant bodies, the intersections between these groups illustrate how they both consent to US notions of common sense, sharing a framing of their work as revolving around a necropolitical "protection of a way of life" against a perceived crisis. Understandings of common sense among both groups are linked to imaginaries that gained salience with settler colonial actions and maintenances of white supremacy. This shared framing allows the groups to co-produce and co-deploy an apparatus of coercive necropower against all who do not consent to this common sense, further legitimizing Gonzales' (2014) anti-migrant hegemony within US society. These findings are

important as they point to the concomitant nature of state and nonstate actors in reproducing a common sense and necropolitical “anti-migrant” hegemony.

REFERENCES

Abramitzky, Ran & Leah Boustan. 2017. "Immigration in American Economic History." *Journal of Economic Literature – American Economic Association*, 55(4), pp. 1311-1345. Dec. 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26417159>.

Altheide, David L. & Christopher J. Schneider. 2013. "Plugged-In Research." Pp. 1-22 in *Qualitative Media Analysis*, 2nd Edition. SAGE Publications, Ltd. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452270043>.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Book Company. Print.

ArizonaBorderRecon. 2024. "The Protection Project – AZBR." *Rumble*. February 18, 2024. Retrieved from https://rumble.com/v4e5khr-the-protection-project-azbr.html?e9s=src_v1_upp.

Arizona Border Recon. n.d. [Frontpage]. *Rumble*. Retrieved from [https://rumble.com/user/](https://rumble.com/user/ArizonaBorderRecon)

[ArizonaBorderRecon](https://rumble.com/user/ArizonaBorderRecon).

Arizona Border Recon. N.d. [Group Website]. Retrieved from [https://](https://www.arizonaborderrecon.org/)

www.arizonaborderrecon.org/.

Arizona Border Recon. N.d. “Standard Operating Procedures.” Retrieved from [https://](https://www.arizonaborderrecon.org/assets/files/AZBR-POLICY-SOP-REV-1202015.pdf)

www.arizonaborderrecon.org/assets/files/AZBR-POLICY-SOP-REV-1202015.pdf.

Arizona Border Recon. N.d. “Rules of Engagement.” Retrieved from [https://](https://www.arizonaborderrecon.org/assets/files/AZBR-POLICY-ROE-REV12022015.pdf)

www.arizonaborderrecon.org/assets/files/AZBR-POLICY-ROE-REV12022015.pdf.

Arizona Border Recon. n.d. *Videos*. YouTube. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/@ArizonaBorderReconorg/videos)

[@ArizonaBorderReconorg/videos](https://www.youtube.com/@ArizonaBorderReconorg/videos).

Arizona Border Recon. 2011. [Group Website]. Retrieved from [https://web.archive.org/web/](https://web.archive.org/web/20110802121613/http://arizonaborderrecon.org.p8.hostingprod.com/)

[20110802121613/http://arizonaborderrecon.org.p8.hostingprod.com/](https://web.archive.org/web/20110802121613/http://arizonaborderrecon.org.p8.hostingprod.com/).

Arizona Border Recon. 2013. [Group Website]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20130723220922/https://www.arizonaborderrecon.org/>.

Arizona Border Recon. 2014. [Group Website]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20141216191832/https://www.arizonaborderrecon.org/>.

Arizona Border Recon. 2016. “11/2015 Operation ‘Big Bird.’” *Facebook*, January 15. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.919572954759049&type=3>.

Arizona Border Recon. 2017. “AZBR ‘Operation Stolen Lives #4.’” *Facebook*, February 12. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1203034233079585&type=3>.

AZ Border Recon. 2021. “Arizona Border Recon Video Montage.” *Facebook*, June 19. Video. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/ArizonaBorderRecon/videos/492534158691292>.

Arizona Border Recon. 2021. "Skull." *YouTube*, February 8. Video. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/S258EIyK3X4?si=9U_B0mjZu4XhtR3K.

Bannons War Room. 2023. "Arizona Border Recon Tim Foley: 'The Cartel Has Control Of The Border.'" Rumble. November 3, 2023. Retrieved from <https://rumble.com/v3th2ty-arizona-border-recon-tim-foley-the-cartel-has-control-of-the-border.html>.

Bardach, Eugene. 2012. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 4th Edition. CQ Press. Retrieved from <https://justicepolicynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Bardachs-Eightfold-Path-1.pdf>.

Beetz, Johannes, Benno Herzog, & Jens Maesse. 2021. "Studying ideology and discourse as knowledge, power, and material practices." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 16(2), pp. 103-106. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2021.1895180>.

- Boissoneault, Lorraine. 2017. "How the 19th-Century Know Nothing Party Reshaped American Politics." *Smithsonian Magazine*. January 26, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/immigrants-conspiracies-and-secret-society-launched-american-nativism-180961915/>.
- Brown, Pamela, Paul LeBlanc, & Kaitlan Collins. 2021. "Trump pardons Steve Bannon as one of his final acts in office." *CNN Politics*. January 20, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/19/politics/steve-bannon-pardoned-by-trump/index.html>.
- Bryna. n.d. "About Byrna." Retrieved from <https://byrna.com/pages/about>.
- Cantú, Francisco. 2018. *The Line Becomes A River: Dispatches from The Border*. Riverhead Books. Print.
- Card, Dallas, Serina Chang, Chris Becker, & Dan Jurafsky. 2022. "Computational analysis of 140 years of US political speeches reveals more positive but increasingly polarized framing of immigration." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United*

States of America (PNAS), 119(31). July 29, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2120510119>.

Carpio, Genevieve. 2019. "The Rise of the Anglo Fantasy Past," Pp. 22- 63 in *Mobility, Memory, and Racial Hierarchies in Inland Southern California, 1870-1900*. University of California Press. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520970823-004>.

Chavez, Leo R. 2013. *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and The Nation*, 2nd Edition. Stanford University Press. Print.

Costley, Willie. 2020. "Online Vigilantes: The Virtual Semiotics of AZ Border Recon." *Public Voices Journal*, 17(1), Pp. 21-31. Suffolk University. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/17XMA_BL3ukYN4U-btJQ1cqrObCqWkAna/view.

Crehan, Kate. 2016. *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives*. Duke University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.mcrq.ac.in/>

[IWM_Migration_2024/11%20Parch%202024%20Gramsci%E2%80%99s%20Common%20Sense_%20Inequality.pdf.](#)

Cross, Katherine. 2024. *Log Off: Why Posting and Politics (Almost) Never Mix*. Little Puss Press. Print.

Cruz, Freddy. 2021. "Extremists at the Border: How the Far Right Exploits the Migrant Crisis, Targets Humanitarian Organizations and Peddles Nativist Fears." *Southern Poverty Law Center*. July 6, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/hate-watch/extremists-border-how-far-right-exploits-migrant-crisis-targets-humanitarian-organizations/>.

Cruz, Freddy. 2021. "In Plain Sight: Uncovering Border Patrol's Relationship with Far-Right Militias at the Southern Border." *Southern Poverty Law Center*. July 29, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/07/29/plain-sight-uncovering-border-patrols-relationship-far-right-militias-southern-border>.

Dale, Daniel. 2021. "Steve Bannon's popular podcasts is a 'dangerous' fantasyland of election lies." *CNN Politics*. November 7, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/07/politics/bannon-podcast-war-room-election-lies/index.html>.

Davis, Angela Y. 2016. "Four: On Palestine, G4S, and the Prison-Industrial Complex." Pp. 51-60 in *Freedom is A Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a354481a9db0961249f52ec/t/5f274aa39f771960409f70a4/1596410532218/On+Palestine%2C+G4S%2C+and+the+Prison+Industrial+Complex.pdf>.

DEA. n.d. "1975-1980." *Drug Enforcement Administration – History*. Retrieved from https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/1975-1980_p_39-49.pdf.

DeLeón, Jason. 2015. "Necroviolence." Pp. 62-85 in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. University of California Press. Print.

DePillis, Lydia. 2021. "Twitter and YouTube Banned Steve Bannon. Apple Still Gives Him

Millions of Listeners." *Propublica*. January 19, 2021. Retrieved from [https://](https://www.propublica.org/article/twitter-and-youtube-banned-steve-bannon-apple-still-gives-him-millions-of-listeners?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social#1046838)

[www.propublica.org/article/twitter-and-youtube-banned-steve-bannon-apple-still-gives-](https://www.propublica.org/article/twitter-and-youtube-banned-steve-bannon-apple-still-gives-him-millions-of-listeners?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social#1046838)

[him-millions-of-listeners?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social#1046838](https://www.propublica.org/article/twitter-and-youtube-banned-steve-bannon-apple-still-gives-him-millions-of-listeners?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social#1046838).

DHS S&T. 2024. "Social Media Working Group (SMWG) for Emergency Services and Disaster

Management Program." *DHS Science and Technology Directorate* (DHS S&T). August

1, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.dhs.gov/archive/science-and-technology/smwg>.

Díaz-Barriga, Miguel & Margaret E. Dorsey. 2020. *Fencing in Democracy: Border Walls,*

Necrocitizenship, and the Security State. Durham: Duke University Press. Print.

Doty, Roxanne Lynn. 2011. "Bare Life: Border-Crossing Deaths and Spaces of Moral Alibi." Pp.

129-143 in *Governing Immigration Through Crime: A Reader*. Stanford University Press.

Print.

Durkheim, Émile. 1982. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, 1st Edition. Edited by S. Lukes. The

Free Press. Retrieved from <https://monoskop.org/images/1/1e/>

[Durkheim_Emile_The_Rules_of_Sociological_Method_1982.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/1/1e/Durkheim_Emile_The_Rules_of_Sociological_Method_1982.pdf).

European Center for Populism Studies. n.d. "Nativism." Retrieved from <https://>

www.populismstudies.org/Vocabulary/nativism/.

Fernandes, Deepa. 2007. *Targeted: Homeland Security and the Business of Immigration*. Seven

Stories Press. Print.

FOX News. 2024. "Armed vigilante group patrols US side of southern border." *YouTube*. January

31, 2024. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/OPbP3XyTzD0?si=IBaDqXngMnaBb7s4>.

French, Philip. 1974. *Westerns: Aspects of A Movie Genre (Cinema One Series, No. 25)*. The

Viking Press. Retrieved from ISBN 13: 9780670757275.

García Hernández, César Cuauhtémoc. 2019. *Migrating to Prison: America's Obsession with Locking Up Immigrants*. The New Press. Print.

Ghosh, Shreenita & Galen Stocking. 2022. "Key facts about Rumble." *Pew Research Center*.

December 21, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/>

[2022/12/21/key-facts-about-rumble/](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/21/key-facts-about-rumble/).

Golash-Boza, Tanya Maria. 2015. *Deported: Immigrant Policing, Disposable Labor, and Global Capitalism*. New York: New York University Press. Print.

Gómez, Laura & Jerod MacDonald-Evoy. 2019. "Some anti-immigrant protestors agree to settle

federal lawsuit with Valley churches." *AZ Mirror*. September 5, 2019. Retrieved from

<https://azmirror.com/briefs/some-anti-immigrant-protesters-agree-to-settle-federal->

[lawsuit-with-valley-churches/](https://azmirror.com/briefs/some-anti-immigrant-protesters-agree-to-settle-federal-lawsuit-with-valley-churches/).

Gonzales, Alfonso. 2014. "The State-Civil Society Nexus and the Debate over the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005." Pp. 21-47 in *Reform Without Justice: Latino Migrant Politics and the Homeland Security State*. New York: Oxford University Press. Print.

Gonzales, Alfonso. 2014. "Race, Domestic Globalization, and Migration Control in Riverside County." Pp. 75-98 in *Reform Without Justice: Latino Migrant Politics and the Homeland Security State*. New York: Oxford University Press. Print.

Gonzales, Alfonso. 2014. "The Geopolitics of the Homeland Security State and Deportation in El Salvador." Pp. 99-120 in *Reform Without Justice: Latino Migrant Politics and the Homeland Security State*. New York: Oxford University Press. Print.

Hernández, Roberto D. 2018. *Coloniality of the U-S///Mexico Border: Power, Violence, and the Decolonial Imperative*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. Print.

Hoare, Quentin & Geoffrey Newell Smith. 1999. "Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci." *London: ElecBook*. Retrieved from <https://uberty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/gramsci-prison-notebooks.pdf>.

Homeland Security Act of 2002 [Official], Public Law 107-296, 107th Congress (2002).

Retrieved from [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/03_0116_hr_5005_enr.pdf)

[2023-11/03_0116_hr_5005_enr.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/03_0116_hr_5005_enr.pdf).

Homeland Security Act of 2002 [Unofficial], Public Law 107-296, Amended through P.L.

118-15. (2023). Retrieved from [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/23_0930_HSA-2002-updated.pdf)

[2023-11/23_0930_HSA-2002-updated.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/23_0930_HSA-2002-updated.pdf).

House Appropriations Republicans. n.d. "Fiscal Year 2024 Homeland Security Appropriations

Bill." Retrieved from [https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-](https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-appropriations.house.gov/files/documents/FY24%20Homeland%20Security%20-%20Bill%20Summary%20Updated%206.21.23.pdf)

[appropriations.house.gov/files/documents/FY24%20Homeland%20Security%20-](https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-appropriations.house.gov/files/documents/FY24%20Homeland%20Security%20-%20Bill%20Summary%20Updated%206.21.23.pdf)

[%20Bill%20Summary%20Updated%206.21.23.pdf](https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-appropriations.house.gov/files/documents/FY24%20Homeland%20Security%20-%20Bill%20Summary%20Updated%206.21.23.pdf).

IMDb. n.d. "Cartel Land." *Internet Movie Database*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4126304/>.

Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection. n.d. "Fact Sheet: Unlawful Militias in Arizona." *Georgetown Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/icap/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/09/Arizona.pdf>.

Laine, Jussi P. (2016). "Intro: The Multiscalar Production of Borders." *Geopolitics*, 21(3), pp. 465-482. July, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/14650045.2016.1195132?needAccess=true>.

Leon, Julia. 2019. "'Veterans on Patrol' leader arrested again." *KVOA*. August 6, 2019. Retrieved from https://www.kvoa.com/news/local/veterans-on-patrol-leader-arrested-again/article_e48bb0e2-f70b-5923-b25c-6f53d221165f.html.

Lilyea, Jonn. 2015. "Timothy Daniel Foley, 'Cartel Land' star." *Valor Guardians*. August 6, 2015. Retrieved from <https://valorguardians.com/blog/?p=61221>.

López, Iván Chaar. 2024. *The Cybernetic Border: Drones, Technology, and Intrusion*. Duke University Press. Print.

Luke, Timothy W. (2013). "Design as Defense: Broken Barriers and the Security Spectacle at the US-Mexico Border." Pp. 115-131 in *Building Walls and Dissolving Borders: The Challenges of Alterity, Community, and Securitizing Space*. Routledge. Print.

MacDonald-Evoy, Jerod. 2020. "Extremist group Patriot Movement AZ agrees to settle federal lawsuit with Valley churches." *AZ Mirror*. January 21, 2020. Retrieved from <https://azmirror.com/briefs/extremist-group-patriot-movement-az-agrees-to-settle-federal-lawsuit-with-valley-churches/>.

Martin, James. 2023. "Antonio Gramsci." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. January 13, 2023. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gramsci/>.

Martínez, Daniel E., Josiah Heyman, & Jeremy Slack. 2020. "Border Enforcement Developments Since 1993 and How to Change CBP." *Center for Migration Studies*. Aug 24, 2020. Retrieved from <https://cmsny.org/publications/border-enforcement-developments-since-1993-and-how-to-change-cbp/>.

Mbembe, Achille. 2016. *Necropolitics*. Duke University Press. Print.

Mbembé J.-A. & Libby Meintjes. 2003. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture*, 15(1), pp. 11-40. Retrieved from https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/postgraduate/masters/modules/theoryfromthemargins/mbembe_22necropolitics22.pdf.

Miller, Todd. 2014. *Border Patrol Nation: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Homeland Security*. City Lights Books. Print.

Murray, Kate E. & David M. Marx. 2013. "Attitudes Toward Unauthorized Immigrants, Authorized Immigrants, and Refugees." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority*

Psychology – American Psychological Association, 19(3), pp. 332-341. Retrieved from

<https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/cdp-19-3-332.pdf>.

Musick, Morley. 2020. “Meet the Boy Scouts of the Border Patrol.” *The Nation*. January 21,

2020. Retrieved from [https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/scouts-border-](https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/scouts-border-immigration-trump/)

[immigration-trump/](https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/scouts-border-immigration-trump/).

National Archives. 2023. “Milestone Documents: Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).” *The U.S.*

National Archives and Records Administration. January 17, 2023. Retrieved from [https://](https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act#:~:text=It%20was%20the%20first%20significant,immigrating%20to%20the%20United%20States.)

[www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-](https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act#:~:text=It%20was%20the%20first%20significant,immigrating%20to%20the%20United%20States.)

[act#:~:text=It%20was%20the%20first%20significant,immigrating%20to%20the%20Unit](https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act#:~:text=It%20was%20the%20first%20significant,immigrating%20to%20the%20United%20States.)

[ed%20States.](https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act#:~:text=It%20was%20the%20first%20significant,immigrating%20to%20the%20United%20States.)

Nevins, Joseph. 2010. *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond: The War on “Illegals” and the*

Remaking of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary. New York, NY: Routledge. Print.

NNiRR. n.d. "Border Militarization Policy." *National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights*. Retrieved from <https://nnirr.org/programs/seeking-border-justice/border-militarization-policy/>.

Obamamoye, Babatunde F. 2023. "When Neo-Gramscians Engage the Postcolonial: Insights into Subaltern Consent and Dissent in the Re/Unmaking of Hegemonic Orders." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 48(2), pp. 115-132. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754231151467>.

Painter, William L. & Audrey Singer. 2024. "DHS Border Barrier Funding Through FY2021." *Congressional Research Service*, (R45888). Mar. 4, 2024. Retrieved from <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45888>.

PBS News. 2017. "How Steve Bannon became a fixture in the White House." *PBS News*. February 1, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/steve-bannon-became-fixture-white-house>.

Procter, Ben H. 2023. "Texas Rangers." *Texas State Historical Association*. January 11, 2023.

Retrieved from <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/texas-rangers>.

Quijano, Anibal. 2007. "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), pp.

168-178. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353>.

Ramos, Paola. 2024. "Introduction: Latino Defectors." Pp. 3-11 in *Defectors: The Rise of the*

Latino Far Right and What It Means for America. Penguin Random House. Print.

Ramos, Paola. 2024. "Border Vigilantes." Pp. 15-34 in *Defectors: The Rise of the Latino Far*

Right and What It Means for America. Penguin Random House. Print.

Rivera, Kendra Dyanne. 2015. "Emotional Taint: Making Sense of Emotional Dirty Work at the

U.S. Border Patrol." *Management Communication Quarterly*, 29(2), pp. 198-228. [https://](https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318914554090)

doi.org/10.1177/0893318914554090.

Roediger, David. 2006. *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White:*

The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs. Basic Books. Retrieved from

<https://doi.org/10.4000/sdt.22594>.

Romo, David Dorado. 2005. *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of*

El Paso and Juárez: 1893-1923. El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press. Print.

Schaeffer, Felicity Amaya. 2022. *Unsettled Borders: The Militarized Science of Surveillance on*

Sacred Indigenous Land. Duke University Press. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/>

[10.1215/9781478022565](https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478022565).

Senate Appropriations Committee – Republicans. n.d. “Homeland Security, 2023.” Retrieved

from <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/>

[FY23%20BILL%20HIGHLIGHTS_DHS1.pdf](https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FY23%20BILL%20HIGHLIGHTS_DHS1.pdf).

SPLC. 2010. “John Tanton’s Network.” Southern Poverty Law Center. January 29, 2010.

Retrieved from <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/reports/john-tantons-network/>.

SPLC. n.d. "Alliance of Christian Leaders of the East Valley, et al. V. Patriot Movement AZ, et al." *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/civil-rights-case-docket/alliance-christian-leaders-east-valley-et-al-v-patriot-movement-az-et-al/>.

SPLC. n.d. "Sovereign Citizens Movement." *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/sovereign-citizens-movement/>.

SPLC. n.d. "Veterans on Patrol." *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/veterans-patrol/>.

Staci Burk v. Doug Ducey, Katie Hobbs, Clint Hickman, Jack Sellers, Steve Chucri, Bill Gates, Steve Gallardo, Adrian Fontes, AZ. No. 20-1243. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/20/20-1243/171445/20210310120306935_20210310-115804-00001755-00001885.pdf.

Steger, M.B. & Paul James. 2013. "Levels of Subjective Globalization: Ideologies, Imaginaries, Ontologies." *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, 12(1), pp. 17-40.

Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691497-12341240>.

Strickland, Patrick. 2020. "Beyond Pizzagate: Anti-Immigrant Conspiracists Traffic Fear in Southern Arizona." *Political Research Advocates*. October 13, 2020. Retrieved from

<https://politicalresearch.org/2020/10/13/beyond-pizzagate>.

Strickland, Patrick. 2022. *The Marauders: Standing Up to Vigilantes in the American Borderlands*. Melville House Publishing. Print.

Taylor, Charles. 2002. "Modern Social Imaginaries." *Public Culture*, 14(1), pp. 91-124.

Retrieved from <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/26276>.

Ticktin, Miriam. 2022. "Borders: A Study of Political Imagination." *Borderlands Journal*, 21(1), pp. 138-170. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48767835>.

Trist, N. P. et al. 2022. "Milestone Documents: Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)." *The U.S.*

National Archives and Records Administration. September 20, 2022. Retrieved from

<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-guadalupe->

[hidalgo#:~:text=This%20treaty%2C%20signed%20on%20February,Oklahoma%2C%20](https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-guadalupe-hidalgo#:~:text=This%20treaty%2C%20signed%20on%20February,Oklahoma%2C%20)

[Kansas%2C%20and%20Wyoming](https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-guadalupe-hidalgo#:~:text=This%20treaty%2C%20signed%20on%20February,Oklahoma%2C%20Kansas%2C%20and%20Wyoming).

United States Attorney's Office. 2020. "Leaders of 'We Build The Wall' Online Fundraising

Campaign Charged With DeFrauding Hundreds Of Thousands Of Donors." *United States*

Attorney's Office: Southern District of New York. August 20, 2020. Retrieved from

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/leaders-we-build-wall-online-fundraising->

[campaign-charged-defrauding-hundreds-thousands](https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/leaders-we-build-wall-online-fundraising-campaign-charged-defrauding-hundreds-thousands).

Upadhyay, Brajesh. 2025. "Steve Bannon pleads guilty in border wall case and avoids jail time."

BBC News. February 11, 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/>

[c4gpk267dvwo](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gpk267dvwo).

U.S. Customs and Border Protection. n.d. "BP Law Enforcement Explorer Program." Retrieved from <https://careers.cbp.gov/s/career-paths/cbp-explorer-program>.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection. n.d. *Videos* [YouTube Channel]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/@customsborderprotect/videos>.

USAGov. n.d. "Congressional Research Service (CRS)." *U.S. General Services Administration*.

Retrieved from [https://www.usa.gov/agencies/congressional-research-service#:~:text=The%20Congressional%20Research%20Service%20\(CRS,to%20an%20informed%20national%20legislature](https://www.usa.gov/agencies/congressional-research-service#:~:text=The%20Congressional%20Research%20Service%20(CRS,to%20an%20informed%20national%20legislature).

Vina, Stephen R., et al. 2006. "Civilian Patrols Along the Border: Legal and Policy Issues."

Congressional Research Service, RL33353. April 7, 2006. Retrieved from <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/homesecc/RL33353.pdf>.

Western States Center. 2022. "Accountability for bigoted and paramilitary activity on the border." May 19, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.westernstatescenter.org/border-activity-letter>.

Wren, Alex. 2024. "Steve Bannon, in federal prison, is getting daily updates from his daughter Maureen." *Politico*. July 16, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.com/live-updates/2024/07/16/rnc-live-updates-coverage/steve-bannon-maureen-updates-00168689>.