



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of International Relations

**THE CONCEPT OF BORDER FROM CRITICAL GEOPOLITICAL
PERSPECTIVE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE US-MEXICO BORDER
DURING DONALD TRUMP PERIOD**

Semanur OĞUZ

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2024

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ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

The jury finds that Semanur Oğuz has on the date of 29 May 2024 successfully passed the defense examination and approves her Master's Thesis titled "The Concept of Border from Critical Geopolitical Perspective: An Analysis of the US-Mexico Border during Donald Trump Period".

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26/06/2024

Semanur OĞUZ

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ETİK BEYAN

Bu alıřmadaki bütn bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar erevesinde elde ettiđimi, grsel, iřitsel ve yazılı tm bilgi ve sonuları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduđumu, kullandıđım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadıđımı, yararlandıđım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduđumu, tezimin kaynak gsterilen durumlar dıřında zgn olduđunu, **Do. Dr. Ayře mr ATMACA** danıřmanlıđında tarafımdan retildiđini ve Hacettepe niversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstits Tez Yazım Ynergesine gre yazıldıđını beyan ederim.

Semanur OĐUZ

To Onur who sheds light on my path with the light in his eyes...

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Firstly, I would like to state that I am proud of carrying out such a study in an order where people are marginalised in many ways in life. In fact, when every individual is born equally, the marginalisation or exclusion of people for different reasons, such as ethnic origin, language, religion and nationality, seems so meaningless considering that everything is so worldly...When it is seen that different stories turn into the same sufferings, I hope that this thesis will remind all those who struggle together with their similarities, not their differences, that the walls are high but the sky is even higher than that. I would like to express how happy I am that I am not alone in my thesis journey to rekindle these ashes of hope.

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ABSTRACT

OĞUZ, Semanur. *The Concept of Border from Critical Geopolitical Perspective: An Analysis of the US-Mexico Border during Donald Trump Period*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2024.

The world is divided into different geographical spaces, but some territories have symbolic meanings beyond their geographical location. These meanings reflect certain power relations and the relationship between knowledge and power. Contrary to the 'borderless world' discourse that came with the globalization and collapsed with the September 11 attack and COVID-19 pandemic, borders and border walls have become a field of study that requires multifaceted analysis as subjects that are politicized, instrumentalized and institutionalized beyond their physical existence. In this thesis, the historical process of how the border (wall) has become a geopolitical territory and its politicization through power relations and discourses will be evaluated within the framework of the critical geopolitics. In this context, the US-Mexican border is chosen as a case study. Within the limits of the study, the discourses of the 45th US President Donald Trump, based on marginalizing, discriminatory, and racist identity politics towards Mexican immigrants in his speeches and tweets, will be examined through a practical geopolitical approach, and in this context, how the border (wall) has become a geopolitical territory will be presented.

Keywords

Critical geopolitics, border, border wall, discourse, Donald Trump, US-Mexico border, marginalization

ÖZET

OĞUZ, Semanur. *Eleştirel Jeopolitik Perspektifinden Sınır Kavramı: Donald Trump Döneminde ABD-Meksika Sınırının Bir Analizi*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2024.

Dünya, farklı coğrafi alanlara ayrılırken kimi bölgeler coğrafi konumun ötesinde sembolik anlamlar kazanmıştır. Bu anlamlar, belirli güç ilişkilerinin ve bilgi-iktidar ilişkisinin yansımasıdır. Küreselleşme ile birlikte gelen ve 11 Eylül ve COVID-19 pandemisi ile çöken ‘sınırsız dünya’ söyleminin aksine, sınır ve sınır duvarları özellikle son yıllarda fiziki olguların ötesinde politikleştirilen, araçsallaştırılan ve kurumsallaştıran özneler olarak çok yönlü analizi gerektiren bir çalışma alanı haline gelmiştir. Bu tez çalışmasında, sınırın (duvarın) tarihsel süreç içinde nasıl jeopolitik bir alan haline geldiği, daha sonra ise, güç ilişkileri ve söylem yoluyla politikleşmesi jeopolitik çerçeve kapsamında değerlendirilecektir. Bu bağlamda, örnek olay incelemesi olarak ABD-Meksika sınırı seçilmiştir. Çalışmanın sınırları dahilinde, 45. ABD Başkanı Donald Trump’ın konuşmaları ve tweetlerinde Meksikalı göçmenlere yönelik ötekileştirici, ayrıştırıcı ve ırkçı kimlik politikasına dayanan söylemleri, pratik jeopolitik yaklaşımıyla incelenerek bu çerçevede sınırın (duvarın) nasıl jeopolitik bir alan haline geldiği sunulacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Eleştirel jeopolitik, sınır, sınır duvarı, söylem, Donald Trump, Amerika-Meksika sınırı, marjinalleştirme

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps it's time for a new beginning, for a story about the 'others' behind the wall.

Why is border control so important for states? Why do migrants trying to cross the border with a tiny suitcase, pose such threat to the states, which are the most powerful actors in the international system? Why do states allocate large budgets for border control? How is it that a defenceless immigrant can pose a threat to a state with large military forces or nuclear weapons?

The answer to all these questions lies in the relationship between the state and citizenship. Since citizens form the local culture and, above all, the local identity of states, they are the most important 'goods' that a state owns and can control. Uncontrolled entry, however, would disrupt the local identity within the state, as well as shake the state's authority to control citizens, and prevent the institutions of the state from functioning in a certain order. In this sense, the borders are not only a framework for states, but also a framework for citizens and ideologies. For this reason, within the issue of border control, the exclusion or inclusion of immigrants is important for states to maintain their authority over their most important 'goods' (citizens) and to consolidate local identity within the borders of the county in which citizens live.¹

In this sense, borders, as effective tools for states, are not only a framework for the territories of states, but also a framework for citizens and ideologies. According to the discipline of International Relations (IR), the state is at the centre of the concept of border, and in this sense, the importance given to borders took on an institutional dimension with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. In this respect, the borders, which represent both the beginning and the end spheres of sovereignty of states, become an effective tool in controlling human mobility. Besides sovereignty areas of states, borders also determine the cultural sphere of states. Therefore, states, especially powerful ones, use their borders

¹ Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*, (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1996), 127.

as a control apparatus in order to discriminate between their citizens and uncontrolled entry. In short, the allocation of a large budget or the creation of policies to ensure border control is essential not only to control the population within, but also to keep under control the human mobility that may come from outside.

Over time, globalization has changed the meaning of borders, which are seen by states, as a kind of sacred line. However, this change was short-lived as states assigned new functions to borders. Borders are still not completely blurred. Visas, passports, border controls and surveillance at border points are examples of this. Contrary to the claim that globalization is eliminating borders, border walls appear as powerful instruments that maintain the power of political leaders. In this respect, it is not the walls that have fallen but the ones that have risen.

There is a strong relationship between border (wall), identity, and immigrants. In this regard, this study deconstructs the place of border (wall) and immigrant discourse in the political process and geopolitics. In doing so, the discourse of Donald Trump, the 45th president of the United States (US), will be evaluated. In this sense, this study will present a critical viewpoint that seeks to deconstruct how Trump has used border (wall) and immigrant discourse in the US to justify his policies.

In order to do this, this thesis aims to answer these two initial questions, which lead to the main research question: How are the meanings constructed in terms of the politicization, securitization, and territorialization of the border (wall) discourse influencing foreign policies and state policies around the power? How are the borders and border walls geopolitically spatialized in terms of the critical geopolitical understanding?

In this context, there has been a strong relationship between geography and power. In parallel to this relationship, both physical and psychological barriers have been created to maintain the position of the power (the US), to maintain and legitimize the policies of the power, and to differentiate and prioritize power from 'others.' Therefore, the main question in the framework of this thesis is how and why the border discourse of Donald Trump is constructed, both in abstract and concrete terms, against the Mexican

immigrants. In this sense, the strategic importance of the border (wall) discourse and the changing meanings attributed to the issue of border, and border wall and immigrants will be evaluated. It will also answer the question of how and why immigrants pose a threat to the national security of the US or is this situation only presented as if it were in the context of the division between ‘us and them’?

Critical geopolitics is used as a theoretical tool in this thesis because answering these questions requires questioning and deconstructing the given knowledge. Otherwise, seeking answers to these questions through traditional theories of IR is nothing more than presenting the limited perspective reflected by the situated knowledge. Therefore, political discourse of Donald Trump will be examined in the light of critical geopolitics, which approaches the fixed geopolitical knowledge accepted by classical geopolitics with a critical attitude. In doing so, critical geopolitics aims to deconstruct the envisioning space of statecraft constructed by traditional geopolitics. Thus, the main aim of critical geopolitics is to reveal how political actors spatialize international politics and to show how and why places are presented as threatening.² These spatializing activities may change or regain importance over time in line with the aims of political actors. All of this becomes meaningful through discourse. This is why critical geopolitics attaches great importance to discourse.³

On the other hand, the distinction between us and them has an important place within the critical geopolitical understanding, because the politics of discourse that is enacted through borders also entails the concepts of belonging and identity. For this reason, according to critical geopolitics, borders are the most important way of showing the distinction between us and them.⁴

In this regard, from critical geopolitical perspective, borders are seen not only physical lines but also as tools of social control in which discursive and constructed identities and

² Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew, “Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy,” *Political Geography* 11, no.2 (1992): 192.

³ Ibid. 191.

⁴ Simon Dalby, “Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference, and Dissent,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no.3 (1991): 274.

meanings exist. The concept of border, whose meaning has changed over time, has gone beyond a straight line separating the two countries and has begun to play a role in the construction and reconstruction of spaces. The multidimensional structure of border studies is therefore best understood within the framework of critical geopolitics. In this sense, the border has become a significant element that gives meaning to geopolitical spaces and defines both us and the other. The border has thus become not only a physical phenomenon, but also a part of a mechanism of control and surveillance that compasses notions of identity, immigration, power, and sovereignty.

According to Joseph Nevins, "...the establishment of a boundary and immigration enforcement apparatus not only helped to define Mexico and its citizens, but also helped to define the US, the boundary, and the citizenry within."⁵ The history of the US-Mexico border therefore suggests that the border not only separates these two countries, but also defines them. In other words, the citizens of these two countries are separated not only by the line on the map, but also by the social boundaries drawn with pejorative terms such as 'illegal', 'alien', and 'wetback.' In this context, narratives and metaphors are not only representations, but also apparatuses of separation. Critical geopolitics therefore not only addresses these narratives, but also helps to analyze how these narratives shape the policies of political leaders.

Therefore, how the US-Mexico border is spatialized, how and why it is discursively presented as a threat, and subsequently how the meaning of the border (wall) changes over time, can best be examined with a critical geopolitical approach. For it is remarkable how the concepts of both border and immigrant have evolved over time and, as a result, how the discourse of the wall has been constructed. Far from the usual, the border is reconsidered as a culturally more complex phenomenon that includes practices, identity, and representations under the branch of geopolitics within the scope of this thesis. To demonstrate this complexity, the US-Mexico border is chosen. It is argued that it would be extremely useful to study the development here within the framework of critical

⁵ Joseph Nevins, "Chapter 2: The Creation of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary and the Remaking of the United States and Mexico in the Border Region," *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S. – Mexico Boundary*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 44.

geopolitics due to the relationship between power, geography, knowledge, and discourse. It is hoped that this analysis will be deepened the problematization of geopolitics and broaden the scope of border studies.

State policies produced through borders and border walls are closely related to discourse politics, territorialization, legitimization and marginalization. Thus, the geopolitical knowledge has been constructed and reconstructed through discourse. In line with this, the aim is to show the change in the definitions attributed to the border (wall) over time, the spatialization and politicization of the US-Mexican border, referring to the importance of the use of language in the Donald Trump era and marginalization, criminalization, and dehumanization of Mexican immigrants through the policies and discourses constructed by Trump, particularly through the analysis of tweets shared through his own Twitter⁶ account.

In this thesis, the power struggles and state policies have been evaluated in a multidimensional way in terms of the critical geopolitical understanding, as opposed to classical geopolitics. Therefore, the US-Mexico border is considered beyond the physical separation on the maps, in fact this issue is a major component of the psychological separation and marginalization of Mexicans ‘others’, created by Trump’s discourse. In this sense, the US-Mexico border, although a popular topic in its own region, is a topic that is not much discussed especially in Turkish literature compared to other border studies. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute and enrich the literature in terms of both the theoretical approach and subject matter. Also, the studies on Donald Trump in the literature have not dealt in detail with Trump’s social media posts, especially his tweets on Twitter, as a political tool, as this thesis does. Therefore, it is a unique study that will contribute to the literature.

Within the scope of this thesis, the US-Mexico border has been studied with a limitation based on the discourses and policies of the Donald Trump era. For this reason, the issue

⁶ It is the social media platform currently known as X. Since the name of this social media platform was Twitter during the Donald Trump period, it has been used as Twitter, instead of X, to avoid confusion and to create consistency.

will be analyzed in a holistic manner by referring to the historical framework of the US-Mexico border. In addition, when conducting the discourse analysis, a qualitative approach that focuses on the content of the discourses and the use of language, rather than a quantitative approach that examines word repetitions, and the number of words has been adopted. The main challenge in researching this topic is accessing the tweets shared by Trump, as most of the sources are blocked for security reasons, making it difficult to access reliable data harder. Therefore, the data was obtained from secondary sources where tweets and speeches are archived.

Proponents of critical geopolitics argue that critical geopolitics is not a kind of 'geopolitical' thinking, but an alternative way of conceptualising geography, space and, most importantly, world politics beyond traditional geopolitics. Also sceptical of scientism, critical geopolitics seeks, within a post-structuralist theoretical framework, to expose the geographical formulation of global politics and to demonstrate the exaggerated importance of geopolitics and its hierarchical relations of domination. Accordingly, this thesis positions critical geopolitics to recognise that geopolitical space (as more than a physical reality) is not only the 'immutable and permanent element' in the making of foreign policy, along with the perspective of knowledge and power relationship and the conceptualisation of geopolitics and power within a discursive framework. In this context, unlike in other studies on borders and border walls and migration studies, globalisation- as claimed by the proponents of critical geopolitics, and economy- as claimed by the representatives of traditional IR theories, are not considered as the only factors.

Within this framework, this thesis is divided into three main chapters, which provide theoretical, historical, and case study analysis respectively.

Can borders and border walls be considered as a geopolitical issue within the framework of critical geopolitics? This question forms the basis of the first chapter. In this regard, the chapter will first explain what the main arguments of critical geopolitics are and where it criticizes classical geopolitics. Accordingly, the theoretical framework of the study, critical geopolitics, is discussed in accordance with the concepts of border (wall) and

discourse. Instead of presenting a pure theory, a theoretical background will be presented within the framework of the key concepts of the thesis.

The second chapter traces the historical roots of the construction and reconstruction of the us vs. them duality of borders, setting the stage for the third chapter. The main focus of the chapter is to show how the concepts of border and immigrant have changed throughout the historical process according to the policies of the US. The 'border' has been defined first as a 'line', then as a 'place to be guarded', and finally as a 'matter of national security'. Similarly, 'immigrants' have also been defined first as 'immigrants', then as 'illegal immigrants', and finally as 'potential criminals for national security'. Political actors and states, therefore, reinterpret concepts to suit to their own interests and to legitimize their own policies.

The third chapter examines Donald Trump's border discourse in terms of a practical geopolitical understanding that seeks to reveal how political leaders construct world politics through their policies. Borders and border walls are thus seen as geopolitical issues that are used by governments in accordance with their policies, especially their foreign policy agenda. To support this argument, the US-Mexico border will be assessed, where Trump has attempted to normalize the US policies, especially immigration and identity, through border rhetoric. Only discourse shapes our understanding, and we can only access the world through geopolitical discourse. In this framework, the focus is not on words, but on the mutual interaction and meaning created by these words. Since this meaning is created by particular actors for a particular purpose, it is not objective and varies according to the context. Therefore, the third chapter, will critically examine the strategy of the US in the Donald Trump era, noting how the imagination of discourse of place -border (wall)- constructs both spatial and political realities.

Finally, the thesis will end with the conclusion chapter in which the findings of the study is presented within the framework of practical geopolitical understanding.

CHAPTER 1- CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS: RETHINKING OF THE BORDER(WALL) IN THE AXIS OF IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE

How are the borders drawn? Just a physical line on maps or a symbolic line constructed through the discourse of the mind?

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Geography does not directly mean power, but it is closely related to the relationship between power and knowledge because the history of knowledge and power relations can be located in a geographical context.⁷ In this sense, critical geopolitics tries to demonstrate that geography is used as a tool by states to organize space according to their own interests. Within this positioning, borderlines become the product of power relations, with both their material and symbolic meanings.

Since the concept of the border gives different meanings and functions to the states to which they belong, they constitute an important field of study in the discipline of IR. For this reason, this chapter draws heavily on the postmodern discussion of border studies, along with the concepts of identity and discourse, to fill the gap left by classical geopolitics in the academy. At this point, the theoretical discussion presented in this chapter will be shaped by the ideas of valuable scholars such as Michel Foucault, Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby, and Elisabeth Vallet.

At the same time, critical geopolitics, which places the question of the border at the centre of discourse and language, has offered a multifaceted analysis by shifting the border question to another dimension. This chapter, therefore, aims to provide a basis for the following chapters, which will situate the concept of the border in discourse in order to reveal the power relations. Furthermore, the theoretical background that will be presented

⁷ Servet Karabağ, *Jeopolitik Açısından Sınırlar*, (Ankara: Pegem Akademi Yayıncılık, 2014), 93.

in this chapter is also intended to help answer to the questions posed in the following chapters.

1.2. FOURTH DEBATE- POSTSTRUCTURALISM

In the 1990s, the Fourth Debate⁸ in IR which is both an ontological and an epistemological debate, took place between ‘positivism’, which gives importance to the observation, and ‘post-positivism’, which gives importance to the understanding and hermeneutics.⁹ Positivists deal only with ‘realities’ that can be observed, believing that repeated examples of observations will reveal regularities that indicate the operation of general laws.¹⁰ According to Smith, positivism has been based on four assumptions. The first one is ‘the unity of science’, known in philosophical terms as naturalism. The second is about the separation of values and facts, which in philosophical language is called objectivism. The third is the assumption that only natural laws can be objectively observed in the social world. The final assumption is about the empirical falsification and validation, which is empiricist epistemology.¹¹ Taking into account all of these four assumptions, it can be said that positivists compare interstate relations to developments in the natural sciences. This positivist view has been criticized and rejected by the post-positivist turn which claims that knowledge is constructed in the social and historical context. The idea of objectivity has also been rejected and the objective world has been seen by the post-positivists as impossible, since observation may not always give a correct result. They argue that there is always a margin of error. Positivism cannot explain the end of the Cold War, issues of identity or the impact of domestic issues on the IR. In this context, the fourth debate has affected new theories such as constructivism, critical theory, feminism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism. The rejection of positivism brings all these approaches under one umbrella.

⁸ Some IR theorists mention this debate as the ‘Third Debate’.

⁹ Colin Wight and Milja Kurki, “International Relations and Social Science,” in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity Third Edition*, eds. by Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20.

¹⁰ Kurki and Wight, “International Relations and Social Science,” 22.

¹¹ Steve Smith, “Positivism and Beyond,” in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, eds. by Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15-18.

Post-positivist theories, which have greatly influenced the discipline of IR to a great extent since the 1980s, have also shown their influence in the field of geopolitics. Positivism, rationalism, and objectivity have been criticized by these new theories. According to them, the mainstream IR theories are not objective because they only serve the interests of certain groups and power relations. Therefore, they argue that there is no possibility of value-free theoretical understanding. In this context, instead of one-dimensional analysis, the post-positivist theories offer the discipline of IR the possibility of multidimensional analysis, which extends to political, economic, cultural, and social fields. This multidimensional analysis, on the other hand, has led to the questioning of the place of the classical state-centred geopolitical understanding in foreign policy practices and has played a major role in the emergence of critical geopolitics. Thanks to this multidimensional analysis, a deeper layer of reality has been provided to post-positivist theories.

According to poststructuralists, there is nowhere outside the world to observe it since there is no neutral ground. In fact, this is their starting point. Thus, they argue that theories also cannot be neutral because they are part of this world and cannot be separated themselves from social practices and social realities in this world.¹² Moreover, they are sceptical of observation because according to them, people who make observations reflect their subjectivity. Therefore, they are also sceptical of observation. Instead of observation, discourse, and language have an important place in the poststructuralist approach. However, poststructuralism should not be understood only as a method of textual analysis that is applied to discourses or written and oral sources. On the contrary, poststructuralism, as a more complex form of approach, is the approach that treats social institutions and practices as ‘texts’ in order to better analyze and reveal the power relations in which they exist.¹³

Jacques Derrida’s concept of ‘deconstruction’ occupies an important place in the poststructuralist approach. In order to understand this concept, it is necessary to refer to

¹² Jenny Edkins, “Poststructuralism,” in *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Martin Griffiths, (New York, Routledge, 2007), 88.

¹³ Edkins, “Poststructuralism,” 94.

Derrida's critique of 'logocentrism' or Western metaphysics. Logocentrism works by generating dichotomies such as inside and outside. In essence, each dilemma also symbolizes a hierarchy in itself. That is, it forms a hierarchy in which the first term of the dilemma is considered primary, and more valuable than the second (subordinate) term.¹⁴ Thus, the first term cannot form its meaning and significance independently of the second one.¹⁵ From the point of view of Derrida and Foucault, the basis of poststructuralism is the discourse, language, textuality, causality, power, and knowledge.¹⁶ Poststructuralism, especially Foucault, has a great role to play. For this reason, it will be more useful to analyze Foucault under a separate title within the framework of this thesis. The examination of Michel Foucault's discourse analysis will be useful both to draw the basic framework of poststructuralism and to better understand critical geopolitics.

1.3. WHAT IS CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS?

Before moving on to the conceptual and theoretical studies for the analysis of the critical geopolitics, it will be useful to explain the concepts of geography and geopolitics. One of the most important elements necessary for a politically organized society to acquire the character of a state is to have a specific territory on which it ensures its sovereignty. The equivalent of a specific territory included in this definition is geography. Geography is associated with power because it is the product of a struggle between authorities competing for power to occupy, control, and manage space.¹⁷ The essence of the word, geography, space, and human relations are fictionalized, shaped, and politicized by governments for a specific purpose in order to legitimize their actions. In this context, the impact of geography on international relations has become the main field of geopolitics. Therefore, geography and geopolitics are intertwined concepts. In this regard, the importance of the study of political geography is undeniable if one accepts geopolitics as a discipline. Although geography and geopolitics are disciplines that influence each other, geographical location only indicates the physical location of states, while geopolitics is a

¹⁴ Edkins, "Poststructuralism," 96.

¹⁵ Richard Devetak, "Post-modernism," in *Theories of International Relations, Third edition*, ed. by Scott Burchill, and Andrew Linklater et. al., (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 168.

¹⁶ Alan D. Schrift, "Foucault and Poststructuralism," *A Companion to Literary Theory*, ed. by David H. Richter, (John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 176-178.

¹⁷ Gearóid Tuathail, "Introduction: Geo-Power," in *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 1.

discipline that determines the location of states relative to the world and regional centres of power.¹⁸ This shows that the geopolitical position of a country is variable, but its geographical position is unchangeable.¹⁹ In this sense, the geopolitical position includes political, social, cultural, and economic factors by drawing a framework beyond the geographical location of the states.

The term geopolitics was first used in 1988 by Rudolf Kjellén, a Swedish political scientist and geographer, to define the relationship between states and geography. However, the term quickly transcended beyond its original meaning. In essence, geopolitics represents both broad world political views and specific policies for states to maintain and legitimize their power. In this sense, geopolitics is an actor that both influences the international system and plays an important role in power struggles between states. Therefore, the term ‘geopolitics’ is difficult to define because it does not have a single definition.²⁰ Since there is no universally accepted definition, different scholars have come up with different definitions. In a word, the polysemic structure of geopolitics, on the one hand, prevents consensus on a common definition, and on the other hand, makes it difficult to theorize geopolitics. Even if the definition of geopolitics changes, the fact remains that the information produced on the geopolitical axis legitimizes the policies of the state. Considering of all these, geopolitics is closely related to the territorial control of power relations.

In this respect, critical geopolitics poses ontological and epistemological questions to traditional geopolitics. In doing so, it deconstructs the conventional geopolitical discourse. Geopolitics is seen by Ó Tuathail as a problem-solving theory for the practice of statecraft.²¹ In 1992, the term ‘geopolitics’ appeared in a broader sense in the study called *Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy* by John Agnew and Gearóid Ó Tuathail. This study adopts the Foucauldian power-

¹⁸ İsmail Hakkı İşcan, “Uluslararası İlişkilerde Klasik Jeopolitik Teoriler ve Çağdaş Yansımaları,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* 1, no.2 (2004): 50.

¹⁹ Deiter Weiser, “Geopolitics: Renaissance of a Controversial Concept,” *AussenPolitik*, no. 4 (1994): 402-403, quoted in İşcan, “Uluslararası İlişkilerde Klasik Jeopolitik Teoriler ve Çağdaş Yansımaları,” 50.

²⁰ Ladis K. D. Kristof, “The origins and evolution of geopolitics,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 4, no.1 (1960): 33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200276000400103>.

²¹ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Understanding critical geopolitics: Geopolitics and risk society,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no.2-3 (1999):107, DOI: [10.1080/01402399908437756](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402399908437756).

knowledge approach and re-conceptualizes geopolitics discursively. According to them, the study of geopolitics is more than geography, but rather “it is the study of the spatialization of international politics by core powers and hegemonic states.”²² At the end of this study, which re-conceptualizes geopolitics critically, four new arguments were put forward. First, the practice of geopolitics is not limited to “the small group of ‘wise men’ who speak in the language of classical geopolitics” but it is an activity that is a component of world politics.²³ Furthermore, they specify that the designation of any place is more than the definition of that place. This kind of designation leads to some classifications and narratives. Their second argument describes two types of geopolitical reasoning: practical and formal. The former is related to the reasoning of practitioners of statecraft, such as politicians. On the other hand, the latter is related to the reasoning of strategic thinkers.²⁴ In the third argument, they state that geopolitical reasoning requires consideration of the production of geographical knowledge both in a certain state and world system because geographical knowledge is reproduced both in a given state and in the world political systems.²⁵ Their final argument places geopolitical reasoning in the context of hegemony. According to them, hegemonic power acts as a playmaker in the world political system, and its rules and powers set the terms of the geopolitical world order.²⁶ Through these four suggestive arguments, Tuathail and Agnew attempt to reconceptualize the traditional meaning of geopolitics.

Taking all these into account, geopolitics can be seen as a variant of political realism. According to Tuathail, militarism, territorial expansion, or the outbreak of war are presented in geopolitical texts as a struggle for survival, and these kinds of images depoliticize the political process presenting it as an inevitable natural process.²⁷ Besides this naturalization, the importance given to power and state-centrism are the common points of both political realism and geopolitics. Even if geopolitics and political realism

²² Agnew and Tuathail, “Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy,” 192.

²³ Agnew and Tuathail, “Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy,” 194.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Agnew and Tuathail, “Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy,” 195.

²⁷ Gearóid Tuathail, “Geopolitics,” in *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 42.

adhere to the same principle, the fact that geopolitics treats geography as a single important element in foreign policy practice makes it different from political realism.²⁸

From all this, in the late 1980s, critical geopolitics, which is influenced by post-structuralist and post-colonial theories, emerged as a kind of interface approach between International Relations and Political Geography. In this context, the critical approaches and the ideas of Michel Foucault and Edward Said are the main points that influence critical geopolitics.²⁹ Scholars of critical geopolitics, such as John Agnew, Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Klaus Dodds, and Simon Dalby, take a critical stance towards geopolitical knowledge. Consistent with this stance, critical geopolitics as an approach begins by arguing that ‘geopolitics’ is a much broader and more complex phenomenon than is accepted in orthodox understandings.

At first glance, being critical has a negative connotation, but it allows one to be skeptical and thus to propose new alternatives. Critical geopolitics does not reflect itself as a constant and stable form, therefore it should not be seen as a theory of geopolitics. In other words, “...it is not an ‘is’ but, in the manner of deconstruction, it takes place.”³⁰ In this sense, critical geopolitics is not a new theory, but rather an approach that tries to raise awareness by revealing how world politics is geopolitically shaped by certain powers.

Critical geopolitics criticizes classical geopolitics, which is seen as an extension of the realist paradigm, for offering only a state-centred perspective. For this reason, it aims to deconstruct traditional geopolitical understandings with a pluralist approach. Initially, critical geopolitics focused on the overly cartographic geopolitical fiction of the Cold War. Indeed, the geopolitics of the Cold War is a period in which dangerous and terrible simplifications were made about world politics. With the end of the Cold War, however, the critical geopolitics understanding spread to wider areas because, after this period, traditional geopolitical theories were insufficient to explain the changes in the

²⁸ Tuathail, “Understanding critical geopolitics: Geopolitics and risk society,” 107.

²⁹ Ayşe Ömür Atmaca, “Yeni Dünyada Eski Oyun: Eleştirel Perspektiften Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri,” *Ortaoğu Etütleri* 3, no.1 (2011):163.

³⁰ Gearóid Tuathail, “Critical Geopolitics,” in *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 53.

international system. In contrast to the conventional Cold War understanding, the critical geopolitics approach evaluates geopolitics not only as a political but also as a social and cultural practice. From a critical geopolitical perspective, in addition to the states, which are the main actors in the international political order, issues such as borders, identities, globalization, conflict, and migration constitute the basic framework of geopolitics. In this way, critical geopolitics allows for a broader understanding perspective on the problematization of ‘geopolitics.’ This broader and richer perspective of understanding is the essential principle of critical geopolitics.

Globalization, which affects the world in many dimensions such as economic, political, social, cultural, and military, has become one of the issues on which critical geopolitics focuses. With globalization, there is no longer a sharp demarcation between the domestic and the foreign. Indeed, the understanding of borders has been challenged by these new issues. The new type of modernity recognizes the idea of ‘and’ as Tuathail calls it. This stems from its tendency towards critical geopolitics, which is concerned with ‘risk society’, and ‘informationalization’, because the new type of modernity can be said to be moving away the idea of ‘either-or’. These issues have not only seriously eroded state sovereignty but have also created ambiguous boundaries. According to Tuathail, the idea of ‘and’ in the new modernity refers to notions of ‘borderlessness’, ‘uncertainty’, and ‘multiplicity’, while he associates the idea of ‘either-or’ with notions of ‘borders’, ‘certainty’, and ‘singularity’.³¹ The concepts of ‘globalization’ and ‘informationalization’ have numerous related tendencies, but the most important point is that both of them have transformed the temporality and spatiality of world politics.³² In connection with this point, Tuathail says that “Geopolitics is becoming postmodern.”³³

According to the critical geopolitics approach, traditional geopolitics reflects its own political, social, and cultural assumptions on the world map.³⁴ This kind of reflection is criticized by critical geopolitics because it contains numerous power politics. Critical geopolitics, therefore, argues that the geographical truths taken for granted by traditional

³¹ Tuathail, “Understanding critical geopolitics: Geopolitics and risk society,” 109.

³² Ibid. 118.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. 108.

geopolitical approaches are not impartial, but rather a politicized form of analysis. In this regard, Tuathail pointed out that geopolitics is not related to power politics, but rather “it is power politics.”³⁵ Unlike classical geopolitics, critical geopolitics aims to expose the power relations that produce knowledge about geopolitics.³⁶ In doing so, critical geopolitics problematizes the existing relationship between power and knowledge.

In a word, critical geopolitics, which has been influenced by the critical turn, asserts that geography, space, and human relations are created by a certain power for a certain purpose. Thus, it problematizes the so-called neutral and objective perspective of classical geopolitics, claiming that it is in fact political.

In 1996, the special double issue of *Political Geography* introduced ‘critical geopolitics’ as a new “constellation”³⁷ within the discipline of geography that problematizes the use and construction of geographical knowledge within different spaces and power orders. According to this double special issue, critical geopolitics, as a ‘new constellation’, struggles to discuss geopolitics critically in terms of the combination of power and geographical knowledge. The articles in this special issue question geopolitical knowledge that is accepted as given, its production in the social process, or its discursive structure. The papers presented in the editorial introduction to this special issue were submitted by Dalby and Tuathail as both political and intellectual challenges to address the problems of the ‘politics of geopolitical knowledge.’³⁸ This special issue of the journal *Political Geography* plays a crucial role in critical geopolitics studies, since the inclusion of critical geopolitics in such a journal is the greatest indicator of its acceptance within the academy.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Simon Dalby and Gearóid Ó. Tuathail, “The critical geopolitics constellation: problematizing fusions of geographical knowledge and power,” *Political Geography* 15, no.6-7 (1996): 451.

³⁸ Dalby and Tuathail, “The critical geopolitics constellation: problematizing fusions of geographical knowledge and power,” 451-456.

1.4. WHAT DOES CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS CRITICIZE?

Under this title, the methodology of critical geopolitics and its critique of classical geopolitics will be discussed in order to provide a better understanding of the general framework of the thesis.

Since critical geopolitics sees geopolitics as an ideological and politicized form of analysis, it does not accept it as an objective assessment of given geographical realities. This means that instead of evaluating geopolitics from a fixed normative perception, critical geopolitics aims to analyze it by placing it in a historical context. On the contrary, it accepts that geopolitics has a discursive relationship with geography and politics. In this respect, the main purpose of critical geopolitics is to reveal the fictitiousness of knowledge by deconstructing the geopolitical knowledge that traditional geopolitics claims to be objective. The analysis of geographical assumptions thus becomes the main domain of critical geopolitics. For this reason, critical geopolitics, which does not accept the concept of geopolitics as an objective and impartial practice, criticizes classical geopolitics in five points.

The first of these five points that form the basis of critical geopolitics is explained as follows: “First, geopolitics is a much broader cultural phenomenon than is normally described and understood by the geopolitical tradition of wise men’ of statecraft.”³⁹ According to critical geopolitics, the role of geopolitical thought is to legitimize the foreign policies of states constructed in accordance with their own interests.

The second point that defines critical geopolitics is that, unlike classical geopolitics, space cannot be represented by a single fact, on the contrary, it is plural and contains different ideological, cultural, and political forms of representation. This means that critical geopolitics rejects the one-sided causal relationship between world politics and space. For this reason, critical geopolitics attaches importance to the practice of drawing

³⁹ Simon Dalby and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics Towards a Critical Geopolitics,” in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, eds. by Simon Dalby and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 3.

boundaries.⁴⁰ Therefore, it is important to discuss and analyze borders and border walls on the basis of critical geopolitics which is concerned not only with the border lines of states on maps but also with the meanings created by these border lines. This means that not only concrete borders but also conceptual borders such as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, ‘domestic’, and ‘foreign’ have been problematized thanks to critical geopolitics.⁴¹ In this sense, border walls best describe the distinction between ‘in’ and ‘out’ and go beyond the physical separation to include a psychological separation. According to Tuathail and Dalby, geopolitics is related to boundaries which also include ‘actual’ and ‘imaginary’, ‘cartographic’ and ‘conceptual’.⁴² This means that geopolitics encompasses not only the geographical borders of the state but also its cultural borders. Thus, the critical geopolitical approach goes beyond the concrete borders contained in the maps and creates the possibility of analyzing the meanings and dualities created by these borders.

The third critique concerns the singularity of geopolitics. Although critical geopolitics accepts the practice of statecraft, but it claims that geopolitics is a broader field that includes cultural and social notions. This means that there is no single way in which representational practices and geopolitical discourses to spread through societies. Geopolitics is thus a set of decentred practices, including both popular and elitist expressions.⁴³ For this reason, the final chapter discusses Donald Trump’s populist discourse within the framework of a critical geopolitical approach. As classical geopolitics suggests, geography and the geographical distinctions of states are important, but they are not sufficient to explain and understand geopolitics.⁴⁴ Critical geopolitics understanding, thus, appeals to three types of geopolitical reasoning that rely on geopolitical imaginations. ‘Practical geopolitics’ includes the practices of statesmen and foreign policy practices; on the other side ‘formal geopolitics’ encompasses the strategic and academic communities associated with the state; and finally, ‘popular geopolitics’ refers to the process by which geopolitical images are reproduced through popular culture.

⁴⁰ Dalby and Tuathail, “Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics Towards a Critical Geopolitics,” 3-4.

⁴¹ Rob B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside International Relations as Political Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), quoted in Dalby and Tuathail, “Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics Towards a Critical Geopolitics,” 4.

⁴² Dalby and Tuathail, “Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics towards a Critical Geopolitics,” 4.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Thus, it includes elements that have taken root in popular cultures, such as cinema, literature, and magazines. These three forms of geopolitical reasoning, which cover different areas from each other, have different mechanisms of production, distribution, and consumption. As such, each demonstrates that it has meanings beyond the policies produced and implemented by statesmen. Dodds argues that this distinction facilitates the understanding of the critical approach.⁴⁵ On the one hand, such a distinction offers the possibility of examining the units within the state separately; on the other hand, it deconstructs them. In fact, this distinction makes it possible to analyze the formation of perception established not only in the political or economic field but also in the media, cultural and social fields. Thus, critical geopolitics develops a different approach to the concrete and given factors accepted by classical geopolitics.

Fourth, critical geopolitics critiques classical geopolitics' claim to objectivity, arguing that geopolitical knowledge cannot be treated objectively. Critical geopolitics understanding problematizes the 'situated knowledge' that traditional geopolitics takes for granted, suggesting that knowledge cannot be formed independently of interpretation. In this way, critical geopolitics has challenged 'God trick' understanding of classical geopolitics.⁴⁶ To do so, it constantly poses questions to geopolitical discourse and subjects 'situated knowledge' to a critical analysis. Furthermore, the idea of 'is' is always accepted as a contested notion because it reflects certain subjects and cultures on the one hand and marginalizes others on the other.⁴⁷ In parallel, critical geopolitics argues that the discourses that accompany the construction of geographical concepts, such as region or border, are not neutral, on the contrary, they are the opinion of the government. With this in mind, the final chapter focuses on how the US-Mexico border has been constructed through discourse. Trump's use of the concept of 'border' in this direction had moved toward immigration policy, identity politics, and even racism. In other words, he had shifted the border to a different meaning. In fact, this shows that geopolitical discourses

⁴⁵ Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45.

⁴⁶ Dalby and Tuathail, "Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics Towards a Critical Geopolitics," 6.

⁴⁷ Tuathail, "Understanding critical geopolitics: Geopolitics and risk society," 108.

are not neutral. Therefore, critical geopolitics aims to expose the practices of government that have permeated geopolitical discourses.

Finally, critical geopolitics seeks to theorize geopolitics as broad ‘technoterritorial’ and ‘socio-spatial’ conditions of development and use. In this sense, critical geopolitics situates its engagement with geopolitics in the context of literature written on the historical expansion of the state, technology, and the history of spatiality.⁴⁸

At first glance, the critical geopolitical understanding criticizes the ‘situated knowledge’ approach of traditional geopolitics, claiming that knowledge can never be objective. In doing so, it challenges the discursive singularity and denies the existence of objective geopolitical knowledge. The meaning and stability of ‘geopolitics’ are thus problematized by these five critiques. Taking all of these critiques into account, it can be seen that although critical geopolitics has many different themes, approaches, and topics, but they all meet on common ground: “rethink geopolitics in a critical manner.”⁴⁹ Such a critical way, in turn, requires a diversity of perspectives. In short, critical geopolitics seeks to expose the fictionality and politics of geopolitical knowledge production by deconstructing the knowledge that classical geopolitics presents in the name of objectivity. From this point of view, within the framework of this thesis, the border will be discussed not only as a border but also as a psychological barrier, a tool that normalizes the identity and immigration policies of Donald Trump.

1.5. WHAT IS BORDER?

Territory and territoriality are the main concepts of political geography where they mean sovereignty, power, and space. Territoriality is a political and ideological activity, especially in the context of nationalism, which leads to state formation. Again, the construction of national identity, which is the basic building block of nationalism, takes place through borders. From this point of view, borders (he uses the term boundaries) are

⁴⁸ Dalby and Tuathail, “Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics Towards a Critical Geopolitics,” 6.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 7.

seen as “constituents of national identity” according to Paasi.⁵⁰ In this sense, this thesis argues that the borders, which mark the geographical, political, economic, social, and even psychological division between the borderlines of states, also become a concrete part of the nationalist identity. However, it is assumed that nations are not only political entities, but also cultural systems. From this point of view, it can be said that borders do not only represent the political structure, but also both define and regulate the social movements of people.⁵¹ For these reasons, this chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework for studying borders and border walls with the conceptual tools of critical geopolitics, which treats borders not only as physical, but also as ideological and discursive constructions.

Territory refers to a space that is classified and delimited because it involves control, possession, exclusion, and defense. Thus, territory acquires a legal function when it is delimited by a state. From the perspective of political geography, territory emphasizes the structure and sovereignty of the state in terms of economic, social, political, administrative, and foreign relations, while as a field of activity of sovereignty, territoriality defines the possession and protection of all of these. In this context, territoriality can be seen as both a social and spatial representation of power.⁵²

In some languages, though not in all, the term ‘border’ is replaced by other terms such as boundary or frontier. Before plumbing the depths of the issue, it is crucial to examine the differences in the use of these terms in order to better understand the issue.

The words frontier and border are used interchangeably in some languages that do not distinguish between these terms. Although some languages do not make such a distinction, it does not change the fact that these words are different. The former, which has strategic meanings such as keeping the country’s resources and citizens inside, and keeping the enemies away from the borderline, is a term related to the outside; while the

⁵⁰ Anssi Paasi, “Boundaries in a Globalizing World,” in *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, eds. by Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh, Steve Pile, and Nigel Thrift, (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 466.

⁵¹ Karabağ, *Jeopolitik Açısından Sınırlar*, 97.

⁵² *Ibid.* 3-4.

latter, which is described by both national and international law, is related to the inside.⁵³ The separation of domestic and foreign, which can be ensured thanks to the border, is vital to maintain political stability.

First of all, it is important to examine the origin of these interchangeable terms, as a basis for future chapters and for a better understanding of the subject. Boundaries are the result of many different processes, such as economic interests, cultural differences, or international conventions, and take many different forms. Although they are shaped by different processes, geographers agree on one thing: boundaries are both ‘geographically constitutive’ and regulatory constructs that reinforce the powers and policies of states.⁵⁴ As a form of boundary, the concept of ‘border’ is closely linked to the sovereign nation-state system that emerged from the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. In this sense, the national sovereignty of a state, in which the distinction between inside and outside is made and even reproduced, is ensured by borders.⁵⁵ Etymologically, the word frontier implies ‘in front of’, and was not historically used as an intellectual, legal, or political concept.⁵⁶ However, with the advancement of civilizational patterns, this word refers to the limits of states.⁵⁷ As can be inferred from this, while the frontier serves as a transitional zone, the border represents separation. According to Malcolm Anderson, frontiers are not only lines between states, but they are both institutions and processes. As the former, frontiers are constructed by political decisions and regulated by legal sources. In this sense, they are the primary political institutions. As the latter, frontiers have four dimensions. First, since governments seek to change them in accordance with their policies and advantages, frontiers function as instruments of state policy. Second, government policies and practices provide only de facto control over frontiers. Third, frontiers are the signs of identity, especially national identity, where people are united around political myths and beliefs. From this perspective, frontiers and nationalism are closely related to each other. Finally, the frontier is a discourse-based concept. Over time,

⁵³ Ladis K. D. Kristof, “The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 49, no. 3 (1959): 271-273, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2561460>.

⁵⁴ Derek Gregory et al., eds., *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, (Malden MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 55.

⁵⁵ Gregory et al., *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 52.

⁵⁶ Ladis, “The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries,” 269-270.

⁵⁷ Gregory et al., *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 264.

the meaning of frontiers and what they represent is constantly changing and even being reproduced by different disciplines and people who delimit and regulate them.⁵⁸ Within the scope of this thesis, the term ‘border’ will be used to refer to the line of demarcation in order to ensure the integrity of meaning.

In this context, although there is a notion that borders have disappeared with the dominance of globalization, the current international order shows that this is not the case, as can be seen from the effects of the September 11 attack and COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, not only the nature of the state, sovereignty, and the border but also their meanings have been affected. Even in the discussion of border studies, the state remains at the forefront.⁵⁹ Thus, instead of repeating discourses such as borders have disappeared or state sovereignty has been undermined, the main thing is to try to understand this change in meaning.⁶⁰

Paradoxically, the increased interest in borders has occurred in the period of globalization, in which the importance of borders is said to have diminished. The argument of the permeability or disappearance of borders claimed by globalization, in fact, conceptualizes border studies. The permeability of the border is associated with the movement of people, goods, and even information. However, information and communication technology, which gives new meaning to borders, takes the concept of borders to another dimension.⁶¹ In this new dimension, studies on borders have increased dramatically and, accordingly, borders have regained importance. As a result of growing interest, various associations have been established within the framework of border studies, thus institutionalizing border studies. The Association of Borderlands Scholars in New Mexico, the

⁵⁸ Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*, 1-3.

⁵⁹ David Newman and Anssi Paasi, “Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography,” *Progress in Human Geography* 22, no.2 (1998): 197, <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913298666039113>.

⁶⁰ Anssi Paasi, “Boundaries as Social Practice and Discourse: The Finnish-Russian Border,” *Regional Studies* 33, no.7 (1999): 670, DOI: [10.1080/00343409950078701](https://doi.org/10.1080/00343409950078701).

⁶¹ Karabağ, *Jeopolitik Açıdan Sınırlar*, Önsöz.

International Boundary Research Unit (IBRU), and the Geopolitics Research Centre at the University of London are the most important of these associations.⁶²

These changing meanings and the institutionalization of border studies can be best studied from a critical geopolitics perspective that focuses on language and discourse. For this reason, looking at borders from a historical perspective helps to understand how identity and discourse have become part of border studies.

1.6. CONCEPTUALIZING BORDER AS A CRITICAL GEOPOLITICAL SUBJECT

In the process of the historical development of the ‘border’, it is seen that there has been a flow consisting of elements that are connected to each other like a chain. Therefore, it is important to address these elements one by one by in a step-by-step process for a better understanding of the concept of ‘border’. This step-by-step process has moved from space to maps, from maps to geography, and from geography to border. This flow, which begins with space and ends with border, will also be evaluated from a critical geopolitical perspective.

Space is the key issue for both classical and critical geopolitics. However, their views of space and their treatment of space within the geopolitical framework are completely different. On the one hand, classical geopolitics focuses only on the relationship between world politics and geographical location. This means that space is evaluated only in terms of its material characteristics. On the other hand, critical geopolitics examines the ideological side of space. For critical geopolitics understanding, the meaning of space only become meaningful through the ideas and interests of geopolitical actors. Therefore, geography and geopolitics cannot be isolated from human practices. This shows how the social construction process of space is essential for a critical geopolitical approach.

⁶² Newman and Paasi, “Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography,” 187.

In the sixteenth century, the problem of the management of space began for the first time in Europe. This management and its conceptualization had religious roots and it led to the birth of the state system. In the end, this conceptualization of space found its place in the Treaty of Westphalia.⁶³ Within this conceptualization, maps gain importance for the governance and management of space because the representation of the world as a whole is done through maps. In fact, in addition to representing the world, maps also contain colonial, positivist, imperialist, and nationalist elements in them, since they were created in accordance with these purposes. In this sense, maps become the basic tools that enable the perception and representation of the world.⁶⁴ The fact that maps are not questioned, like sacred objects, is due to the fact that classical geopolitics presents them as if they were objective and impartial. Therefore, the definition and demarcation of the state as a national border is fully defined as a geopolitical act.

Geography is closely related to power struggles over space. For this reason, this incessant power struggle over space can be understood in the context of borders.⁶⁵ From this point of view, geographical knowledge can indeed be associated with the control of territorial space by the government. Both international and domestic space and the maintenance of borders are closely related to the practice of geopolitics.

By definition, borders are lines that signify separation. In fact, the borders on the maps are not only the lines that define the state territories. The changes of the states in the historical, political, and social process have affected not only the borderlines of the states but also their spheres of influence. These borderlines also reflect the identities, historical milestones, diplomatic achievements, and historical processes of states and societies. In other words, the borders that separate the territories of states from each other have existed with the meanings that states and societies assign to them. In addition to these meanings which are assigned by states and societies, historical context has made the concept of border a concept that needs to be discussed.

⁶³ Gearóid Tuathail, "Introduction," in *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 3.

⁶⁴ Karabağ, *Jeopolitik Açından Sınırlar*, 75.

⁶⁵ Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, 2.

The dynamic and complex structure of borders, which symbolize the areas of authority and sovereignty of modern nation-states, requires a multidimensional analysis because borders are related to many issues such as economic, political, social, and cultural. According to Balibar, the meaning of the border cannot be explained in a simple way. Since each border gains meaning within its own history, it cannot be attributed to an essence that would be valid everywhere and at all times. The meaning of the border, therefore, requires complex concepts because of its polysemic structure.⁶⁶ This complexity is best understood within the framework of critical geopolitics.

Examining how space and the geopolitical imagination are constructed is one of the main points that critical geopolitics focuses on in order to deconstruct them. According to critical geopolitics, space is not independent of power, on the contrary, it is constructed and even reconstructed by power. Space thus becomes a sign of a particular ideology that serves the interests of those in power. The powers that construct their own geopolitical realities legitimize these realities through discourse and provide themselves with a basis for on which to justify their policies. Based on this assumption, critical geopolitics deconstructs the concept of border and takes it beyond the monotonous narrative of classical geopolitics.

The concept of border is challenged by theorists of critical geopolitics who object to the classical geopolitical assumptions. Borders, seen from a critical geopolitical perspective as social structures, also have a symbolic meaning. Claiming that classical geopolitical theories are not insufficient at this point, they attach special importance to the question of identity within the framework of border studies.⁶⁷ For this reason, they are interested not only in the physical meaning of borders as lines, but also in the symbolic and discursive meanings of borders. This is crucial for them because they argue that borders are not only about border areas, but that they extend through discourse to all levels of society.

⁶⁶ Étienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, (London: Verso, 2002), 75-79.

⁶⁷ Newman and Paasi, "Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography," 188.

At first glance, the border is seen only as a line that physically separates the sovereign spaces of the two states. However, critical geopolitics transcends this concrete meaning and offers a deeper perspective: lines drawn on the minds of individuals. Borders can be both visible and invisible. This is due to the symbolic meaning of borders. According to Dalby and Tuathail, “Geopolitics is already about more boundaries than those on a map, for those boundaries are themselves implicated in conceptual boundary drawing practices of various kinds.”⁶⁸

The meanings of the state borders, which also have an allegorical meaning, have a deep historical background that has led to the creation of geopolitical imaginations. In this respect, critical geopolitics aims to deconstruct these constructed geopolitical meanings and imaginations of borders. Accordingly, it must emphasize that in order to understand the present context, the past context always plays a crucial role. This also means that borders take on different meanings depending on their context. From this perspective, defining state borders merely as static lines located between states definitely means ignoring their historical, social, cultural, religious, symbolic, and discursive sides.

The meanings of borders change crucially according to the historical process in which different contexts and different actors exist. At this point, it is important to emphasize which practices give meaning to the border and are ritualized around this meaning. Indeed, this kind of perspective offers a broader understanding than the traditional view. The ritualized practice is crucial since the border does not only exist as a material line, but has also acquired different social meanings. It is undeniable that state borders have material meanings, but they also manifest themselves in various political, cultural, and social meanings.⁶⁹ This means that they also have discursive and symbolic practices.

⁶⁸ Dalby and Tuathail, “Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics Towards a Critical Geopolitics,” 4.

⁶⁹ Newman and Paasi, “Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography,” 188.

1.7. IDENTITY POLITICS, CATEGORIZATION, IMAGES OF THE 'OTHERS' THROUGH BORDERS

Identity is a phenomenon with strong effects in terms of building a sense of belonging in societies and establishing a connection to a certain place. In this sense, identities are not only located in the empirical sphere but also in a discursive sphere in which they are reproduced. Therefore, identity, as a means of separation, operates in various different spheres.

Identity is crucial in that it creates a bond of belonging to a particular space and also directs the structural changes in that same space. For critical geopolitics, the concept of identity, which is accepted as changeable and interactive, is directly linked to the social structure of the society. Instead of being pre-given, identity is accepted as socially constructed by the critical geopolitics which assumes that the concept of identity is shaped by changing social and political conditions that are crucial for the construction and analysis of meaning.

Identities that give individuals and groups a sense of belonging require the existence of the 'other'. According to Simon Dalby, "the essential moment of geopolitical discourse is the division of space into 'our' place and 'their' place; its political function being to incorporate and regulate 'us' or 'the same' by distinguishing 'us' from 'them,' 'the same' from 'the other.'"⁷⁰

How have borders become a tool used both in the construction of collective identity and in the definition of 'self' and 'other'? Borders allow for certain divisions of identity while excluding the people or groups labelled as 'other'. Since critical geopolitics is concerned with dualities such as 'inside' and 'outside'; 'us' and 'them', it is important to look at the issue of borders through a critical geopolitical lens. In this sense, the dualities created by the borderline, especially the representation of what is beyond the borderline as an anarchic outside, can best be understood from a critical geopolitical perspective.

⁷⁰ Dalby, "Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference, and Dissent," 274.

The place and importance of borders in the process of identity construction are problematized and the relationship between these two phenomena is discussed within the framework of critical geopolitics in order to present the link between identity and border.

Borders, which contain the defining and complementary role of identity construction, and identity are closely related. Borders, which define the territory of states and give it meaning by separating it from other territories, also form the identity of the states. However, in addition to the material function, the metaphorical functions of borders also constitute identity. To classify the formation of a space in terms of identity means is to create borders, and ultimately, both the material and symbolic meanings of borders institutionalize identities. In border studies, identities thus point to differences that are underscored by borders.

Although the concepts of border and identity seem to be separate at first glance, they are in fact connected. There is no need for them to flow into each other, but, these two concepts mutually create each other and share common essentials that create a connection between them. In this respect, the concept of identity by its very nature includes and creates differences within its structure, just as borders do. As Newman and Paasi point out, “boundaries both create identities and are created through identity.”⁷¹ In this regard, identity can be considered within the framework of socio-cultural boundaries. The reason for this is explained by Bourdieu as follows: since the establishment and institutionalization of something gives an identity to individuals, this constructs a socio-cultural border.⁷²

As a social marker of identity, borders also take place in people’s imaginations by determining the framework of their social relations. In this way, identities become visible through the social relations and meanings that are attributed by borders. Within this framework, borders act as a driving force for the creation of the identity of the ‘other’ and

⁷¹ Newman and Paasi, “Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography,” 194.

⁷² Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and symbolic order*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), quoted in Newman and Paasi, “Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography,” 194.

‘us.’ On the claims of Newman and Paasi “Identity and boundaries thus seem to be different sides of the same coin.”⁷³

As noted above, the critical geopolitics approach does not accept the concept of ‘identity’ as given and fixed. Rather, it is seen as a concept that is constantly discussed, reconstructed, and deconstructed by states in order to use it in their own interests. Thus, the concept of identity, which is socially constructed, involves discursive work. From this point of view, critical geopolitics analyzes both spatial and social construction processes of identity, thus deepening the one-sided perspective of classical geopolitics. This means that critical geopolitics treats identity as a more complex concept with a dynamic structure that has been shaped by the actions of political leaders, the policies of states, and the space bounded by borders.

The impact of identity and the historical process on foreign policy and, consequently, the impact of foreign policy discourses on identities are other important issues discussed in critical geopolitics. They are important because through these issues states create images and visions for themselves and are perceived by others through these images and visions.

The role and definition of identity can change over time depending on the political structure of states, the policies, and intentions of political leaders, and the foreign policies of states. These changes indicate that identities are politically constructed. In this regard, identities are used by political leaders to legitimize and implement their own policies, or to control the population. In terms of revealing the differences, identities are the concepts that are often used by politicians in order to consolidate their sphere of influence. Moreover, identities are used by political powers that marginalize particular people or groups and create potential enemies out of them according to their own interests. In this respect, the creation of ‘others’ is crucial because it is the creation of ‘others’ that gathers ‘us’ around a certain meaning by giving us a sense of belonging. At the same time, identities appear as tools that are most often used by political leaders in foreign policy. From this point of view, some identities have a privileged status, while others are on the

⁷³ Newman and Paasi, “Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography,” 194.

marginalized and exploited side. Critical geopolitics, thus, examines the effects of identity on geopolitical discourse and then seeks to uncover these effects, which are rooted in power relations.

Furthermore, the conceptualization and representation of identity with borders have shaped foreign policy, the policies of political leaders, the movement of people, and even the understanding of people. According to Paasi, “The boundaries of the identity of a state (or a group of states as a ‘we’) are typically secured by the representation of danger which is an integral part of foreign policy.”⁷⁴

Along with identity, the concept of the border has become the most important element in the construction of spaces and building the image of the other, creating opposition between insiders and outsiders. Borders send messages both inside and outside. In this way, while domestic policy is formed with the message given inside, foreign policy is formed with the message given outside. In this process, the policies implemented by decision-makers against the inside and the outside have been seen as representatives of the political geological actions carried out on the axis of border, space, and identity.⁷⁵

1.8. FROM THE POWER AND KNOWLEDGE RELATIONS: BORDER

Critical geopolitics, which argues that knowledge cannot be objective, on the contrary, power, and knowledge are inseparable, starts from this point and examines discourse in the axis of geopolitical knowledge and power.

Discourse analysis in Foucault’s knowledge/power perspective has an important place in the critical geopolitical approach because discourse is seen as a tool that generates the truth. According to him, knowledge and power are inseparable parts because knowledge comes into existence through the struggle of power centres. These power struggles create

⁷⁴ Anssi Paasi, “Boundaries as social processes: Territoriality in the world of flows,” *Geopolitics* 3, no.1 (1998): 85, DOI: [10.1080/14650049808407608](https://doi.org/10.1080/14650049808407608).

⁷⁵ Petar Kurečić, “Identity and discourse in critical geopolitics: A framework for analysis,” *Society & Technology Book of Papers* 2, (2015): 3.

their own perception of truth. Thus, geopolitical power and knowledge create the main discussion zone for critical geopolitics.

According to Tuathail, geography is not primordial and permanent, but a relationship of power and knowledge.⁷⁶ It cannot be separated from human inventions and power relations. In this regard, Foucault said that “Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it.”⁷⁷ In this way, how knowledge is constructed and legitimized can be questioned by focusing on power. Thus, the question is how power and knowledge influence and institutionalize the social construction of borders.

All powers need knowledge in order to maintain their existence. Thus, existing power is in a determinant position in order to create ‘truth’ that is part of social settings. In such a vicious circle, knowledge depends on existing power relations. In fact, each power produces its own subjects. In essence, it is the power-knowledge relations that shape events in accordance with their interests and policies and allow us to understand how.

In parallel with this, there is a strong correlation between power and geography. Within this correlation, geography, which is not primordial, cannot be isolated from the relationship between power and knowledge. According to Foucault, “There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”⁷⁸ Thus, knowledge is located in both the geographical and historical contexts of the power relations in which knowledge is produced and consolidated.⁷⁹

Even if the knowledge of the border is generally considered theoretical, in practice, this knowledge is secured by the government, politicized, and centred on a certain power. For this reason, the relationship between the knowledge that constitutes the concept of the

⁷⁶ Tuathail, “Introduction,” in *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 8.

⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 59, quoted in Tuathail, “Introduction,” in *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 8.

⁷⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, (New York: Vintage, 1979), 27, quoted in Tuathail, “Introduction,” in *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 8.

⁷⁹ Tuathail, “Introduction,” in *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 8.

border and power is the main theme of border studies. At this point, the border has been instrumentalized in power relations in order to create the division of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’. In fact, this dichotomy constructs the assumption that we are better than others and brings about discursive work.

Since borders are socially and politically constructed according to power relations, they cannot represent universally accepted truths and can change according to circumstances and history. For this reason, the struggle over geography includes not only the conflict of the physical border, but also covers the discursive border that creates dichotomies like ‘us’ and ‘others.’

Taking all of these into account, ‘border’ is seen as a reflection of power relations, and ‘discourse’ is seen as a reflection of knowledge in a way that serves interests within the framework of power relations or, in the context of this thesis, consolidates power. The deconstruction of these power relations can only be realized through the critical geopolitical axis. This is because borders are not manifested themselves not only in the territorial sphere but also in foreign policy discourse, socialization processes, culture, and rituals. Although the purpose of creating ‘other’ may change with time, place, context, and political leader, the importance of discourse has always remained within the border studies. For these reasons, understanding the meanings attributed to borders requires uncovering the real meanings underlying discourses.

1.9. THE GEOPOLITICAL DISCOURSE OF THE BORDER WALL

Why should border walls should studied in the current system? The answer to this question lies in the borders. Throughout history, borders have changed both physically and theoretically, and this process of change makes borders as an interesting subject to study. Accordingly, border walls have also found a place in the academy, due to the growing interest in border studies. Moreover, border walls, which contain many dynamics and are concrete expressions of them, actually give ideas about many current issues.

Since the end of the Second World War, the world stage has witnessed the construction of new walls. Even though some of them have been destroyed or have been lost their function over time, their impact and place in the international system is still dominant, especially the iconic one that is the Berlin Wall. Undoubtedly, the international system changed after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and this change mainly affected borders and border walls.

The issue of borders is popular in the discipline of IR, but not studied by many. With globalization, “the utopia of a borderless world”⁸⁰ has become popular. However, after the September 11 attack, when ‘the fear of outsiders’ began, there has been a growing interest in security studies, but most of these studies are done by historians or geographers.⁸¹ In fact, the narratives that served by these studies indicate that borders and border walls still have a huge impact on the academy. The important question here is why the border walls are seen more in a globalized world that brings the rhetoric of a borderless world?

Borders and accordingly border walls have never disappeared from the world system. On the contrary, their construction has been steadily increased. The reason why states build walls, even if in the globalized world, is closely related to the concept of ‘identity’. In this sense, walls can be seen as tools used by political leaders to maintain identity politics and shed light on the understanding of the identity politics by governments.

Although the materials used to build the walls, the purpose of their construction, and the messages they convey change over time, reducing the flow of migration is the primary reason for their construction.⁸² Clearly, border walls are complex, political, and social tools that are used by political leaders in order to control or restrict the flow of people. Therefore, the main purpose of the walls is to counter the threat of immigrants. In this

⁸⁰ Elisabeth Vallet, “BIG Podcast 09: Geopolitics of Borders and Border Walls,” *YouTube*, July 14, 2023, educational video, 12:10 to 12:38, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhFHi5ca-5M>.

⁸¹ Elisabeth Vallet, “BIG Podcast 09: Geopolitics of Borders and Border Walls,” *YouTube*, July 14, 2023, educational video, 05:02 to 11:31, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhFHi5ca-5M>.

⁸² Andreanne Bissonnette and Elisabeth Vallet, “Introduction,” in *Borders and Border Walls: In-Security, Symbolism, Vulnerabilities*, ed. by Andreanne Bissonnette and Elisabeth Vallet, (London, England: Routledge, 2021), 3.

regard, political leaders have legitimized both their own policies and the walls by dehumanizing, de-identifying, and criminalizing migrants through the use of labels such as ‘illegal aliens’ or ‘undocumented’.⁸³ These kinds of labels necessitate the redefinition of borders and border walls through discourse, as these labels go beyond a physical wall to create a symbolic and metaphorical wall.

Words have incredible power. Even if they do not exist in such a concrete way, they allow connection through their meanings, both literal and symbolic. In this regard, they do not convey the same meaning everywhere and at all times. This means that their meanings can change depending on the situation, context, and time. When discussing issues such as borders, identity, and immigration, words have both a unifying and a divisive role. This role can be changed according to the political, economic, social, and ideological positions and agendas of actors who may be political leaders, historians, or geographers.

Moreover, the terminology chosen is very important as it indicates one’s point of view and position on the issue. In the context of border issues, several words may be used, such as border wall, fence, and barrier. According to Bissonnette and Vallet “Calling it any of these is not a judgment of what it is as an object, but of where you stand as a speaker.”⁸⁴ Since a critical stance is taken, the term border wall will be used throughout this thesis in order to avoid any ambiguity.

The border wall is a field of study that allows for interdisciplinarity without being tied to a single discipline, as it provides a ‘multifaceted’ workspace.⁸⁵ Although walls separate the societies, cultures, and people in the places where they are built, they bring together scholars from different disciplines and provide them with a rich field of study.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Emily Regan Wills, “Constructing a “Wall”: Discursive Fields, Social Movements, and the Politics of the [Wall/Barrier/Fence],” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 31, no. 3 (2016): 316, DOI:[10.1080/08865655.2016.1174596](https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2016.1174596).

⁸⁵ Bissonnette and Vallet, “Introduction,” in *Borders and Border Walls: In-Security, Symbolism, Vulnerabilities*, 2.

Undoubtedly, the construction of the wall has an economic side. This thesis does not deny this, but aims to shed light on the aspects of wall construction that are not often discussed in the discipline of IR. For this reason, border walls will be discussed throughout this thesis as more complex political, legal, and social institutions. Therefore, the main purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the walls within the framework of the new meanings attributed to them, rather than just discussing their number, construction materials, or their increase in the historical process. For this reason, the walls will be analyzed together with discourse, identity, and migration policies. It is expected that such an evaluation will make a major contribution to the border and border wall studies in the academy.

Regardless of the place, time, or material of their construction, walls are not only the concrete foundations of the border, but rather are tools of political leaders and products of their discourse. In this sense, they are accepted not only as physical but also as symbolic manifestations of state power. For these reasons, discussing walls in terms of the new meanings ascribed to them by discourse, migration, and identity politics, and analyzing them from this perspective, is very important for understanding their role in the international system.

1.10. LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE IN CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS

Analysing the justification of the border raises important questions about discourse, which is conceptualized in this thesis as both language and practice around the concept of the border. Discourse is central for critical geopolitics, which examines how power produces geopolitical knowledge through the instrumentalization of its discursive practices. Since this thesis will critically analyze Donald Trump's border wall discourse, Michel Foucault's approach to discourse provides a favorable basis for this analysis.

Foucault is one of the key figures in discourse studies. His works play a significant role within both poststructuralism and postmodernism, particularly his works *Order of Discourse* and *Archaeology of Knowledge* which are important for understanding the meaning of discourse in the cultural and historical sphere. He been positioned the discourse in a wide range of spaces where concepts such as power, knowledge, social

structure, and historical process exist. In this context, he explains discourse as “a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation...Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history.”⁸⁶ In this sense, Foucault’s view can be interpreted to mean that there is no universally accepted truth that is outside of historical reality, since there are historical processes in which each discourse is formed. Thus, it is important to evaluate the discourse within the historical process in order to reveal who, how, and for whom it is used. The semantic structure of the discourse is, of course, important, but it is not enough to attribute a meaning to the discourse. Thus, it can be said that discourse becomes meaningful within the historical context in which it is produced.

According to Foucault, what is considered to be truth resides in discourse, and this truth only comes into existence as a result of the relationship between power and knowledge. For this reason, he takes a doubtful approach to ‘universal truth’ because he believes that beyond society and history, we cannot speak on ‘universal understanding’.⁸⁷ Given his power-knowledge relationship, the knowledge accepted as ‘true’ by the society is actually the discourse created by the powers for the acceptance of their policies.

Even though discourses do not have an any real existence, they get their realizations from speeches, and texts. However, discourses should not be understood simply as a language, speech, or written source. Rather, they are very complex structures with their sociological foundations. This means that they include cultural and social sources that people use in the process of constructing meaning about their desires, expectations, and activities. That’s why, it’s only through discourse that both speakers and listeners can receive what they speak, and hear and make it meaningful. However, it is important to emphasize that discourse is more than words, it is also a practice that excludes the ‘other’. On the one hand, discourse gathers society around a particular pattern, but on the other hand, it excludes the other group. In other words, while the discourse has the power to unite one side, it also has the power to separate and otherize the group it labels as the other. For this reason, borders appear as crucial elements that marginalize ‘others.’ In essence, discourse

⁸⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Smith, (London: Routledge, 2002), 131.

⁸⁷ Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 4.

is not only composed of language or written sources, but also includes symbolic systems in accordance with the social and cultural practices in which they acquire meanings. It is, therefore, more than speech and text, even more than their linguistic features and narratives.

Space is created by the giving meaning to or imagining places. This demonstrates that space is always a discursive phenomenon. Therefore, there is a strong correlation between discourse and space.⁸⁸ For some scholars, only practices such as military force, invasion, or war, can define the term geopolitics. These practices are certainly geopolitical, but they are not enough to define geopolitics. Even if military intervention or foreign policymaking takes place through actions, these are nothing but discourses that legitimize them. In other words, the struggle over geography is not just about conquering a place or naming the conquered place. This struggle does not only take place with the help of weapons, soldiers, cannons, or rifles, but can also be carried out through discourse and language. Because the geographical struggle is a struggle in which there are dualities and psychological boundaries produced through discourse.⁸⁹ On the other hand, describing and naming a particular place brings with it a set of narratives. This means that naming a place is actually also branding it with a certain meaning in terms of foreign policy.⁹⁰ For these reasons, discourse that shapes social life, becomes the most essential concept for the critical approach. In this context, John Agnew and Tuathail asserted that geopolitics “should be critically re-conceptualized as a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft ‘spatialize’ international politics in such a way as to represent it as a ‘world’ characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas.”⁹¹

The analysis of geopolitical truths and policies created through discourse has an important place in critical geopolitical studies. In addition to geopolitical spatialization, discourse analysis also provides a perspective on the political spatialization of the world. Since

⁸⁸ Michael J. Shapiro, *Reading the Postmodern Polity: Political Theory as Textual Practice*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

⁸⁹ Tuathail, “Introduction,” in *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 11.

⁹⁰ John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, “Geopolitical Discourse,” in *Mastering Space*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 48.

⁹¹ Agnew and Tuathail, “Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy,” 192.

discourse analysis focuses on the meaning in the content of the text, it provides an opportunity to examine both explicit and hidden meanings and themes within the text. Without discourse, all these practices become meaningless, but through discourse, practices, and actions acquire meaning and become a justification.⁹²

Again, through discourse, political leaders can legitimize their policies and mobilize the public. Above all, certain groups such as politicians, geographers, and historians directly influence the production of geopolitical discourses, for better or worse, and spatialize world politics through discourse. In addition to certain groups, the creation of ‘others’ and ‘us’ are reproduced through discourse in various spheres such as the mass media, education, and social media. In this way, identity is manifested not only in the political sphere, but also in the social and cultural spheres, such as through films, songs, magazines, novels, etc. The construction of external threats is one of the discourses that are used in order to justify the policies of political leaders in the eyes of the public. In this sense, discourse includes not only written or spoken language, but also the ‘ideas’ and ‘philosophies’ that are disseminated through this language.⁹³ For these reasons, the language itself cannot be neutral because it is used as a means of expressing power relations. This means that language goes beyond just being a means of communication and becomes into a tool that reflects power relations, contextual, geographical, and historical structures.

From a critical geopolitical perspective, discourses play an important role in the process of legitimizing sovereignty because the truths produced and fictionalized by the government can only be understood through discourse analysis. Thus, geopolitical discourses are not merely written or spoken expressions, tools used by state leaders in order to legitimize and make sense of their policies. For this reason, critical geopolitics focuses on the discourses that are contained in foreign policy texts, politicians’ speeches,

⁹² Ibid. 191.

⁹³ Teun A. Van Dijk, “The Study of Discourse,” in *Discourse as Structure and Process*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 2.

and academic writings in order to reveal power-knowledge relations. Thus, discourse analysis is important since political intentions and goals are hidden in geopolitical visions.

The geopolitical vision is defined by Dijk as “any idea concerning the relation between one’s own and other places, involving feelings of (in) security or (dis) advantage (and/or) invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy.”⁹⁴ He adds that “geopolitical vision requires at least a Them-and-Us distinction and emotional attachment to a place”.⁹⁵ From this point of view, geopolitical vision can be evaluated as a dynamic and discursively constructed concept that can be used by political leaders in order to justify their foreign policy agenda according to their purposes.⁹⁶ In parallel with this view, it is important to stress the undeniable role of language in foreign policy-making, not only as words but also as practices. Some critical geopolitical scholars have assessed discourse as ‘performative’ beyond its grammatical meaning. Such a view, however, should not imply a rejection of materiality. In this context, some scholars such as Bialasiewicz et al. discuss discourse as a ‘performative,’ which includes both the non-linguistic and the linguistic, the material and the ideal at the same time. This means that, as a ‘performative’, “discourse constitutes the objects of which they speak.”⁹⁷ To be clear, political leaders implement all kinds of policies such as foreign policy, immigration, and the economy through discursive practices. Thus, strategies, identities, and constructed meanings become the meeting point of the material and the ideal.⁹⁸ For this reason, Bialasiewicz et al. define discourse as “a specific series of representations and practices through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established, and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible.”⁹⁹ From this point of view, it can be said that geographical knowledge has been constructed to be used for specific political purposes, particularly in foreign policy-making. In this process, discourse appears as a lifesaver to construct geographical knowledge according to the purpose of political

⁹⁴ Gertjan Dijkink, *National identity and geopolitical visions: Maps of pride and pain*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 11.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ayşe Ömür Atmaca and Zerrin Torun, “Geopolitical Visions in Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 24, no.1 (2022): 114-137, DOI: [10.1080/19448953.2021.1992189](https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2021.1992189).

⁹⁷ Luiza Bialasiewicz et al., “Performing security: The imaginative geographies of current US strategy,” *Political Geography* 26, no.4 (2007): 406.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

leaders. Therefore, political leaders deliberately construct geopolitical knowledge that allows them to have control over issues such as identity, immigration, and borders and to formulate foreign policy accordingly. In this sense, language goes beyond being a means of communication and becomes a tool that gives life to certain meanings that do not exist before.

Within the issues of foreign policy making and the construction of geopolitical imagination, discourse analysis has an undeniable role. In parallel with this argument, a discourse has an important place since it is an essential tool that constructs and objectifies subjects in accordance with the goals and policies of political leaders according to critical geopolitics. The important point here is that subjects are not free from the goals or policies of political leaders. For Tuathail, “Rather than sovereign subjects having discourses, discourses constrain and enable subject positionings”¹⁰⁰

According to Foucault, not only words but also practices are discourses, i.e. there is nothing outside of discourse. For him, “discourses... as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”¹⁰¹ In this sense, the Foucauldian perspective of discourse argues that discourse constitutes all social practices in a particular historical context and argues that not only words but also practices are discourse themselves.

The main issue under the name of geographical ‘reality’ represented by geopolitical knowledge is precisely related to this political attitude. Political leaders construct specific discourses that support their own policies and goals, and present them to society in order to legitimize their own authority. They prevent the consideration or definition of actions that fall outside their own policies. At this point, critical geopolitics seeks to reveal the meanings and intentions of discourses by deconstructing them. Therefore, discourse, which is a part of the social relations, plays an indispensable role in legitimizing geopolitical realities.

¹⁰⁰ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Theorizing practical geopolitical reasoning: the case of the United States’ response to the war in Bosnia,” *Political Geography* 21, (2002): 606.

¹⁰¹ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 54.

In his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault says:

We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.¹⁰²

Therefore, Foucault's famous concept of power cannot be considered as separate from discourse, because for him, it is already power itself that produces discourse in society. Accordingly, discourse appears as a space in which power and knowledge interact. For this reason, for him, there is an inextricable link between power and discourse, and discourse is only effective when it gains meaning as a result of the relationship between power and knowledge. Parallel to this link, the subject is created and then shaped by discourse. This means that the creation of the subject is not accidental. Moreover, for him, individuals or groups are only gaining meaning when they are subjected to discourse. For these reasons, Foucault focuses on the contextuality of discourse.

From a discursive perspective, the study of geopolitics is the study of the socio-cultural sources in which international politics is located.¹⁰³ Within the issue of discourse; historical process, language, identity, and social and political processes are important in order to understand the real intent, indeed *arrière-pensée*, and meaning of actors. An analysis of the historical process reveals how the power maintains its power by using the discourse and shows how the discourse is used by the government to legitimize its power and policies. In a sense, this means that international affairs are mediated through geopolitical discourses.

Language and the use of language are, of course, central to discourse studies, but discourse not only represents social, mental, or physical phenomena, but also plays a key

¹⁰² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 27.

¹⁰³ Agnew and Tuathail, "Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy," 193.

role in the construction of these realities.¹⁰⁴ In this sense, it is believed that conceptualizing discourse as both language and practice will provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of borders. For this reason, throughout this thesis, the discourse analysis does not consist merely of data analysis or simple analysis, but rather it makes a connection between society and the language of power that constructs the ‘reality’ of society. In parallel with, the political attitude of power appears as a key aspect of this connection.

As a result, discourse conceals various ideas, facts, and policies that are invisible rather than visible and obvious. In order to reveal these, this thesis considers discourse not only as a product of language, but also as a practice. Therefore, critical geopolitics that challenges the discursive construction of borders that presents ‘them’ as a threat and distinguishes ‘them’ from ‘us’, has a significant role to play in revealing and analyzing the discursive structures of borders. In this context, the discourse of dichotomies and hierarchical oppositions serves certain political purposes. In other words, political powers need such dichotomies in order to justify their power, and this situation can best be analyzed through discourse. That is why ‘others’ are constructed. Taking all this into account, it is impossible to think of geopolitical discourses and realities that constitute our identities apart from critical geopolitics, which is a suitable field of study for the analysis of geopolitical discourses.

1.11. CONCLUSION

The details of these theoretical concepts and other critical geopolitical concepts will not be discussed further, as they are beyond the scope of this thesis. The theoretical background presented so far has shown that borders, whose meanings, and functions change according to the historical process, are best understood from a critical geopolitical perspective. This chapter demonstrates that critical geopolitics is such a suitable approach to examine the extent to which state-centred discourse is effective in using the borders and border walls as tools. Therefore, evaluating borders from a critical geopolitical

¹⁰⁴ Michael Karlberg, “Discourse Theory and Peace,” in *The Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology, First Edition*, ed. by D. J. Christie, (Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 1.

perspective brings a new perspective to border studies. In this context, discussing the role of borders as social structures and, accordingly, the place of borders in political discourses is crucial in order to provide a comprehensive perspective on border studies.

With the change in the established geopolitical perceptions and in the world system, as well as the debates in the academy, critical geopolitics has begun to take its place in the discipline of IR. Critical geopolitics, based on the principles of post-structuralism, has moved geopolitics beyond a concept that defines only geographical features and has begun to take into account social, cultural, political, and technological values. In addition, the geopolitical realities presented by traditional geopolitics have been questioned, and the focus has begun to be on how these realities are constructed, how they are presented to society, and how they are legitimized. All of this construction, presentation, and legitimization is closely related to both domestic and foreign policies not only create the duality of ‘us’ and ‘them’, but also construct racial, cultural, and psychological borders. Within these processes, political leaders, through their discourse, create knowledge that is accepted and even unquestioned by society.

The theoretical discussions presented so far suggest that space, borders, and geographical knowledge, which are socially constructed, should be deconstructed because they not only appear on maps, but also exist within dichotomies such as ‘us’ vs. ‘them’. By deconstructing these dichotomies, critical geopolitics shows that borders are not just a line that marks the beginning and end of the sovereignty territory of states, but are also spaces where social relations are formed, policies are determined, and identities are constructed. In this context, the borders created against the ‘other’, on the one hand, take on the task of a tool that provides security, and on the other hand, become part of institutionalization by representing a certain identity.

According to Tuathail and Agnew, critical geopolitics seeks to explain the practices of political actors who spatialize international politics and present it as a ‘*world*’ characterized by certain types of space.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, critical geopolitics considers

¹⁰⁵Agnew and Tuathail, “Geopolitics and discourse,” 190.

geopolitics as an ideological and politicized form of analysis which is a spatial practice that can never be neutral. The state, as a rational actor, produces various policies in order to protect its existing borders and its order within these spaces. At this point, discourses are central to understanding of the border and border studies, as they produce constantly changing different meanings for borders, which are also used as tools for policymaking. Since discourse and identity are the sine qua non parts of border studies, they require a critical geopolitical perspective in the postmodern sense. It is for this reason, the meanings produced by the discourses have been analyzed in the context of border politics in general.

The critical approach plays an important role in revealing how discourse ideologically helps power to maintain its power. In parallel with this, the critical geopolitical approach, which claims that the politicization of information and space takes place through discourse, attempts to reveal underlying power-knowledge relations by deconstructing symbols and metaphorical uses. In this context, this thesis argues that borders are symbols of power relations. Even, as a part of everyday life, these power relations manifest themselves not only in politics but also in every area of social institutions. Moreover, the historical process by which the meanings of borders are constantly reproduced by powers is also central to border studies. At this point, it is crucial to emphasize that borders, which are formed according to different processes, have their own unique histories. For this reason, this chapter has examined borders and border walls within the framework of critical geopolitics and attempted to draw a conceptual framework around this axis. In this framework, the history of the US-Mexico will be examined through the concept of the 'border' in the next Chapter. In doing so, the concept of the border in the historical process will be shown in the axis of critical geopolitics.

CHAPTER 2: (DE-) CONSTRUCTING THE US-MEXICO BORDER THROUGH CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS

For whom are the borders drawn? For the policies of the powerful or for the powerless who want to cross the border to survive?

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Over time, the border discourse has been shifted and taken on different meanings depending on historical contexts, foreign policy agendas, and political leaders. This chapter will present these changes and different meanings in order to provide a deeper examination of the history of the US-Mexico border. Indeed, this historical analysis of border discourse is also important for understanding the contemporary border issue. Evaluating the border in a historical process will not only show how the border discourse has changed depending on foreign policy, but also show how immigration has been politicized around the border discourse. Before delving into Donald Trump's border discourse in the next chapter, it is crucial to examine the US-Mexico border in terms of history, immigration, and identity in order to present how the historical process has been shaped by policy makers.

In this framework, the aim is to show how border (wall) discourse, as a part of foreign policy, prepares the ground for political leaders to justify their policies in the eyes of the public. The wall, which is the main metaphor for the border concept, has been a tool used by states throughout history to legitimize their policies. It is therefore important to consider the construction of the border in the historical process, in accordance with the political and economic policies of the time.

Within this scope, the US-Mexico border has been chosen as a case study because it involves colonial activities, a security dimension, and the aim of restricting immigration flows. This case study, therefore, allows for the analysis of 'other' discourses in a broad

sense. The important point that makes the US-Mexico border interesting is that, although there is no war on the border today or in recent history, it is surprisingly the most heavily armed border in the world.

The economic perspective of borders has not been rejected within the scope of this thesis. However, it can be seen that the analysis of the border from an economic perspective has mostly been discussed in the literature. For this reason, without ignoring the economic side of the border issue, how the role of the border in the historical process has been shaped by politicians, especially discursively, and policy-making constitutes the milestone of this thesis.

Geographically, the U.S.-Mexico border, the most frequently visited border in the world, stretches from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico and crosses through various terrains such as deserts and urban areas.¹⁰⁶ Like any border, the border between the US and Mexico has been embodied meanings far beyond the separation represented by a physical line on maps. For this reason, the most important way to understand how the U.S.-Mexico border has been shaped according to U.S. policies, interests, and purposes is to examine how the concept of ‘border’ has been used throughout the historical process. Indeed, these terms only gain meaning when they are discussed in the context of historical processes.

Migration from Mexico to the U.S. dates back to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and has been a key issue for both countries ever since. Since that day, the flow of immigration from Mexico has never stopped and has changed in line with the foreign policy agenda of the US. Although the reason for the immigration, which is economic, has not changed, the policies of both states and their discourses have been constantly changed over time. What makes this border interesting is that these discourses and foreign policy practices still influence the meaning of borders. Before discussing the changing

¹⁰⁶Ramón Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States,” *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of American History*, (29 July 2019): 3, (Date of Access: 3. 01.2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.146>.

meanings ascribed to the border and immigrants over the historical process, it is hoped that a brief mention of factors related to migration will ensure the integrity of the subject.

Migration is a complex phenomenon and depends on many variables. These variables are related not only to the conditions in the sending country, but also to the advantages and disadvantages of the receiving country. The phenomenon of migration, therefore, cannot be reduced to a single cause. From this point of view, Everett Lee developed the migration theory in 1966. According to Lee, regardless of the duration and difficulty of the migration act, every migration has three specific points: ‘an origin’, ‘a destination’, and some ‘obstacles.’ These obstacles, which are sometimes easy and sometimes insurmountable, are located between the origin and the destination. The most well-known and most discussed obstacle is ‘distance.’ While there may be ‘actual physical barriers’ that restrict or prevent the movement of immigrants, these barriers may also be ‘immigration laws.’ At this point, Lee used the example of the Berlin Wall when talking about real physical barriers.¹⁰⁷ In the scope of this thesis, the actual physical barrier is the US-Mexico border wall, while the non-physical barriers are both immigration laws and the discourse of policymakers.

The migration act therefore involves the push and pull factors, which encompass multidimensional and very complex social realities and cannot be reduced to a single factor. The push factors include not only economic problems - such as poverty, low wages, lack of job opportunities, poor financial systems, etc., but also non-economic problems, such as political instability, authoritarian governments, civil war, natural disasters, social or religious discrimination, etc. Indeed, regardless of the pull factors, these push factors clearly show why a person or people are forced to leave their homes behind and seek safety or better living conditions elsewhere. On the other hand, the pull factors relate to the opportunities offered by the destination country. These include improved employment and economic conditions, security, better living conditions, and equal opportunities. Although migrants tend to work in ‘3D jobs’ - dangerous, dirty, and difficult- in the host countries to which they go, the pull factors in the destination countries make migration

¹⁰⁷ Everett S. Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” *Demography* 3, no. 1 (1966): 49-51, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063>.

appear to be the only solution for them. The pull factors are therefore very effective in determining where they are to go.¹⁰⁸

How these push and pull factors translate into immigration problems depends on the immigration laws of the destination country and on how immigrants are received in that country. In this sense, this chapter provides an overview of the push and pull factors of the Mexican migration within the historical process. The aim is not to present a comprehensive history of the US-Mexico border, but rather to show how the border discourse can change over time through functionalization in order to provide a solid basis for the analysis of Donald Trump's border discourse.

The history of the US-Mexico border can be read and learned from anywhere. The main purpose here is not to present a purely historical narrative, but an eclectic historical narrative with a critical vision of the process. In line with the main purpose and originality of the thesis, in this sense, it is claimed that the border has been institutionalized from the symbolic meaning and turned into an instrument of marginalization. In order to present this eclectic narrative, the historical process is divided into periods that are classified under five unique titles: *the Symbolic Border Era*¹⁰⁹, *the Institutionalized Border Era*, *the Militarized Border Era*, *the 'War on Others' Border Era*, and *the Social Media Border Era*. This classification has been created specifically for this study, and this shows the novelty of this thesis.

2.2. THE SYMBOLIC BORDER ERA

The problem of the US and Mexican border long predates the formation of modern nation-state borders. The roots of the border dispute, therefore, go to the imperial competition for 'possessions' in North America between England, Spain, and France. However, both the fate of the border and the imperial competition changed in 1803, when the US bought

¹⁰⁸ March E. Rosenblum and Kate Brick, "US Immigration Policy and Mexican/Central American Migration Flow: Then and Now," *The Regional Migration Study Group*, (2011): 2.

¹⁰⁹ Since it is difficult to talk about a clear border between the two countries in this period, it would not be wrong to define this period as 'frontier'. However, in line with the conceptual consistency established within the scope of this thesis, the meaning of frontier is reflected by the term of 'symbolic border'.

the territory of Louisiana from France. Indeed, the Louisiana Purchase was the first indication of the US' expansionist stance in the light of Manifest Destiny. As the border between the US and Spain was not clearly defined, the Louisiana territory was disputed until the Treaty of Adams-Onís in 1819. With this treaty, the border between the Louisiana Territory and Spain became clear. Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821. However, Mexico not only gained its independence from Spain but also inherited the border dispute that continues to this day. After gaining independence, Mexico was unable to control Texas. For this reason, it populated the region with American settlers. This policy did not have the desired result and ended with the declaration of Texas's independence in 1836. This independence ended with the annexation of Texas by the US in 1845.¹¹⁰

The annexation of Texas paved the way for the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. The US declared war against Mexico under the guise of "defending the national territory".¹¹¹ In response, Mexico also waged a 'defensive war' against the US, claiming a right to the Texas territory.¹¹² The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ended this war in 1848. In this treaty, Mexico lost about half of its land and ceded to the US the present-day states of California, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Nevada, as well as parts of Kansas and Oklahoma to the US. In return for these territories, the US paid \$15 million.¹¹³ This war, indeed, is the beginning of a never-ending vicious circle of cooperation and conflict between the two countries.

In addition to this treaty, Mexico also lost territory in 1854 with the Gadsden Purchase Treaty, also known in Mexican history as the *Treaty of La Mesilla*. As a result, the U.S.-

¹¹⁰ Joseph Nevins, "Chapter 2: The Creation of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary and the Remaking of the United States and Mexico in the Border Region," 12-15.

¹¹¹ Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro, "Chapter 1," *The United States and Mexico: Between Partnership and Conflict 2nd Edition*, (New York and London: Routledge., 2009), 8, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203951484>.

¹¹² Douglas S. Massey, "The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 160, no. 2 (2016): 162, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26159208>.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Mexican border, which had been organized by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, was reorganized with the Gadsden Treaty.¹¹⁴

Finally, as the US-Mexico border took its place on the maps, the US, this time, began to focus on the symbolic and psychological definition of the border through the shadow of Manifest Destiny. This means that the citizens of these two countries were separated not only by the border, but also by a border discourse in which Manifest Destiny was used as a building block. In other words, the US-Mexico border (wall) discourse serves not only material but also social and psychological conditions. At this point, the US-Mexico Border (Wall) must be treated as a continuation of the American colonial endeavour based on the backwardness of the Mexican people and the superiority of the American people. The American colonial mission has thus been used as an ideological support for the implementation of the US policies. In this sense, the US-Mexico Border (Wall) is not only a concrete symbol of the American colonial project, but also a tool that deepens current us-them duality.

After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War, the border simply took on its lexical meaning. During this period, the border was defining criterion of citizenship and civil rights, but it did not restrict mobility or access. In other words, there was no clear border policy or bureaucracy to define the border at that time.

There were also very few immigration laws regulating the border compared to today. Of course, there were laws that dealt with borders and immigrants, but they mostly concerned immigrants from places other than Mexico. For example, the Immigration Act of 1882, which only prohibited the immigration of Chinese workers, did not mention any Mexican immigrants. This law, which remained in force until 1943, was followed by the implementation of a series of anti-Asian policies and the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, which stopped immigration from Japan.¹¹⁵ Restrictive laws against Asian

¹¹⁴ Domínguez and Fernández de Castro, *The United States and Mexico: Between Partnership and Conflict*, 37.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Grant Wood, ed., *The Borderlands: An Encyclopaedia of Culture and Politics on the U.S.-Mexico Divide*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 119-120.

immigrants did not include Mexican immigrants at the time. This was because Mexican immigrants were few in number and tended to work in the railway and mining sectors.¹¹⁶

In contrast to today's surveillance mechanisms on the US-Mexico border, in 1893 there were no border patrol officers other than Leonidas B. Giles. Five years later, only four immigration inspectors were stationed at the border. The Mexicans who crossed the border were interrogated by these inspectors and their reasons for crossing the border were recorded by these inspectors, but they had no difficulty in entering the country.¹¹⁷

In 1903, the Immigration Service, which had previously a part of the Treasury Department before, was linked to the US Department of Commerce and Labor. This indicated that immigrants at the time were mostly associated with commercial issues. As Payan stated, "The government considered immigrants as workers, not as potential criminals who posed problems of law enforcement or national security."¹¹⁸

In 1907, an investigation by Marcus Braun, an immigration inspector, found that some unskilled workers from China, Japan, Syria, Greece, and other third countries, who were considered as 'undesirables', were using the border to enter the US. immigrants were then categorized by the Immigration Service into 'illegal' and 'legal' immigrants. In this categorization, Mexican immigrants were accepted as 'legal immigrants.' As a result of this categorization, people who wanted to cross the border were subject to the tax. This time, however, they began to use entry points that were not controlled by border officials. The important point here is that none of these people had been arrested or deported and classified as 'illegal', as they are today. On the contrary, the border was defined by Theodore Roosevelt as a place "closed to all but citizens and bona fide residents of Mexico."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Timothy J. Henderson, *Beyond Borders: A History of Mexican Migration to the United States*, (Malden Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 18.

¹¹⁷ Tony Payan, "The Three Border Wars," *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, (Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006), 6-7.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 7.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 7-9.

As a result, the border between Mexico and the US had no fences in order to prevent the movement of people. On the other hand, the border patrol consisted of only a few people at the entry points. Looking at the early period of the US surveillance mechanism in terms of *the Symbolic Border Era*, “there was no need for coyotes, guides to sneak illegals through the border; there were no border markings (save a few stone pillars here and there), no immigration control, and thus no illegals.”¹²⁰ In other words, there were no agents responsible for deporting undocumented immigrants or controlling of the border.

2.3. THE INSTITUTIONALIZED BORDER ERA

There were some events -the Mexican Revolution, World War I, the extension of the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the Wall Street Crash of 1929- that were not directly related to the border itself but have changed its destiny. On the other hand, one specific event, the Bracero Program, completely affected the meaning of the border, leading to the closure of the Symbolic Border Era and the beginning of the Institutionalized Border Era.

The first of these was the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910 and lasted until 1920. Border security was tightened out of fear that the environment of conflict that gripped Mexico during the Revolution, would spill over into the US. For this reason, the US government built fortresses on the border to prevent people from crossing and not be affected by the chaos on the other side of the border. Therefore, in this era, the border began to become an obstacle for Mexican immigrants in order to prevent possible disorder that could spread from the Mexican Revolution.¹²¹

Although illegal immigration decreased during the revolution, the upper class in Mexico migrated to America with their capital after the revolution, while the lower class crossed the border as refugees.¹²² This lower class, fleeing the insecurity of Mexico and seeking for both economic and political stability, was accepted by the US as ‘economic refugees’

¹²⁰ Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 48, quoted in Nevins, “Chapter 2: The Creation of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary and the Remaking of the United States and Mexico in the Border Region,” 21.

¹²¹ Nevins, “Chapter 2, The Creation of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary and the Remaking of the United States and Mexico in the Border Region,” 22.

¹²² Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 9.

to meet the demand for low-wage labour in the south-west of the US.¹²³ In those years, Mexico was losing its power because of the revolution, while the US, with its economy, began to appear as a viable place for Mexicans to immigrate. However, the economic crisis that followed the First World War changed attitudes towards immigrants, especially Mexicans, to change. In other words, the US, which welcomed immigrants according to its own needs and policies, did not hesitate to declare these immigrants illegal if they did not comply with its policies.

In this context, the 1911 report of the Dillingham Commission (also known as the US Immigration Commission) is important for understanding the US perspective on Mexican immigrants at the time. The main aim of this report was to discuss the immigration problem. The report defined the Mexican immigrants as “notoriously indolent and unprogressive in all matters of education and culture.”¹²⁴ On the other hand, even if they were considered as “unassimilable”, they did not pose a threat at that time. According to the studies of Reisler and Gutiérrez referred in Cohen’s article, “While the Mexicans are not easily assimilated, this is not of very great importance as long as most of them return to their native land after a short time.”¹²⁵

The Zimmermann Telegram, which helped bring the US into the First World War, changed attitudes towards Mexican immigrants.¹²⁶ The telegram was sent in January 1917 by German Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmermann to the German ambassador in Mexico.¹²⁷ Consisting of a string of numbers, the telegram was first seen as meaningless, until British signals intelligence revealed that it was actually Germany’s proposal to

¹²³ Nevins, “Chapter 2, The Creation of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary and the Remaking of the United States and Mexico in the Border Region,” 26.

¹²⁴ U.S. Immigration Commission, *Immigrants in Industries: Part 25: Japanese and Other Immigrant Races in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain States: Agriculture*, (Washington, D.C., USA: Government Printing Office, 1911), 50, 59, 94, 110, quoted in Massey, “The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination,” 163.

¹²⁵ Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940*, (Westport, CT, 1976), 13, and David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*, (Berkeley, CA, 1995), 47, quoted in Katherine Benton-Cohen, “Other Immigrants: Mexicans and the Dillingham Commission of 1907-1911,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 30, no. 2 (2011): 33–57, <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerethnhist.30.2.0033>.

¹²⁶ Puong Fei Yeh, “The role of the Zimmermann Telegram in spurring America’s entry into the First World War,” *American Intelligence Journal* 32, no.1 (2015): 61-64.

¹²⁷ Alexander Patterson, “The Zimmerman Telegram,” *The Student Researcher: A Phi Alpha Theta Publication* 3, no.1 (2018):18.

Mexico to ally itself against the US in the First World War. In return, Germany promised Mexico financial aid and the recovery of lost Mexican territories such as Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico.¹²⁸ Taking all this into consideration, it can be said that the Monroe Doctrine which was sent by the President James Monroe as a message to the Congress and determined the foreign policy of the US, was violated as the doctrine was described as a policy of isolationism.¹²⁹ As a result, the Congress made immigrants take a literacy test and pay a tax of \$8 per person.¹³⁰ However, immigrants from Mexico and other countries had begun to cross the border in uncontrolled places to avoid paying the tax. The process of fighting illegal immigration began then and has increasingly continued to this day.

The other event that affected the meaning of borders was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. With this act, the anti-immigration discourse in the US had a great impact, and in 1902 the Act was extended, indefinitely. For the Mexicans, who were affected by this event, the border that they crossed easily in their daily lives had now become foreign territory, and Mexicans had gone from being ‘legitimate immigrants’ to being ‘foreigners.’¹³¹ This kind of prohibition actually increased the number of illegal immigrants’ status and led to a corresponding increase in the bureaucratisation of border control. In this regard, the bureaucratisation of the border not only concretized the social, economic, and legal distinction between citizens and illegal immigrants but also increased the legitimacy of US border control.

In order to systematize border control and bureaucratize border policy, Congress created the Border Patrol in 1924 as a part of the Immigration Service.¹³² According to George Sánchez, the establishment of the US Border Patrol was “crucial in defining the Mexican as ‘the other,’ the ‘alien,’ in the region.... Eventually crossing the border became a painful

¹²⁸ Ibid. 19.

¹²⁹ Mark T. Gilderhus, “The Monroe doctrine: meanings and implications,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no.1 (2006): 5-16.

¹³⁰ Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States,” 7.

¹³¹ Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 9-10.

¹³² Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 10.

and abrupt event permeated by an atmosphere of racism and control—an event that clearly demarcated one society from another.”¹³³

The establishment of the Border Patrol not only affected immigrants, who had previously crossed the border easily, but also changed the meaning of the border at the same time. The patrol, which initially consisted of a few hundred agents, has now become a structure of tens of thousands of police officers, where the heart of the surveillance mechanism.

On the other hand, the ‘prohibition period,’ in which customs controls were made more explicit by the Eighteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, also affected the meaning of the border. Moreover, with the new law passed by Congress in 1929¹³⁴ ended the privileges of Mexicans, who had to obtain a visa to enter the US.

Within this framework, when the stock market crash of 1929 led to the Great Depression, Mexican immigrants, described as lazy, and ignorant, were again made scapegoats. In parallel with the Great Depression of 1929, Mexican immigrants were seen as a burden on the US economy and as competitors to American workers. For this reason, social workers insisted on their deportation.¹³⁵ These deportations did, in fact, cause the border to become even more concrete, making it even more real.¹³⁶ On the other hand, making the border more real increased the sense of difference between Mexicans and Americans.

On the other hand, the participation of the US in the Second World War added a new layer to the relationship between the US and Mexico. In 1942, the US implemented a new policy known as the Bracero Program to address the needs of the labour shortage caused by the Second World War. This guest worker program, which was based on bilateral agreements with Mexico, first came into effect in 1942 as a wartime measure. However, the program was extended several times until 1964 due to the economic crisis that

¹³³ George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 59, quoted in Nevins, “Chapter 3: Local Context and the Creation of Difference in the Border Region,” *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the “Illegal Alien” and the Making of the U.S. – Mexico Boundary*, 44.

¹³⁴ Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 10-11.

¹³⁵ Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States,” 9.

¹³⁶ Massey, “The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination,” 164.

occurred after the war. The word ‘*Bracero*’, which gave the program its name, means in Spanish ‘people who work with their arms’. These braceros were defined by the US Commission on Migratory Labour as people who “go to work when needed; to be gone when not needed”.¹³⁷ In fact, the name of the program itself shows how the immigrants were classified in society. These seasonal workers were also referred to by such a derogatory term: ‘wetback.’ The origin of this term came from the fact that some workers swam across the Rio Grande and crossed the US border wet.¹³⁸

So, it can be said that when the US entered the Second World War, the border discourse returned to the US agenda with the Bracero Program. But this time it returned with a difference. The difference was that Mexican workers, who had previously been mentioned in the context of deportation, were now mentioned in the context of providing labour for US needs. Since the braceros were cheap labour in poor conditions, they were seen as attractive by American employers.

The braceros could not demand better working conditions or higher wages because they were threatened with deportation. In other words, they knew that if they did not accept the working conditions offered by American employers, they could be easily deported and criminalized. Even if they accepted the conditions offered, they could not prevent their transition from legal guest worker to illegal alien status. This situation has been described as a “deportation regime”¹³⁹ by Nicholas De Genova since the Bracero Program provided opportunities for American employers, who threatened the Mexican workers (or illegal aliens) with deportation.

The marginalization of immigrants is also linked to the economic sphere where “illegal migrants are not people but labour.”¹⁴⁰ In the US case, illegal immigrants tend to work in the ‘three D’ jobs which are also known as dirty, dangerous, and demanding. In addition, they are uninsured, do not receive welfare from the state, and work for low wages, and

¹³⁷ Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States,” 10-12.

¹³⁸ Massey, “The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination,” 166.

¹³⁹ Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States,” 13.

¹⁴⁰ Catherine Dauvergne, *Making People Illegal: What Globalization Means for Migration and Law*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 20.

their lack of job security makes them desirable from time to time according to US needs and policies.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, it attributes a criminal profile to the immigrants: “Criminalized from the outset as ‘illegal’ because they don’t have the documents that grant them a modest place to stay and a lowly job to survive in the countries.”¹⁴² In this sense, the criminalization of immigrants has widened the gap between ‘illegal’ and ‘legal.’

As a result of the events that took place during this period, the US-Mexico border was transformed into a ‘fixed and harder line.’¹⁴³ The US government began to take a more protectionist stance on the border in order to maintain border security.

On the other hand, the appearance of the immigration headlines in the media tools, such as newspapers, and television, made it easier for US to use the symbolic importance of the border in the eyes of the public and to legitimize its policies. These were some of the headlines: “Wetbacks Cited as Aids to Mobs and Subversion,” “Illegal Aliens Flood Nation,” “Alien Influx Perils Nation, Senate Told.”¹⁴⁴ Immigrants were also described and marginalized as ‘aliens’ who were invading and ‘flooding’ the US and accordingly ‘drowning’ the society.¹⁴⁵

These events explained in this era, led for the first time to the restriction and the regulation of the line for both people and goods between the US and Mexico, ending the freedom environment of the Symbolic Border Era. This kind of transformation increased both the surveillance mechanism and the customs protection of the US across the border. All of this had the effect of making the border even more bureaucratic than it had been during the Symbolic Border Era.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 19.

¹⁴² Teun A. Van Dijk, Editorial, “Illegal Aliens,” *Discourse and Society* 7, no. 3 (1996): 291–292.

¹⁴³ Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 11.

¹⁴⁴ Avi Astor, “Unauthorized Immigration, Securitization, and the Making of Operation Wetback,” *Latino Studies* 7, (2009): 5-29, quoted in Massey, “The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination,” 166.

¹⁴⁵ Douglas Massey and Karen A. Pren, “Origins of the New Latino Underclass,” *Race and Social Problems* 4, (2012): 5-17, quoted in Massey, “The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination,” 168.

2.4. THE MILITARIZED BORDER ERA

In contrast to other periods, the rise of conservative forces, and subsequent beginning of the militarization of the border in the axis of the Operation Wetback, drug combating, the Immigration Reform and Control Act, Operation Hold the Line, and the Operation Gatekeeper gained importance in this period.

The Bracero Program was followed by another important issue: Operation Wetback. The main aim of this operation was to deport undocumented Mexican immigrants from the US. On the other hand, this operation allowed the US to implement its restrictive immigration policies, such as building new fences, increasing funding for the Border Patrol, and establishing new intelligence agencies in order to prevent illegal entries.¹⁴⁶

Therefore, the gates of the US were opened to Mexican immigrants who accepted low wages and poor working conditions through the Bracero Program. Even though the gate was opened, it also paved the way for restrictive US policies such as Operation Wetback. It can be said that this operation was the first step in the militarization of the border. Accordingly, the terms used to describe borders and immigrants began to change. Although the economic programs were carried out in the name of ensuring cooperation between the two countries, they actually paved the way for a restrictive US policy towards immigrants. As a result, the construction of borders (walls) in the physical sense is introduced as a reflection of national security and securitization by the US, while in the legal and economic sense, policies such as the Bracero Program have been shaped in accordance with the needs and interests of the US.

The border was also affected by the conservative policies of the Ronald Reagan's administration, which sought to maintain 'law and order'.¹⁴⁷ In this context, undocumented immigration was described by Reagan in 1985 as "a threat to national security".¹⁴⁸ Thus, the immigration threat narrative was used by policymakers in order to both consolidate society and implement their policies. On the other hand, the number of

¹⁴⁶ Henderson, *Beyond Borders: A History of Mexican Migration to the United States*, 85.

¹⁴⁷ Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 12.

¹⁴⁸ Massey, "The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination," 169.

undocumented immigrants had increased dramatically during this period, as had the budget allocated to immigration policy in order to prevent an ‘alien invasion’.¹⁴⁹

The drug smuggling alliance between the Mexican drug cartel, organized by Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo, and the Colombian drug cartel also marked this era. The US government, concerned about this alliance, focused on drug trafficking on the Mexican border and linked it to the immigration problem.¹⁵⁰

The militarization of the border literally began at the border with the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). As the growing numbers of undocumented immigrants became visible in the 1980s, this situation was exploited by both the media and conservative leaders under the discourse of a potential threat to national security. Based on this discourse, the border was described as a place that was “out of control” because of this potential threat. After several legislative proposals, IRCA was signed into law by Ronald Reagan in 1986 and became one of the important milestones in the US-Mexico history.¹⁵¹

Indeed, IRCA also signalled the beginning of a restrictive US policy. In this respect, IRCA aimed to reduce the number of illegal immigrants entering the country by imposing fines on employers who hired illegal immigrants and increasing the budget of the Border Patrol and the INS.¹⁵² In addition to IRCA, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) was enacted in 1996, which imposes harsh penalties on immigrants whose legal visas have expired. Under this new harsh immigration law, immigrants could be deported without any legal review by the Border Patrol.¹⁵³ As a result, the cost of crossing the border and the risk of apprehension increased even more. In the face of increasing risks and costs, immigrants who were able to cross the border,

¹⁴⁹ Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 12.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States,” 15.

¹⁵² Mark Eric Williams, *Understanding U.S.-Latin American Relations: Theory and History First Edition*, (Routledge, 2011), 295, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203805107>.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

chose to live in isolation in America in an atmosphere of fear, for fear of being deported again.¹⁵⁴

In the 1990s, some major law enforcement operations, Operation Hold the Line and Operation Gatekeeper, were launched in order to protect the border from drug trafficking and illegal immigration, including undocumented workers. These operations accelerated the militarization of the border that had begun with IRCA.

The first of these was Operation Hold the Line which was the forerunner of other operations because it was the first of its kind. The operation was launched on the US-Mexico border in El Paso in 1993 by Silvestre Reyes, who was the chief of the Border Patrol. Initially called Operation Blockade, it was eventually renamed Operation Hold the Line. In order to control illegal immigration, this operation presented a new policy that was developed by Reyes and was known as ‘prevention through deterrence’. Unlike previous policies that focused on the apprehension, detention, and deportation of immigrants, Operation Hold the Line focused on the preventive and deterrent measures of the Border Patrol.¹⁵⁵

Operation Gatekeeper, on the other hand, was launched in 1994 in San Diego, California, during the Bill Clinton administration.¹⁵⁶ Like Operation Hold the Line, this operation was designed to prevent illegal immigration rather than to deport or apprehend of illegal immigrants who had already crossed the border. This operation, which came about in response to rapidly increasing immigration, involved a variety of surveillance technologies such as trip wires, sensors, infrared binoculars, and motion detectors.¹⁵⁷

These operations, therefore, caused immigrants to turn to areas where there are no security measures, such as deserts, to cross the border, and undocumented immigrants who crossed the border did not leave the US in order to avoid the risk of being apprehended.

¹⁵⁴ Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States,” 15.

¹⁵⁵ Henderson, *Beyond Borders: A History of Mexican Migration to the United States*, 129-130.

¹⁵⁶ Wood, *The Borderlands: An Encyclopedia of Culture and Politics on the U.S.-Mexico Divide*, 195.

¹⁵⁷ Henderson, *Beyond Borders: A History of Mexican Migration to the United States*, 130.

In this sense, it can be said that these operations have led to immigrants prolonging their stay in the country.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, these operations can also be considered as the beginning of the surveillance mechanism that reached its height after September 11.

Indeed, IRCA and these subsequent operations were an important indicator of the restrictive policies of the US. Consequently, these operations indicated that “the border was a lawless place where more law and order was required.”¹⁵⁹ As a result of these operations and the legal sanctions that accompanied them, family ties on both sides of the border were damaged and the historical, social, and cultural ties between the two countries began to weaken.

These operations characterized migrants without discrimination as ‘lawbreakers’ or ‘criminals’ and positioned them accordingly in a discourse that threatened the US. As both the number of Border Patrol officers and the budget allocated to the Border Patrol increased, so did the number of migrants apprehended at the border. This increasing number of apprehended migrants was used in both the public discourse and the media to justify US policy. Even, an article entitled *Illegal Aliens: Time to Call a Halt!* was written in 1976 by Leonard F. Chapman, who was the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, once again, immigrants were marginalized by the US in line with its policies.

Finally, the establishment of a ‘free trade zone’ under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was another important issue evaluated during this period. After several rounds of diplomatic negotiations, the agreement was signed by President George H.W. Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari on December 17, 1992¹⁶¹, and came into force on January 1, 1994. The

¹⁵⁸ Domínguez and Fernández de Castro, *The United States and Mexico: Between Partnership and Conflict*, 137.

¹⁵⁹ Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 13.

¹⁶⁰ Massey, “The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination,” 168.

¹⁶¹ Wood, *The Borderlands: An Encyclopedia of Culture and Politics on the U.S.-Mexico Divide*, 187.

purpose of NAFTA was to eliminate all tariff and trade barriers between the three signatories of the agreement.¹⁶²

After the European Union (EU), this trilateral agreement was introduced as the second important free trade zone in the world. However, this was not the case. The EU created a supranational structure that established common trade and agricultural policies, a common market, and a single currency. More importantly, under this supranational structure created ‘a single space of mobility’ for the citizens of the member states to work, live, and travel in.¹⁶³ However, NAFTA completely ignored the equalization of economic development, which was at different levels in the signatory countries, and the mobility of labour. As a result, NAFTA represented only economic integration, not political integration.¹⁶⁴

In contrast to the European Union, NAFTA had a double standard. On the American side, the people who were responsible for drafting the agreement were politicians, bankers and business representatives, but not including public interest organizations or labour unions. Under the terms of NAFTA, therefore, the borders became permeable for the mobility of capital, but the same borders became restrictive for the mobility of immigrants.¹⁶⁵

In this sense, NAFTA can be seen as an agreement that provides a basis for creating conditions conducive to increasing US profits while at the same time restricting the mobility of immigrants. This means that although NAFTA was introduced as an agreement that would remove the tariff barrier and create open market conditions, it actually contains different meanings and interests of the US within itself. Within the

¹⁶² Williams, *Understanding U.S.-Latin American Relations: Theory and History*, 321.

¹⁶³ Brent F. Nelsen and Alexander Stubb, eds., *The European Union: Readings on the theory and practice of European integration*. Boulder, (CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005), quoted in Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Douglas S. Massey, “Borders for Whom? The Role of NAFTA in Mexico-U.S. Migration,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610, (2007): 105, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097891>.

¹⁶⁴ Gary Gereffi, David Spener, and Jennifer Bair, *Free trade and uneven development: The North American apparel industry after NAFTA*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), quoted in Fernández-Kelly and Massey, “Borders for Whom? The Role of NAFTA in Mexico-U.S. Migration,” 105.

¹⁶⁵ Fernández-Kelly and Massey, “Borders for Whom? The Role of NAFTA in Mexico-U.S. Migration,” 101-102.

agreement, the disregard for both the mobility of immigrant workers and the workers' rights demonstrates this kind of perspective.

In parallel to these events, the idea of building a steel wall in the urban areas of the border was on the agenda of the US government. In fact, some fences and walls began to appear in some parts of the border. As a result, both illegal immigration and drug smuggling “made the border a place where law and order had to be imposed from above.”¹⁶⁶

2.5. THE ‘WAR ON OTHERS’ BORDER ERA

The attack of September 11, which had an enormous impact on the US, is the main issue discussed in this era. From that point on, immigration began to be seen as a political issue as well as an economic threat. Although every part of the country was affected by this attack, it was undoubtedly the US-Mexican border that was most affected and continues to be affected. It is interesting to note that the Mexican immigrants were neither of Muslim origin nor had any known connection with Al-Qaeda, which carried out this terrible terrorist attack.¹⁶⁷

The US government, unable to detect the terrorist attack, focused on immigration policy and border control. In other words, even though Mexican immigrants had nothing to do with the attack, they were scapegoated by the government. While potential terrorists could enter the country in many ways, the focus was mostly on one border: the US-Mexico border, where the avenger of the attack was carried out.

Following this terrorist attack, the US government adopted a number of short-term and long-term measures. The short-term measures included the temporary closure of the border. This affected both people and the economy negatively. While many people had to leave their families, workers could not go to work, or students could not go to school.

¹⁶⁶ Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 12-13.

¹⁶⁷ Massey, “The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination,” 175.

On the other hand, the import and export sectors were badly affected, as the waiting time at the border increased fourfold compared to the past.¹⁶⁸

As a result of long-term measures, the border issue has become one of national security rather than a law enforcement. This re-description of the border has brought with it the issue of ‘securitization.’ For this reason, both the number of border patrols and the budget allocated to surveillance technologies and border security have increased dramatically compared to the 1990s. Correspondingly, attitudes towards people crossing the border have changed, with everyone being seen as a potential criminal in the aftermath of September 11.¹⁶⁹

With the September 11 attacks, the issue of borders became much more prominent on the US’ security agenda, and surveillance mechanisms were strengthened in the name of the ‘war on terror.’ After the collapse of the Twin Towers, the Mexican and Canadian borders were identified as the main ‘terrorist alien’ entry points for undocumented immigrants. At the same time, “alert level 1 ‘code red’ search authority procedures” were activated. Accordingly, not only x-ray machines, densitometers, and laser scanners, but also hundreds of INS officers were deployed at both non-commercial and commercial Mexico-US border entry points.¹⁷⁰

Immigration legislation also gained in importance. The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act, commonly known as the USA PATRIOT Act, came into force on October 26, 2001.¹⁷¹ As Renato Rosaldo said that “the U.S.-Mexico border has become theatre, and border theatre has become social violence. Actual violence has become inseparable from

¹⁶⁸ Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security*, 13.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Mat Coleman, “The naming of ‘terrorism’ and evil ‘outlaws’: geopolitical place-making after 11 September,” *Geopolitics* 8, no.3 (2003): 89, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14650040412331307722>.

¹⁷¹ Henderson, *Beyond Borders: A History of Mexican Migration to the United States*, 142.

symbolic ritual on the border-crossings, invasions, lines of defence, high-tech surveillance, and more.”¹⁷²

On the other hand, after the September 11 attacks, a number of agencies were merged in 2002 to form the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In response to the terrorist attacks, the DHS was given primary responsibility for counter-terrorism and border policy.¹⁷³ Although these were presented as the main responsibilities of the DHS, its real effect was to terrorize and criminalize immigrant workers from Mexico. The main basis for this terrorization was linked to the positioning of migration as a national security issue on the US political agenda and the consequent redefinition of immigrants, regardless of their origin, as a threat to the integrity of the US.¹⁷⁴

The US perception of the border and immigrants thus began to take shape under the discourse of the ‘war on terror.’ The US’ representation of the space, border and identity therefore reveals much about its immigration policy. The post-September 11 terror discourse taking place in American geopolitics, which is associated with immigrants, is also an important part of this representation. In this sense, the place-naming of the US geopolitics has allowed it to create a space of belonging for itself and, at the same time, to implement its foreign policy in a legitimate area.

The September 11 attack, which created an atmosphere of fear, actually created a sphere in which America legitimized its policies, especially immigration and border policies. The US turned this terrible attack into a strategic advantage to strengthen surveillance mechanisms and security measures. In other words, the US government put itself in a position to justify itself in the eyes of the public when it implemented its policies for its

¹⁷² Renato Rosaldo, “Cultural Citizenship, Inequality, and Multiculturalism,” in *Latino Cultural Citizenship*, eds. by Rina Benmayor and William V. Flores, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 33, quoted in Massey, “The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination,” 176.

¹⁷³ Domínguez and Fernández de Castro, *The United States and Mexico: Between Partnership and Conflict*, 171.

¹⁷⁴ Fernández-Kelly and Massey, “Borders for Whom? The Role of NAFTA in Mexico-U.S. Migration,” 108.

own purposes. The border thus took on a new meaning as the US created a new geopolitical vision in the name of national security, after the September 11 attack.

Generalization of border as a symbolic mechanism that should be defended against all kinds of external threats, after September 11 attack, which contributed to the sanctification of the border in foreign policy making, has a great effect. In this way, the sacralization of the border has become an inseparable part of border symbolism.

During this period, when being an immigrant was equated with being a criminal, political actors have gained legitimacy in the eyes of the people by attributing importance and urgency to the issue, claiming that it posed a danger to the country and the US citizens. As a result, because of their association with the border, immigrants, who were portrayed by the US government as a threat to national security.

2.6. THE SOCIAL MEDIA BORDER ERA

In the context of the US-Mexico border, this thesis argues that Twitter is used not only as one of the communicative tools, but also as it is a place where the US-Mexico border wall has begun to metaphorically rise. In this context, it proposes that social media tools should also be considered within the framework of the subject in today's conditions. As social media tools have evolved from personal communication and sharing tools to political platforms, this title has been prepared as a fifth title.

One of the main reasons for the need to add such a new additional stage by considering today's conditions is due to the fact that social media, by challenging conventional political assumptions, both expands established political perspectives and goes beyond traditional border studies. In addition, this study seeks to draw attention to the importance of social media, as an unexplored subject, in understanding borders and their impact on the political arena, rather than explaining the securitization of the border, the interaction between borders, or just the history of borders. Therefore, it is hoped that adding such a new stage and analysing the border (wall) issue within this framework will contribute to the literature.

Social Media Border Era begins with a brief overview of how social media, particularly X, has become one of the most important political communication tools in the foreign policy-making process of political leaders, especially populist ones. This section therefore aims to provide a basis for Chapter 3, in which the place of the US-Mexico border (wall) within social media will be discussed in more detail by examining Trump's discourse.

The problems of migration are caused by different reasons, and the solutions to these problems also depend on different dynamics, such as the conditions of time, the policies of the governments, and the aims of the politicians. These differences, therefore, shape the migration policies and occupy the foreign policy, which is also gaining ground in social media. In this regard, even though social media initially entered our lives as a platform for sharing photos or brief daily situations, it has transformed into a place where political leaders and diplomats articulate state affairs. In other words, social media platforms are being used by policymakers as a means of political communication, and thus becoming an effective tool in foreign policy-making.

Not only politicians, but also states are using Twitter accounts in the name of "nation branding."¹⁷⁵ Thus, social media is emerging as a place where states can legitimize their political messages. For this reason, social media, which is having a dramatic impact on political discourse, is becoming a central issue in world politics in the process of time. The significance of the use of social media in the political sphere is therefore related to the effectiveness of social media in shaping political discourse.

In recent years, not only people, but also states and governments have been actively using social media, which appears to be a place where politicians can raise awareness about issues they want to raise or run a political campaign in order to gain public support. Just as some topics go viral through the *#hashtag* feature on Twitter by some trolls, populist leaders also put some issues, such as migration, on the agenda that they want to make popular. But what are the reasons that make social media attractive to politicians? The answer is closely related to the benefits that social media brings. Unlike traditional media,

¹⁷⁵ Radhika Chhabra, "Twitter Diplomacy: A Brief Analysis," *Observer Research Foundation*, ORF Issue Brief no. 335 (January 2020): 7.

social media offers a direct access to an audience that can comment, respond, or criticize. This interactivity brings with its accessibility. On the other hand, Twitter also helps politicians during election time. When candidates send messages to the public on Twitter during elections, they not only make themselves accessible to the eyes of the public, but also create an image of being one of the people. People who use Twitter can connect directly not only with their friends, but also with diplomats and political leaders through the *@mention* feature. Political leaders can also use this feature to contact their colleagues without any delay or procedure via this feature. While this communication goes beyond the personal sphere to the political sphere, it easily reaches a mass audience.¹⁷⁶

Social media tools, especially Twitter, are often used by politicians in the political communication process and form an important part of the political movement, as they can easily take place in the memory of the society, shape its opinion, and spread rapidly in the society. Although Twitter offers a limited space for expression with its 280 characters, its impact goes beyond these limited characters. In other words, even though there is a limit to the use of words, the messages conveyed express much more than these limited characters and make a difference in foreign policy. In addition, the spread of knowledge on social media removes time and space, and this situation has led to a decrease in state control over knowledge. This means that the impact of Twitter cannot be limited by borders, geography, and time. As a result, Twitter, which has become a structure in which politicians in particular come to the fore, has over time also become an important element in foreign policy.

Within this framework, space constitutes the parameters of national and personal identities, of national prestige, and this space becomes meaningful through borders that create a sense of belonging. Borders, which are the main point of securitization and control, have become contested spaces with globalization. Although, from the perspective of globalization, borders are lines that constitute an obstacle for migration and immigrants, from the perspective of the nation-state, they are one of the most important

¹⁷⁶ Constance Duncombe, "The Politics of Twitter: Emotions and the Power of Social Media," *International Political Sociology* 13, no.4 (December 2019): 412, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olz013>.

and functional tools in the fight against migration. The perception of borders in social media, especially on Twitter, is shaped by a nation-state perspective.¹⁷⁷ For these reasons, Twitter, which has the potential to legitimize political processes, appears as an essential part of political movements.

Social media have created a sphere in which people not only communicate with each other, but also participate in foreign policy-making processes. Borders, which are thus positioned within the framework of the approaches and policies in question and accordingly reconstructed within the framework of a certain meaning and discourse, are included in the foreign policy-making process through social media. Therefore, social media, which is successful in influencing society, has become an effective tool in shaping the border and immigration policies of the states. As political leaders use Twitter to influence and consolidate the public opinion on border and immigration policy, the way has been paved for social media to become a tool that shapes the perspective of society. The dominant position of social media thus, has a direct impact on both the construction and the meaning of borders. In this context, social media, which has become an attractive platform for politicians because of its instantaneous interaction capacity, its ability to reach mass audiences quickly, its power to influence the masses, and its low cost, has also become a channel that covers the US-Mexico border wall. Therefore, this thesis argues that social media, which adds a new dimension to the political communication process, appears as a new stage in the US-Mexico border issue.

As a result, the case of the US-Mexico border (wall) shows that economics and politics are a new generation war, fought not only in conventional ways but also in modern ways through social media. As traditional methods are insufficient to understand the issue of borders, it seems that, social media, particularly Twitter, will continue to be a significant tool in the field of international relations, as the new normal. In the current system, illegal migration and foreign policy are combined with a strong discourse of othering. This situation leads to a change in the position of immigrants in foreign policy and a reinterpretation of the place of immigrants in the current system. As a result of this

¹⁷⁷ Kerem Özbey, "Sınırları Anlamada Medyanın Rolü: Dijital Medya Haberlerinde Sınırların İlişkisel Analizi," *Amasya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 13 (Haziran 2023): 221.

reinterpretation, the line between us and them is constantly being redrawn, even though it is sometimes striped and sometimes wavy. In this way, this line, which is constantly reshaped according to the policies of the states, is not only limited to the borderline but begins to appear in all areas of life and society, just as the populist leaders want.

2.7. CONCLUSION

The border is an inherently interesting and dynamic concept. Even if its physical appearance does not change, its meaning and context can constantly shift. The meaning of the US-Mexico border, which has become a more protected and controlled space by the day, has also changed over time according to the policies and discourses of political leaders. Over time, the border has been transformed from a line on a map into a marginalizing tool used against immigrants. In this way, the border, which has become even more bureaucratic, has become a centre of surveillance.

The reason why the US has historically pursued completely contradictory policies towards Mexico is closely related to its own purposes and interests. As the history of the US-Mexico border shows, immigrants have also been shaped according by US policies throughout history. In the present day, immigrants have become the subjects used by political leaders to legitimize their policies and mobilize the masses. This means that in order to serve these purposes, policy-makers do not hesitate to marginalize immigrants. On the other hand, they have created a legitimate space for their policies by normalizing the deprivation of human rights of ‘illegal’ immigrants. Furthermore, in order to prepare the ground for its ‘the war on illegals’, the US has built both physical and emotional identities for those who advocate immigration restrictions at the national and international levels, by creating social boundaries between individuals: ‘Americans’ and ‘others’.

From the establishment of the US, the criminalization of foreigners and scapegoating of immigrants in the shadow of Manifest Destiny, have been among the policies to which the US has often resorted, especially in times of economic and political crisis. The history of the border, therefore, cannot be imagined without the American nation-building process and Manifest Destiny. As part of this process, the US has used some pejorative

words to describe the backwardness of Mexico. For example, the terms ‘illegal’ and ‘wetback’, as discriminatory words, on the one hand, attribute negative criteria to the immigrants, and on the other hand deepen the ‘us-them’ distinction that this thesis is concerned with in this chapter. These terms are generally used by populist leaders because of their both political and popular meanings. While these terms label some groups, they also create a legitimate ground for political actors in the manner of the legal sphere.

The marginalization and illegalization of immigrants did not happen all at once; on the contrary, the terms used to define immigrants gradually changed over time, as the border took on different meanings over time according to the policies of the US government. Therefore, these historical events show how the border issue between two neighbouring states became a political metaphor that influenced the foreign policy discourse of the US.

The increasing number of immigrants beyond the control of the US has, on the one hand, shifted immigrants from legal status to illegal status in the eyes of the US and, on the other hand, it restricted the mobility of immigrants along the border. As a result, the border has come to be seen not only as a line demarcating the sovereign territory of states, but also as a line separating citizens and legal immigrants from ‘illegal’ immigrants. It is said that the US government waging a war against immigrants and is trying to justify this new generation of war, which is disarmed and unilateral, through border policies and the discourse of the wall.

All this raises to the question: Why are borders and walls being sanctified by states and turned into a mechanism that dominates the foreign policy agenda? The answer to this question lies behind the intentions of political leaders. Throughout history, states have attached importance to borders and walls since they prevent external threats. Indeed, these external threats change depending on the historical process, the political actors or the purpose of the political leaders. The important point about the external threats is that the ambiguity of their definition makes them seem like a panacea for states. On this basis, it can be seen that in today’s globalized world, these threats have been transformed into discourses of migration, immigration, and unemployment rather than war, invasion, or the military.

It seems that the ‘us-them’ distinction is being used very successfully by states in this transformation. Although the emphasis points and policies of the governments have changed throughout history, the essence of the matter has always remained the same: the us-them duality. Moreover, populist leaders who want to cover up their own policies go one step further in this discourse and try to create legitimacy for themselves by making a connection between being an immigrant and being a terrorist. In this context, immigration from Mexico to the US has been one of the main causes of political and economic problems in the US throughout history. Or, as this thesis argues, political actors wanted to portray immigration as the cause of these problems in order to implement their policies in the national interest of the US. Therefore, borders have begun to turn into walls, both to consolidate the power of political leaders and to concretize the borders.

On the other hand, it is seen that the economic vulnerability and fears of terrorism, especially after the attacks of September 11, have taken hold in the US, but the reflection of such issues on the US-Mexico border has not been described as well-founded as these issues. Instead of, actually solving the major problems affecting the country, the policymakers have sought to attract public attention to the issues of border security and immigration, which have become symbolic in the foreign policy-making process. Indeed, sometimes the causes of problems that are not really related to border and immigration issues are made part of this symbolism.

Many areas that support this symbolism have also been deliberately constructed by the policy-makers. To a large extent, this includes the economic sphere. In this sense, border security has generated the flow of profits by providing a new market for technology companies -such as the sale of high-tech security and surveillance equipment- and an academic field for scholars to write books and articles, indirectly creating a new market for publishing companies.

In fact, the most significant factor in creating of a new market for other fields around border and migration issues is the narratives constructed by politicians through the media. In the following chapter, these narratives will be examined and discussed through the discourses of the Donald Trump era.

CHAPTER 3 – THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ‘OTHER’ THROUGH DONALD TRUMP’S BORDER (WALL) DISCOURSE

Why are the borders drawn? For the existence of states or for the existence of imaginary threats?

3.1. INTRODUCTION

On the US-Mexico borderline, geography and politics are closely intertwined, as this borderline has long been associated with a series of spatial struggles, such as the border (wall), immigration policy, identity issues, border patrol, and the corresponding high-tech panoptic checkpoints. Even though the tensions here eased from time to time, this border has taken its place in the literature as a border region that is closely monitored with fortified checkpoints, increased inspections, and electronic surveillance networks. This borderline geography can therefore be treated as a problem that is closely related to the control of space.

As explained in the previous chapter, the history of border politics in the US has been based on presenting immigrants as a threat to the country and accordingly marginalizing them within the society. The US-Mexico border case, therefore, cannot be understood without both othering discourses and identities. For this reason, this thesis draws primarily on overlapping themes in the critical geopolitics literature: border, discourse, and identity. All of these themes are perhaps best illustrated through the lens of critical geopolitics.

In order to protect their political authority; governments intervene or ignore the situation whenever they wish by creating policies in the spatial domain. In this context, concepts such as border, identity and migration serve as lifesavers for the power to formulate policies and maintain its political stability. In this respect, it is important to ask why the US-Mexico border wall has become a near-crisis issue, rather than the economy, inflation, or current problems. Based on this view, this chapter attempts to demonstrate how the

discourses constructed around the border and immigration influence policy-making practices, while at the same time attempting to provide a content analysis of the border wall discourse of Donald Trump. The evaluation of Trump's speeches and tweets also helps to demonstrate how social media is effective in foreign policy-making, especially on the issue of the border wall. In this respect, the thesis discusses the issue from the perspective of critical geopolitics and demonstrates how practical geopolitical reasoning can be studied.

3.2. THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE STUDY: WHY DONALD TRUMP?

Donald John Trump was born in New York City in June 1946, the fourth of five children. His grandparent was a German immigrant. His father was a real estate developer and Trump took over his father's business in 1971, renaming it the Trump Organization. In addition to licencing his name in various industries and services and his famous projects such as Trump Tower, the reality show, *The Apprentice*, also increased Trump's popularity in the media. This popularity, in fact, laid the groundwork for his political career.¹⁷⁸

His political career began on June 16, 2015, when he announced his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination.¹⁷⁹ The Republican party believes that immigration policy should be overhauled and that immigrants should be subject to strict controls. The party also claims that amnesty for immigrants has increased the number of illegal immigrants and the problems they cause. For this reason, immigration reform is an important part of the Republican Party's agenda.¹⁸⁰

In this respect, immigration and border issues were also at the forefront of Donald Trump's election campaign. In this context, he built and ran his election campaign on

¹⁷⁸ "Donald J. Trump," *The White House*, December 23, 2022, (Date of Access: 15.02. 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/donald-j-trump/>.

¹⁷⁹ National Archives and Records Administration, (Date of Access: 15. 02. 2024), <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/people/donald-j-trump/>.

¹⁸⁰ "Republican Views on Immigration: Republican Views," *RepublicanViews.org*, February 3, 2018, (Date of Access: 23.02.2024), <https://www.republicanviews.org/republican-views-on-immigration/>.

certain discourses. The most famous of these discourses is “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) ¹⁸¹ which was used frequently on social media in the later period. This slogan is important because it is a rhetoric that gives voters a duty and creates the perception that their vote is valuable for the interests of the country. In other words, by giving role to the voter and calling him/her to duty, the voter feels valuable. In this sense, his or her vote is not just an ordinary vote, but a vote that has the power to make America strong, safe, glorious, and great again.

Trump, who frequently used anti-immigrant rhetoric during the election campaign, claimed that he would take radical measures to solve the immigration problem if elected president. His anti-immigration rhetoric not only boosted his popularity in the country, but also helped him stand out from his rivals. On the other hand, he made big promises during the election campaign, by explaining why it would be better for America if he were elected president. Building of the Mexico wall was another major campaign promise he made. Although Trump lost the popular vote to Hillary Clinton, he became the 45th President of the US on November 8, 2016; and took office on January 20, 2017. ¹⁸²

Why has the Mexican border been such a prominent issue in the Trump era compared to other presidents? Why did the Mexican border issue evolve into the wall discourse during the Trump era? What made the US-Mexico border issue different from the other issues? The answer to all these questions is closely related to the fact that the border issue created a symbolic geopolitical vision for Trump to legitimize his policies. From the first day he announced his candidacy, Donald Trump clearly expressed his exclusionary rhetoric towards immigrants and implemented his policies accordingly. This means that the issue of the Mexican border has been a ‘lifesaver’ for Donald Trump, not only during the election campaign, but also during his presidency. More specifically, by using the border discourse, Trump constructed a discursive political sphere for himself, as he was able to distract the public from the country’s other real problems. Understanding and then deconstructing this discursive policy sphere requires a practical geopolitical reasoning

¹⁸¹ “Donald J. Trump,” *The White House*, December 23, 2022, (Date of Access: 15.02. 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/donald-j-trump/>.

¹⁸² Ibid.

that can explain how Trump constructed stories about the border (wall), and how these stories were presented to the public as geopolitical knowledge.

3.3. THE PERSPECTIVE OF DONALD TRUMP THROUGH HIS POLICIES

Anti-immigrant rhetoric was the one of the main issues that Trump focused on the most throughout his election campaign and, it enabled him to outperform his rivals in the US presidential election. Once in office, Trump continued his anti-immigrant rhetoric, and in particular continued to identify the concept of Mexican immigrants with negative words such as gangs, mafia, MS-13, drugs, and criminals. Moreover, throughout his presidency, he has not hesitated to describe immigration as an invasion and immigrants as people who have invaded the country and taken the jobs of American citizens. In this way, Trump not only consolidated his policies but also made the public build hate speech against them by declaring illegal immigrants as scapegoats.

Under the guise of border security, the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has been tasked with controlling immigration at the border. In this context, members of the National Guard were deployed to the Mexican border by order of Trump on April 4, 2018. The number of troops deployed increased dramatically to 4,000 on September 30, 2018.¹⁸³

The most significant policy implemented in the name of strengthening the border is the 'zero tolerance' policy, which began to be implemented along the US-Mexico border in April 2018. This policy involves detaining those who enter the country illegally and then sending them to court with a request for deportation. As part of this policy, the provision that has provoked the reaction of many institutions and the public is the separation of detained people from their children. Children separated from their families, or relatives, regardless of their age, were placed in the Department of Health and Human Services.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Sarah Pierce, *Immigration-Related Policy Changes in the First Two Years of the Trump Administration*, (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2019), 2.

¹⁸⁴ William A. Kandel, "The Trump Administration's "Zero Tolerance" Immigration Enforcement Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, R45266, (2021): 1-2, (Date of Access: 21.03.2024), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45266>.

The zero-tolerance policy, therefore, not only hinders the asylum rights of people who enter the country illegally but also makes it difficult for them to seek asylum in the country within the framework of human rights.¹⁸⁵

As a part of the zero-tolerance program, the policy of family separation was also implemented. The exact number of children forcibly separated from their families is still unknown.¹⁸⁶ As a result, parents who took the risk of illegally and dangerously entering America in search of better living conditions did not find what they were looking for and paid a high price by being separated from their children at the border. Even though the policy was suspended as a result of public outcry, it did not change the fact that many families were separated. The separation of thousands of children from their families as a result of the zero-tolerance policy demonstrated the Trump immigration regime: preventing immigration at the border at all costs, rather than managing it within the country.

On the other hand, the termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which was developed during the Obama administration, was one of the other major issues of Donald Trump's immigration policy. In essence, the rejection by Congress of the DREAM Act, which aimed to provide legal status to young illegal immigrants, paved the way for the signing of DACA in 2012. In this sense, although DACA offered a two-year work permit, it did not pave the way for American citizenship. However, on September 5, 2017, Donald Trump's administration announced the termination plan of DACA, which provides legal status to undocumented immigrants by preventing them from being deported. In 2018, the termination plan of the program was blocked by three federal courts and in 2020 the Supreme Court stated that the reason given for the cancellation was arbitrary. On the other hand, although the Deferred Action for

¹⁸⁵ Segâh Tekin, "Küresel Göç Krizi ve Kurumsal Şiddet: ABD-Meksika Sınırı Örneği," *Türkiye İnsan Hakları ve Eşitlik Kurumu Akademik Dergisi* 4-5, (2020): 314- 316.

¹⁸⁶ Pierce, *Immigration-Related Policy Changes in the First Two Years of the Trump Administration*, 2-3.

Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program never went into effect, it was officially cancelled by the Trump administration on June 15, 2017.¹⁸⁷

The Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) was also an important program that made its mark in the Trump era. Although the name of the program included the concept of protection, it was only used as a word and not as an action. As immigrants had to wait for their court date in the country of origin, which was usually Mexico, the program is popularly known as “Remain in Mexico”. The program was announced on December 20, 2018, and implemented on January 25, 2019. Under the program, migrants were returned to Mexico pending their day in court, where they not only faced various threats such as rape, and kidnapping, but also lacked access to basic services. In this way, around 70,000 asylum seekers were sent to Mexico under the MPP. Thus, the program itself violated both international and US refugee law. In other words, instead of protecting immigrants, as its name suggests, the program violated their right to asylum.¹⁸⁸

Since this program could not provide adequate protection for immigrants, they made a step to for their own protection, which is migrant caravan. Migrant caravans are the term used to describe people migrating from Central America, especially from the Northern Triangle -Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador- to the US to seek asylum. Mexico is a transit country on this migration route. The reasons that lead people to migrate and seek asylum vary from person to person. But their main reason is to build a better future for themselves and their families by escaping poverty, hunger, abuse, corruption, persecution, gang violence, and climate change in their own countries. As an example of the obligation of immigrants to leave their country, the statements of Josefa, who is an immigrant, are noteworthy. She tells the story of her daughter, who was kidnapped and then raped, and adds that “We went because we had to go,” to build a new life.¹⁸⁹ Even

¹⁸⁷ Pierce, *Immigration-Related Policy Changes in the First Two Years of the Trump Administration*, 31-32.

¹⁸⁸ American Immigration Council, The “Migrant Protection Protocols”: an Explanation of the Remain in Mexico Program, https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/migrant_protection_protocols_2024.pdf; Pierce, *Immigration-Related Policy Changes in the First Two Years of the Trump Administration*, 19-20.

¹⁸⁹ Katy Watson, “Honduran Migrants: ‘We Left Because We Had To,’” *BBC News*, November 18, 2016, (Date of Access: 28. 03.2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37935357>.

though the factors driving them to migrate are different, they share a common reason for travelling in caravans: the belief that travelling in a group is safer and less risky than travelling individually. Migrants are often kidnapped, abused, or killed by drug gangs or human traffickers. According to migrants, travelling in large groups would protect them from these dangers.¹⁹⁰

The first wave of the migrant caravans began in 2017. At the time, the caravans were not on the US government's agenda. However, as the number and size of the caravans increased, they caught the government's attention.¹⁹¹ Accordingly, this migration journey also became one of Donald Trump's key discourses, and he described it as an "invasion".¹⁹²

Although the main focus of this thesis is on Mexican immigrants, it is also necessary to consider attitudes towards immigration and immigrants, with a particular focus on Muslims. One of the initial actions taken by Trump following his inauguration as President was the implementation of a travel ban. In this context, the Trump Administration announced Executive Order 13769 on January 27, 2017. The order, entitled *Protecting the Nation from Terrorist Entry into the United States by Foreign Nationals*, imposed a 90-day travel ban on individuals from seven Muslim-majority countries: Libya, Syria, Yemen, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia. Additionally, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program was also suspended for 120 days, and Syrian refugees were suspended indefinitely, in accordance with this order. For this reason, the order is also known as the Trump travel ban or Muslim travel ban. Furthermore, the order referred to the September 11 attacks and asserted that the visa issuance process should be subject to

¹⁹⁰ Gary J. Hale and Jie Ma, "Migrant Caravans: A Deep Dive Into Mass Migration through Mexico and the Effects of Immigration Policy," (Houston: Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, March 2, 2023): 9-11, <https://doi.org/10.25613/6FRS-8K68>.

¹⁹¹ Hale and Ma, "Migrant Caravans: A Deep Dive Into Mass Migration through Mexico and the Effects of Immigration Policy," 1-2.

¹⁹² "Migrant Caravan: What Is It and Why Does It Matter?," *BBC News*, November 26, 2018, (Date of Access: 25.03. 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45951782>.

rigorous oversight.¹⁹³ In this way, the executive order sought to legitimize itself within the context of the September 11 attacks.

On March 6, 2017, this order was superseded by Executive Order 13780 entitled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*. For this reason, it is also known as the *Travel Ban 2.0*. Within the scope of the travel ban, this executive order contains similar provisions to Executive Order 13769. However, it also contains significant differences. One of the most significant differences between the two executive orders is the removal of Iraq from the list of banned countries.¹⁹⁴

Consequently, throughout his presidency, Trump pursued a particular stringent migrant policy, one that was in accordance with his own interests. On the one hand, immigrants were deported before they could even enter the American border and seek asylum as a result of the zero-tolerance policy. On the other hand, those who had already submitted applications were sent back to Mexico.

The most striking election promise made by Donald Trump was his pledge to build a wall on the southern border to prevent illegal immigration and to have Mexico pay for it. From the election campaign to the end of his presidential term, the cost of building the wall has remained a constant topic of discussion not only among Trump supporters but also among politicians in both the US and Mexico. In this regard, the US-Mexico border itself has become a symbol of discrimination. The discriminatory nature of the border stems from its labelling force.

Within the context of the border wall, Executive Order 13767 was announced by Donald Trump on January 25, 2017. The order, entitled *Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements*, underscored the necessity of constructing a “physical wall”

¹⁹³ Office of the Federal Register, “Executive Order 13769: Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States,” *National Archives and Records Administration*, (January 27, 2017), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2017-02-01/pdf/2017-02281.pdf>.

¹⁹⁴ Office of the Federal Register, “Executive Order 13780: Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States,” *National Archives and Records Administration*, (March 06, 2017), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2017-03-09/pdf/2017-04837.pdf>.

along the southern border to ensure “the national security of the state”. In this context, undocumented immigrants were defined as ‘aliens’ who present a threat to both the safety of the public and the security of the state. In addition, the order also defined the term ‘wall’ as “a contiguous, physical wall or other similarly secure, contiguous, and impassable physical barrier.” Although the order elucidated the purpose, meaning, and significance of the wall, it did not provide any information regarding the associated costs.¹⁹⁵

Trump, who had previously asserted that the border barrier was a mere toy, subsequently declared his intention to construct a ‘real wall’ with the objective of preventing illegal immigration. His commitment to construction of a wall persisted following the election. From the outset of his candidacy to the presidency, Trump espoused the view that the construction of a wall was a vital necessity for the security and prosperity of the US. To avoid public reaction, Trump asserted that the financial burden of constructing a wall would be borne by Mexico. However, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto consistently refuted this claim.¹⁹⁶ In fact, the dispute over the budget for the wall reached such a level that it resulted in a 35-day shutdown of the federal government.¹⁹⁷

The reason for the 2018–2019 US government shutdown was precipitated by a dispute between President Trump and Congress regarding funding for the proposed border wall between the US and Mexico. Despite the fact that the construction of the wall was the cause of the longest government shutdown in US history, it remained an integral part of Trump’s policy agenda. This shutdown is also the longest one in the US history. Trump requested that the 2019 appropriations bill contain \$5.7 billion in funds for the construction of the Mexico wall, however this request was rejected by Congress. As a

¹⁹⁵ Office of the Federal Register, “DCPD-201700071 - Executive Order 13767: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements,” *National Archives and Records Administration*, (January 25, 2017), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/DCPD-201700071>.

¹⁹⁶ “Peña Nieto says Mexico will not pay for wall,” *The Washington Post*, (Date of Access: 27.03.2024), https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/world/pena-nieto-says-mexico-will-not-pay-for-wall/2017/01/26/794474ae-e3b2-11e6-a419-eefe8eff0835_video.html.

¹⁹⁷ In the US political system, a government shutdown occurs if a bill to provide federal funding for government agencies or programmes is not passed by Congress, which is composed of two separate chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate. In this case, all public activities stop, except for emergency and essential services.

consequence of the aforementioned impasse, numerous federal employees were compelled to take unpaid leave or to work without remuneration from 22 December 2018 to 25 January 2019.¹⁹⁸

During the Donald Trump period, therefore, the political and psychological importance of the border (wall) increased in accordance with his policies, speeches, and tweets. Indeed, the discourse surrounding the border (wall), which resulted in a significant increase in security expenditure, became the primary focus of immigration policy.

3.4. AN ANALYSIS OF DONALD TRUMP PRESIDENCY FROM PRACTICAL GEOPOLITICAL UNDERSTANDING

Trump constructed a geopolitical vision, which included a border wall, and a human relations strategy, which was characterized by a us vs. them mentality, for a specific purpose. In the scope of this thesis, it is posited that this specific purpose arises from the belief that immigration and border issues, which increased Trump's popularity by pushing him ahead of his opponents during the election period, would provide the same superiority during his presidency. The bold and sharp promises, particularly those pertaining to migration, enabled him to secure not only the affections of the electorate but also their ballots. Trump's frequent reference to the issue of immigration in his election promises had an impact on the social sphere and was instrumental in winning the election. In this regard, as a president, he both set the agenda and dominated the press in accordance with his interests. In order to elucidate the power relations of the Trump administration, the power and knowledge relations will be problematized in relation to the border discourse and will be analyzed accordingly through the president's tweets and speeches.

“... this was written by Al Wilson a long time ago and I thought of it having to do with our borders and people coming in and we know what we are going to have. We are going to have problems. We have to very, very carefully vet. We have to be smart; we have to be vigilant. So here it is, the snake. It's called the snake.”

“...A tender-hearted woman saw a poor half-frozen snake...

...She cried, “I'll take you in and I'll take care of you” (Here Trump said ‘the border’) ...

¹⁹⁸ Mehmet Ozan Gülada, “Donald Trump’ın Göçmenlere Yönelik İnşa Edilmesi Planlanan Meksika Duvarı ve Propaganda Karikatürlerindeki Sunumu,” *Göç Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5, no.1 (2019): 87.

Take me in, oh, tender woman
 Take me in, for heaven's sake...
 ...Now she wrapped him up all cozy in a coverture of silk
 And laid him by the fireside with some honey and some milk...
 ...But instead of saying thanks, that snake gave her a vicious bite...
 ...” I saved you,” cried that woman
 “And you’ve bitten me, even why?
 And you know your bite is poisonous and now I’m gonna die”
 “Oh, shut up, silly woman, “said that reptile with a grin
 “Now you knew darn well I was a snake before you brought me in...”¹⁹⁹

Donald Trump repeatedly recited the song *The Snake*, which was written by Al Wilson, at the campaign rallies. The genesis of the song can be traced back to Aesop's fable, entitled *The Farmer and The Snake*.²⁰⁰ Although the song and the fable have no correct correlation with the issue of immigration, Trump has made his stance on the matter clear by associating the song with immigrants. In accordance with this stance, there is a perception of the presence of immigrants in the country will ultimately have a detrimental impact on the country.

By using the metaphor of a snake, Trump dehumanized immigrants by reducing them to stereotypes. He simplified the immigration problem in the eyes of the general public, presenting it as an issue that could only be solved by his policies. In fact, the use of this metaphor even in the early stages of his election campaign is indicative of how Trump's attitude toward immigrants will evolve over time. Trump reinforced his assertion that immigrants crossing the border pose a threat to America with this speech, in which he made a connection between immigrants and viciousness. Thus, Trump not only validated his promises but also paved the way for voters to endorse his policies.

¹⁹⁹ “Trump Reads ‘the Snake’ Poem,” *YouTube*, April 30, 2017. (Date of Access: 29. 03. 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSrOXvoNLwg>.

²⁰⁰ Katharina Stevens, “Trump, Snakes and the Power of Fables,” *Informal Logic* 38, no. 1 (March 15, 2018): 53-54, <https://doi.org/10.22329/il.v38i1.4959> .

Such conceptual discourses constitute the political discourse of Trump. These implicit and explicit political discourses are not employed in a random or arbitrary manner, rather, they are utilized with the intention of persuading the masses and conveying messages and ideologies to them. As critical geopolitics asserts, there is a robust correlation between language, power, and ideology. Accordingly, the government seeks to impose a sense of hostility and prejudice against immigration as an ideology through the use of allegorical narrative.

“.... likewise, billions of dollars gets brought into Mexico through the border. We get the killers, drugs & crime, they get the money!”²⁰¹

“Druggies, drug dealers, rapists and killers are coming across the southern border. When will the U.S. get smart and stop this travesty?”²⁰²

“If you want to stop the drug smugglers, human traffickers, and vicious MS-13 gang members from threatening our communities and poisoning our youth, you have only one choice — you must elect more REPUBLICANS!”²⁰³

²⁰¹ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “.... Likewise, Billions of Dollars Gets Brought into Mexico through the Border. We Get the Killers, Drugs & Crime, They Get the Money!,” X, July 13, 2015, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/620546522556534784?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E620546522556534784%7Ctwgr%5Ed1fbc41617118353a63ffcc85907a668e4a247f%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22likewise2Cbillionsofdollarsgetsbroughtinto22.

²⁰² Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “Druggies, Drug Dealers, Rapists and Killers Are Coming across the Southern Border. When Will the U.S. Get Smart and Stop This Travesty?,” X, June 20, 2015, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/612083064945180672?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E612083064945180672%7Ctwgr%5E3c31e2f4adf61dc43a4a4c3845c3e8a89755787b%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22likewise2Cbillionsofdollarsgetsbroughtinto22.

²⁰³ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “If You Want to Stop the Drug Smugglers, Human Traffickers, and Vicious MS-13 Gang Members from Threatening Our Communities and Poisoning Our Youth, You Have Only One Choice - You Must Elect More Republicans! #KAG2020 Pic.Twitter.Com/L4neBV2SEo,” X, September 17, 2019, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1173806093635444736?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1173806093635444736%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945fbbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22ifyouwanttostopthedrugsmugglers22.

Every discourse creates its own subject, which is demonstrated as a scapegoat in society. The tweets in question portray undocumented immigrants as criminals, drug dealers, druggies, members of MS-13, killers, or rapists. In fact, these immigrants were simply people seeking a chance for a better living. On the one hand, the labelling of immigrants with pejorative connotations allowed Trump to reinforce his harsh policies in the eyes of society. On the other hand, this enabled the re-constructing of the identity of immigrants by criminalizing them.

Furthermore, the use of the words ‘we’ and ‘they’ has been employed to create a dichotomy between two opposing groups, with ‘we’ representing a positive and ‘they’ a negative connotation. This polarization has resulted in a rise in anger and hatred within society. On the one hand, the US is a victim of a focus on the alleged increase in criminal activity perpetrated by Mexican immigrants. On the other hand, Mexican immigrants are the subjects of criminalization and blame generating income through criminal activities. From a critical geopolitical perspective, narratives employed by Trump are associated with the ideas constructed regarding a place and the people of that place. Consequently, narratives of places and narratives of people intersect at some point. However, this intersection has resulted in the emergence of geopolitical racism. In this regard, the US is portrayed as a nation of people, whereas Mexico, the country of origin for many immigrants, is depicted as a collection of geographies defined by narratives of dehumanization and otherness. Such rhetoric and policies based on xenophobia are, in fact, supported by racist tendencies.

“We MUST have strong borders and stop illegal immigration. Without that we do not have a country. Also, Mexico is killing U.S. on trade. WIN!”²⁰⁴

According to critical geopolitics, borders are not always drawn by separating territories on a map. What makes a border an actual ‘border’ is the meaning attributed to it. These meanings have generally been made by political leaders, and the evolution of these

²⁰⁴ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “We Must Have Strong Borders and Stop Illegal Immigration. without That We Do Not Have a Country. Also, Mexico Is Killing U.S. on Trade. Win!,” X, June 30, 2015, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/615861274929446912>.

meanings is embedded in the historical context, as critical geopolitics argues. In this sense, critical geopolitics underlines the importance of the historical context, since the meanings only make sense within the historical context.

According to Trump, borders are not just geographical lines that exist on the maps, instead they are powerful symbols for Americans. They are powerful symbols because they distinguish and separate Americans from ‘others.’ As seen in this tweet, the US-Mexico border is not only a dividing line between territories, but it has also become a political apparatus that excludes certain identities in accordance with the meanings that Trump ascribes to it. In other words, the meaning of the border (wall) in the historical process has been shaped in line with Trump’s discourses and turned into a marginalization that goes beyond separation, in both abstract and concrete terms. Moreover, by identifying immigrants as illegal, Trump not only underlined the illegality of the action, but also portrayed undocumented immigrants as potential criminals who posed a threat to national security. Therefore, the border itself was used as a discourse space in which Donald Trump sought to legitimize his policies on the US-Mexico borderline.

When Mexico sends its own people, they don’t send the best ones. They don’t send you. They don’t send you. They send people with a lot of problems, and they bring these problems to us. They bring drugs. They bring crime. They are rapists. And I assume some of them are good people.²⁰⁵

“We will win and establish strong borders, we will build a WALL and Mexico will pay, we will be great again.”²⁰⁶

In these words of Trump, it is seen that the discourse of ‘us’ is emphasized against the other. On the one hand, there is a strong imitation of ‘us’- Americans, who are capable of

²⁰⁵ “Donald Trump: Mexico Is Bringing Drugs, Crime and Rapists to the US,” *USA Today*, (Date of Access: 28.03.2024), <https://www.usatoday.com/videos/news/2015/06/25/29292957/>.

²⁰⁶ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump);“.@AnnCoulter Has Been Amazing. We Will Win and Establish Strong Borders, We Will Build a Wall and Mexico Will Pay. We Will Be Great Again!,” X, January 23, 2016, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/690908222249512960?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E690908222249512960%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945fbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwanttostopthedrugsmugglers22.

building a wall, and on the other side, there is a reflection of the weaker and accused ‘others’- Mexicans, who must pay for what they do. In this way, psychological barriers are also created. These psychological barriers apply not only to Mexican immigrants, but also to those living in Mexico who have not yet immigrated to the US but are considering migrating in search of new opportunities. In fact, the barriers here produce the politics of negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and disgust.

Fear, as the alpha emotion in the hierarchy of emotions, should be controlled. It is the most archaic and modern emotion that can help people survive.²⁰⁷ When people feel fear, they react in three ways: flee, freeze, or fight.²⁰⁸ Within this framework, while Americans are put in a position to be feared, Mexicans are put in a position to feel fear. In fact, in both cases, the aim is to provoke actions that will occur in the face of fear. Imagine, therefore, a representation in which the Americans fight with the Mexicans, who represent a direct threat to them, and the Mexicans should obey the sanctions of the powerful country by fleeing and freezing. In this sense, the construction of the wall is the most powerful reflection of the anticipation that triggers fear in terms of past experiences and in a way that affects the future. In this way, even if the threat disappears, the anticipation remains. In other words, the past, the present and the future are affected. In the political sense, Americans are perceived to be in danger and deprived of accurate information on the issue of the border and migration.

On the other hand, the emotion of disgust is used against the ‘others’ since this emotion represents the rejection mechanism that originally arose as a reaction to food. In this sense, it is a mechanism of self-protection through the reaction of repulsion and withdrawal. Therefore, disgust is a moral emotion, and it is used to label others as ‘immoral, unclean, illegal, contaminating and threatening’, even though the ‘others’ could not do any concrete harm.²⁰⁹ In a political sense, disgust is anger in disguise, an essential tool for Trump to influence voting tendencies and elicit harsher responses due to the lower

²⁰⁷Arne Öhman, “Fear and anxiety: Overlaps and Dissociations,” *Handbook of emotions*, eds. by Michael Lewis Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, and Lisa Feldman Barrett, (New York, London: Guilford Press, 2008), 709-729.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹Sumio Imada et al., “Body, psyche and culture: The Relationship Between Disgust and Morality,” *Psychology and Developing Societies* 9, no.1 (March 1997): 108.

levels of cognitive empathy. With all this, it is impossible not to increase the level of anxiety for both parties. Therefore, Trump created the perception that Americans, in return, Mexicans will continue their lives knowing that Trump is always prepared against them.

Our military is being mobilized at the Southern Border. Many more troops coming. We will NOT let these Caravans, which are also made up of some very bad thugs and gang members, into the U.S. Our Border is sacred, must come in legally. TURN AROUND!²¹⁰

From a critical geopolitical perspective, the sanctity of the border makes it a phenomenon that must be protected, cannot be questioned, and cannot be evaluated objectively or impartially. In the framework of this tweet, by sanctifying the border, Trump legitimized the militarization of the border.

Trump also described the people who came in the caravan as gang members. Although the group was generally consisted of children, women, and the elderly, Trump claimed that the group was consisted of bad thugs, gang members, criminals, and invaders, and accordingly he described them as a threat to national security. At the same time, he identified the journey as an ‘invasion’ and deployed troops to the southern border. Through these discourses he sought to normalize the militarization of the border and shaped the public opinion.²¹¹

The caravans make a big impact on social media. In another incident that went viral on social media, migrants waiting for their documents to cross into the US’ southern border of Mexico staged a dramatic protest to make their voices heard. As part of this protest, they sewed their own mouths shut in order to be accepted and to express themselves.

²¹⁰ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “Our Military Is Being Mobilized at the Southern Border. Many More Troops Coming. We Will Not Let These Caravans, Which Are Also Made up of Some Very Bad Thugs and Gang Members, into the U.S.. Our Border Is Sacred, Must Come in Legally. Turn Around!,” X, October 31, 2018, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1057614564639019009?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1057614564639019009%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945fbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwanttostopthedrugsmugglers22.

²¹¹ “Migrant Caravan: Hundreds Reach Tijuana on US Border,” *BBC News*, November 14, 2018, (Date of Access: 30.03.2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-46207034>.

Those who fled dictatorial regimes with problems such as oppression, corruption, unemployment, and hunger, and migrated with dreams of building a new life, said that they would rather die trying to cross the border than return.²¹² So, they wanted to send a message by sewing their mouths shut. The message was that they were not likely to harm anyone but themselves and were not criminals. In other words, they wanted to emphasize that the authorities should see them only as human beings, not as criminals or animals. So, is it necessary to show such an action in order to prove that they are human beings and should be treated equally and humanely?

We have people coming into the country or trying to come in — and we’re stopping a lot of them — but we’re taking people out of the country. You wouldn’t believe how bad these people are. These aren’t people. These are animals. And we’re taking them out of the country at a level and at a rate that’s never happened before. And because of the weak laws, they come in fast, we get them, we release them, we get them again, we bring them out. It’s crazy.²¹³

In a comprehensive study, Card et.al. examined 5,000 US presidential and 200,000 congressional speeches on immigration from 1880 to 2022. According to their findings, nationality is a crucial criterion that has shaped the immigration discourse. The point here is that the profile of Mexican immigrants portrayed by politicians today is very similar to that of Chinese immigrants in the 19th century. It finds that today Mexican immigrants are now defined by more negative and inhumane metaphors than ever before. Furthermore, the study reveals the great differences between the language used to describe European and non-European immigrants, especially Chinese and Mexicans.²¹⁴

On the other hand, Trump’s words here allow us to witness the reconstruction of identity. As the understanding of critical geopolitics presupposes, identity is not given, it is

²¹² “AJ+ on Instagram: ‘A Group of Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Monterrey, Mexico Have Sewn Their Mouths Shut in Protest after Authorities Would Not Allow Them to Buy Bus Tickets to the U.S.-Mexico Border Even Though They Have Visas. the Few Who Managed to Get on a Bus Say That They Keep Getting Turned around by the Police. #mexico #asylum #migrant #immigration #protest,’” *Instagram*, (Date of Access: 30.03.2024), <https://www.instagram.com/reel/Ce7KPnlgzDP/?igsh=MThlcXMIYnY1NzJh>.

²¹³ “President Trump: ‘These Aren’t People. These Are Animals.’ (C-SPAN),” *YouTube*, May 16, 2018, (Date of Access: 23.03. 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aib5Ts2cDI8>.

²¹⁴ Dallas Card et al., “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* 119, no. 31 (July 29, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2120510119>.

constantly and socially constructed, changeable, and interactive. This is an example of the perfect use of metaphor, which is the combination of marginalization, dehumanization, generalization, and labelling. The border produces identity, and identity produces the border. In other words, these two concepts are inherent and interrelated. Moreover, the discourse used by Trump here reflects an understanding that discourse is more than words, it is more like a tool to exclude others by using identity. The word ‘animals’ used to describe immigrants is part of spreading fear of stereotypes, which has similarities to the racial profiling that took place after the September 11 attack. In other words, the rhetoric of racism has not disappeared, on the contrary, it has changed over time.

“Our first duty, and our highest loyalty, is to the citizens of the United States. We will not rest until our border is secure, our citizens are safe, and we finally end the immigration crisis once and for all.”²¹⁵

Since the issue of borders is an inseparable part of power struggles, it is always used by political powers to consolidate their control over national borders. Through this discourse, Trump on the one hand constructs a group identity through ‘us’, and on the other hand, he marginalizes this group by referring to ‘them’, which he presents as a threat. In this sense, he shapes spatial identity by separating the ‘other’ (Mexican immigrants), which is presented as a threat, from a particular identity (American identity).

In fact, the marginalizing discourse used here aims to penetrate not only the border region, but also every level of society. It can be said that this aim has been successful. Even though Trump could not physically build the wall on the border, he built this wall in the minds of people. For walls are not only built visibly, but also invisibly.

²¹⁵ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “Our First Duty, and Our Highest Loyalty, Is to the Citizens of the United States. We Will Not Rest until Our Border Is Secure, Our Citizens Are Safe, and We Finally End the Immigration Crisis Once and for All. Pic.Twitter.Com/7yFz9kjb23,” X, June 22, 2018, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1010257002478620673?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1010257002478620673%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945fbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwanttostopthedrugsmugglers22.

“Separating families at the Border is the fault of bad legislation passed by the Democrats. Border Security laws should be changed but the Dems can’t get their act together! Started the Wall.”²¹⁶

As explained above, under Trump’s zero-tolerance policy, children were separated from their families or relatives at the border. Although this situation occurred because of Trump’s policy, he misled the public. Therefore, Trump tried to create a legitimate space for his policy by blaming both the Democrats and the politicians before him, and by claiming that immigrants threaten national security.

Illegal immigration affects the lives of all Americans. Illegal immigration hurts American workers; burdens American taxpayers; and undermines public safety; and places enormous strain on local schools, hospitals, and communities in general, taking precious resources away from the poorest Americans who need them most. Illegal immigration costs our country billions and billions of dollars each year...²¹⁷

The rhetoric of this tweet portrays America as a victim and illegal immigrants have been shown as the cause of all the country’s problems, such as unemployment, lack of public safety and public services. Immigrants, in need of new hopes and new jobs, were portrayed as people trying to steal jobs from Americans and becoming a burden on society. Although the US citizens were threatened with unemployment, the fact that illegal immigrants tend to work in the ‘3D jobs’ - dangerous, dirty, and difficult. In this sense, the perception has been created that if the economy is protected from illegal

²¹⁶ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “Separating Families at the Border Is the Fault of Bad Legislation Passed by the Democrats. Border Security Laws Should Be Changed but the Dems Can’t Get Their Act Together! Started the Wall.,” X, June 5, 2018, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1003969399148118016?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1003969399148118016%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945fbbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwantstopthedrugsmugglers22.

²¹⁷ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “Illegal Immigration Affects the Lives of All Americans. Illegal Immigration Hurts American Workers, Burdens American Taxpayers, Undermines Public Safety, and Places Enormous Strain on Local Schools, Hospitals and Communities...Https://T.Co/En1iqpnbjy,” X, November 1, 2018, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1058100070158098433?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1058100070158098433%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945fbbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwantstopthedrugsmugglers22.

immigrants, the country will become more prosperous, and the welfare level of the country will increase.

Another point to be noted here is that the construction of the identity of the other actually creates the definition of the identity of the original group. The causes of economic, social, political, security and even cultural problems in the society are attributed to the others, who are said to be disrupting the social structure. In other words, the marginalized group is not only presented as a threat to society, but also portrayed as the main cause of the problems.

We must maintain a Strong Southern Border. We cannot allow our Country to be overrun by illegal immigrants as the Democrats tell their phony stories of sadness and grief, hoping it will help them in the elections. Obama and others had the same pictures and did nothing about it!²¹⁸

I am watching the Democrat Party led (because they want Open Borders and existing weak laws) assault on our country by Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, whose leaders are doing little to stop this large flow of people, INCLUDING MANY CRIMINALS, from entering Mexico to U.S.....²¹⁹

...The Steel Barrier, or Wall, should have been built by previous administrations long ago. They never got it done - I will. Without it, our Country cannot be safe. Criminals, Gangs, Human Traffickers, Drugs & so much other big trouble can easily pour in. It can be stopped cold!²²⁰

²¹⁸ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “We Must Maintain a Strong Southern Border. We Cannot Allow Our Country to Be Overrun by Illegal Immigrants as the Democrats Tell Their Phony Stories of Sadness and Grief, Hoping It Will Help Them in the Elections. Obama and Others Had the Same Pictures, and Did Nothing about It!” X, June 22, 2018, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1010156224749408258?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1010156224749408258%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945fbbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwantstopthedrugsmugglers22.

²¹⁹ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “I Am Watching the Democrat Party Led (Because They Want Open Borders and Existing Weak Laws) Assault on Our Country by Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, Whose Leaders Are Doing Little to Stop This Large Flow of People, Including Many Criminals, from Entering Mexico to U.S.....” X, October 18, 2018, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1052883467430694912?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1052883467430694912%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945fbbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwantstopthedrugsmugglers22.

²²⁰ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “...The Steel Barrier, or Wall, Should Have Been Built by Previous Administrations Long Ago. They Never Got It Done - I Will. without It, Our Country Cannot Be Safe. Criminals, Gangs, Human Traffickers, Drugs & so Much Other Big Trouble Can Easily Pour in. It Can Be Stopped Cold!” X, January 11, 2019, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1083759500618805254?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1083759500618805254%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945f

This series of three tweets, draws comparisons with previous administrations, criticizing them for not doing their best and highlighting the ability of Trump's presence to stop dysfunction.

On the other hand, these tweets reflect the offensive call for support for the construction of the wall, as Trump describes immigrants as gangs, criminals, and human traffickers. However, the Cato Institute report shows that, unlike native-born citizens, immigrants refrain from committing crimes because they have a fear of deportation. It also found that there is no positive correlation between the number of immigrants and the level of crime, on the contrary, crime rates are lower in areas where immigrants are the majority. According to researchers, the fear of deportation discourages crime and reduces the propensity of immigrants to commit crimes. In this regard, it has been stated that people who migrate in the hope of a better future do not have a positive correlation with crime rates, but on the contrary, they contribute to reducing in crime rates in the places where they migrate.²²¹

In their book *Immigration and Crime: Taking Stock*, Charis Kubrin and Graham Ousey examined the relationship between immigration and crime. This comprehensive study concludes that it is inappropriate to portray immigration as a source of crime and that, contrary to popular belief, immigrants are more likely to obey the law than native-born citizens.²²²

Making people illegal by marginalizing them in order to gain a legitimate sphere in the political scene is one of the best-known policies of Donald Trump. In this regard, Trump

[bbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwanttostopthedrugsmugglers22](https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?s=bbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwanttostopthedrugsmugglers22).

²²¹ Alex Nowrasteh, "Immigration and Crime – What the Research Says," 2015, July 14, (Date of Access: 25. 03.2024), <https://www.cato.org/blog/immigration-crime-what-research-says>; "Study by Michael Light Demonstrates Low Crime Rates among Undocumented Immigrants Compared to U.S. Citizens," *Department of Sociology*, December 17, 2020, (Date of Access: 25.03.2024), <https://sociology.wisc.edu/2020/12/08/study-by-michael-light-demonstrates-low-crime-rates-among-undocumented-immigrants-compared-to-u-s-citizens/>; Daniel P. Mears, "Immigration and Crime: What's the Connection?" *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 14, no. 5 (2002): 284–288, <https://doi.org/10.1525/fsr.2002.14.5.284>.

²²² Glenn Kessler, "The truth about illegal immigration and crime," February 29, 2024, (Date of Access: 25.03. 2024), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/02/29/truth-about-illegal-immigration-crime/>.

has succeeded in making the ethnic difference between the suspect and the victim by presenting the construction of the wall as a cure to eliminate all problems. It is true that building a wall will reduce irregular migration, but it will not eliminate it and all the problems mentioned. However, Trump tried to show the opposite and tried to scare people by making them believe that without the wall they would be in danger.

“Tremendous numbers of people are coming up through Mexico in the hopes of flooding our Southern Border. We have sent additional military. We will build a Human Wall if necessary. If we had a real Wall, this would be a non-event!”²²³

Another explanation for the geopolitical territorialization of the border wall is related to its securitization. In this regard, Trump emphasizes the importance of the border (the wall) in line with national interests, arguing how important the militarization of the border is not only in the context of policy, but also in everyday life. On the other hand, he used the immigrant threat to build a border defence system and to legitimize the budget to be allocated to it.

The mobility of illegal immigrants is used by political actors to suit their needs, policies, or to demagogue in the eyes of the public. The marginalization of immigrants and their portrait as a threat not only legitimizes the policies of political actors, but also allows them to gain the approval of society.

In fact, with this tweet, Trump was trying to convince the public that a wall built on the border would solve all problems and that America would not be safe without the wall. Of course, a wall built on the border could lead to a reduction in crime. But it is important to remember that not all crime in the country is committed by immigrants, and not everyone who crosses the border is a potential criminal. On the other hand, Trump’s rhetoric, not

²²³ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), “Tremendous Numbers of People Are Coming up through Mexico in the Hopes of Flooding Our Southern Border. We Have Sent Additional Military. We Will Build a Human Wall If Necessary. If We Had a Real Wall, This Would Be a Non-Event!,” X, February 5, 2019, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1092787440560078849?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1092787440560078849%7Ctwgr%5Ebdbeaaf49298148d80333aafbc945fbfbfeca75%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%26ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fsearchbox%3D22Ifyouwanttostopthedrugsmugglers22.

only in his election campaign but also during his presidency, has portrayed immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, as a threat to the public and the country. While exaggerating them as a threat, he has actually normalized the militarization of the border in the eyes of the public.

3.5. THE POWER OF DISCOURSE

Discourse, which gives meaning to the text or speech, has an enormous impact on society. As a crucial instrument for the production of knowledge, discourse goes beyond words, in fact it gives meanings and prepares justifications for the practices of political leaders to exclude others in terms of the understanding of critical geopolitics. Therefore, the relationship between power and knowledge intersects with the discourse, as this relationship is the producer of discourse. However, this tool of exclusion can sometimes be used as an instrument for the inclusion of others in terms of the perceptions of political leaders. In this framework, the former one is used by Donald Trump in parallel with the construction of others (immigrants) by presenting them as a threat. The latter one, on the other hand, is used by Barack Obama, the 44th President of the US, in parallel with the unification of the society, presenting it as a strength. Thus, it is seen that these dichotomies can be used by political leaders for certain purposes. In this sense, to show the power of discourse, Donald Trump's discourse will be conceptualized in terms of both language and practice by comparing it with Barack Obama's immigration discourse.

Within the scope of this thesis, Obama's discourse is chosen against Trump's discourse because Obama is Trump's predecessor; and since the historical process is important for critical geopolitics, it is believed that it will help to better understand the power created by Trump's discourse.

...These are young people who study in our schools, they play in our neighbourhoods, they're friends with our kids, they pledge allegiance to our flag. They are Americans in their heart, in their minds, in every single way but one: on paper. They were brought to this country by their parents -- sometimes even as infants -- and often have no idea that they're undocumented until they apply for a job or a driver's license, or a college scholarship.

Put yourself in their shoes. Imagine you've done everything right your entire life -- studied hard, worked hard, maybe even graduated at the top of your class -- only to suddenly face the threat of deportation to a country that you know nothing about, with a language that you may not even speak. That's what gave rise to the DREAM Act...²²⁴

On June 15, 2012, Barack Obama gave a speech on immigration in the Rose Garden. In his speech, he announced and explained the DACA program, which has been cancelled by the Trump administration. By emphasizing the importance of the people in the program to American society, talking about the fear of deportation of undocumented immigrants, and empathizing with them, his views on immigration are clear.

On the one hand, he tried to integrate them into society by saying that the only thing separating them from American citizens was a piece of paper. He emphasized the importance of believing wholeheartedly and not equating being a citizen with having an identity. On the other hand, instead of alienating, scapegoating, or dehumanizing them, as president, he invited society to empathize with them.

... We have 11 million undocumented immigrants in America; 11 million men and women from all over the world who live their lives in the shadows. Yes, they broke the rules. They crossed the border illegally. Maybe they overstayed their visas. Those are facts. Nobody disputes them. But these 11 million men and women are now here. Many of them have been here for years. And the overwhelming majority of these individuals aren't looking for any trouble. They're contributing members of the community. They're looking out for their families. They're looking out for their neighbours. They're woven into the fabric of our lives...

... We strengthened security at the borders so that we could finally stem the tide of illegal immigrants. We put more boots on the ground on the southern border than at any time in our history. And today, illegal crossings are down nearly 80 percent from their peak in 2000...²²⁵

²²⁴ "Remarks by the President on Immigration," *National Archives and Records Administration*, June 15, 2012, (Date of Access: 01.04.2024), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/15/remarks-president-immigration>.

²²⁵ "Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform," *National Archives and Records Administration*, January 29, 2013, (Date of Access: 01.04.2024), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/29/remarks-president-comprehensive-immigration-reform>.

The important point of this speech is that Obama chose to use a unifying and constructive discourse rather than a divisive one, while emphasizing the importance of border security in the context of undocumented immigration.

As examined above, Trump declared illegal immigration a threat to national security and scapegoated illegal immigrants. According to him, immigrants were the source of all the country's problems. America could only be safe, glorious, and great without them. On the other hand, Obama did not deny the problem of illegal immigration. Nevertheless, he did not present illegal immigrants as a threat to national security, but as a problem of legal status. It seems that the two presidents' perspectives on the issue influenced their discourses and subsequently their policies. In this sense, while Trump tried to consolidate the society by using a divisive rhetoric, Obama tried to make immigrants a part of the society by using a unifying rhetoric.

"...We have always drawn strength from being a nation of immigrants, as well as a nation of laws, and that's going to continue. And my hope is that Congress recognizes that and gets behind this effort..."²²⁶

...When we talk about that in the abstract, it's easy sometimes for the discussion to take on a feeling of "us" versus "them." And when that happens, a lot of folks forget that most of "us" used to be "them." We forget that. It's really important for us to remember our history. Unless you're one of the first Americans, a Native American, you came from someplace else. Somebody brought you...²²⁷

...For more than 200 years, our tradition of welcoming immigrants from around the world has given us a tremendous advantage over other nations. It's kept us youthful, dynamic, and entrepreneurial. It has shaped our character as a people with limitless possibilities...Are we a nation that kicks out a striving, hopeful immigrant like Astrid, or are we a nation that finds a way to welcome her in? Scripture tells us that

²²⁶ "Remarks by the President on Immigration," *National Archives and Records Administration*, June 15, 2012, (Date of Access: 01.04. 2024), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/15/remarks-president-immigration>.

²²⁷ "Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform," *National Archives and Records Administration*, January 29, 2013, (Date of Access: 01.04. 2024), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/29/remarks-president-comprehensive-immigration-reform>.

we shall not oppress a stranger, for we know the heart of a stranger — we were strangers once, too...²²⁸

In these three speeches, Obama refers to the roots of the US. He emphasizes that America is a country of immigrants and therefore every citizen is an immigrant unless they are Native American. On the other hand, he apparently states that America is a country of laws and that illegal immigration is against the law. But at the same time, he reminds that America is a country of immigrants, referring to its history. This means that instead of defining every immigrant as a criminal, rapist, or gang member, he expresses that immigrants are a part of society.

As assessed above, while Trump defined immigration and immigrants in negative terms, Obama drew attention to the positive aspects of immigration. While Trump defined immigration as an ‘invasion,’ Obama described it as an ‘asset.’ In this sense, Obama argued that immigrants contribute to the country and that this puts America ahead of other countries.

...we define ourselves as a nation of immigrants. That’s who we are -- in our bones. The promise we see in those who come here from every corner of the globe, that’s always been one of our greatest strengths. It keeps our workforce young. It keeps our country on the cutting edge. And it’s helped build the greatest economic engine the world has ever known.

After all, immigrants helped start businesses like Google and Yahoo!. They created entire new industries that, in turn, created new jobs and new prosperity for our citizens. In recent years, one in four high-tech startups in America were founded by immigrants. One in four new small business owners were immigrants, including right here in Nevada -- folks who came here seeking opportunity and now want to share that opportunity with other Americans...²²⁹

According to Obama, immigrants are the people who keep the American economy vibrant and help make it the largest economy in the world. Instead of an anti-immigrant discourse,

²²⁸ “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Immigration,” *National Archives and Records Administration*, November 20, 2014, (Date of Access: 01.04.2024), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/20/remarks-President-address-nation-immigration>.

²²⁹ “Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform,” *National Archives and Records Administration*, January 29, 2013, (Date of Access: 01.04.2024), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/29/remarks-president-comprehensive-immigration-reform>.

Obama emphasizes the contribution of immigrants to the American economy. In this sense, instead of portraying immigrants as a burden on the country, as Trump has done, he has portrayed them as strengths and opportunities.

He went on to say that immigrants have not only helped build the new world's most used search engines, but have also created new technology start-ups and industries. In doing so, they have enabled many Americans to work here. In this sense, he described them as people who create job opportunities for American citizens, rather than people who steal American jobs. In other words, according to Obama, deporting immigrants would not only affect them, but also the American economy to which they contribute.

As a result, the issue of immigration is an ongoing issue in US history, as explained in the previous chapter. What is intended to be shown here, however, is Trump's discourse towards immigrants, because Trump has created an imaginary geopolitical space in line with his own discourse to legitimize his policy towards immigrants, the border, and the border wall. In other words, Donald Trump's discourse, in which geopolitical representations and codes are hidden, reveals his imaginary geography.

Although the issue of immigration was one of the most important issues during both presidents' terms in office, they handled it differently in their speeches. On the one hand, Obama emphasized the origins of the US as a country of immigrants and, on the other hand, underlined the contributions of immigrants to the country. In this sense, he portrayed them as a strength, and he used unifying and constructive language.

Trump, on the other hand, has marginalized and scapegoated since his election campaign. As can be seen from his speeches and tweets, Trump's rhetoric excluded the Mexican immigrants, who were presented as 'others'. The frequent mention of otherness was therefore at the heart of his discourse and accordingly dominated his politics. In this sense, he constructed a space where he legitimized his policies through his discourses by using discriminatory language. As a result of his discriminatory language, the 'us vs. them' distinction emerged from geopolitical discourse, and such a label is rooted in politics as polarization.

Moreover, his exclusionary and racist rhetoric towards immigrants, especially Mexicans and Muslims, clearly triggered xenophobia in American society. That is, he constructed his discourse around the fear, portrayed immigrants, whose strength cannot be compared to a regular army, as a threat. In this sense, by presenting immigration as an invasion and immigrants as a threat to national security and national identity, Trump not only legitimized the militarization of the border but also created prejudices against immigrants that intimidate the society. In this way, Trump presented building a wall as a miraculous solution and created the perception that America would not be safe without the wall.

3.6. CONCLUSION

Border security and immigration issues are not new phenomena in American history. What is new in the Trump era is that these issues, especially the border wall issue, are directing policy through discourse. According to critical geopolitics, the construction of geographical knowledge and visions and their use as legitimizing tools is done through geopolitical discourse. In the Donald Trump era, discourses and accordingly policies have created such a geopolitical vision of the border that it has been portrayed as the gateway to terrorists, crime, drugs, and rapists. In this context, evaluating the US-Mexico border issue with a critical geopolitical understanding helps to offer a new perspective by deconstructing it.

State leaders set their own agenda by using concepts such as terrorism, immigration, and refugees in order to control their territories, borders, citizens, and most importantly, to legitimize their own policies. Through both his official speeches and his unofficial statements on Twitter, Trump has not only implemented his anti-immigration policies, but has also managed to mobilize the public. In this sense, the wall is an imaginary solution to the fictional problems created by Donald Trump's narratives. Not only the wall itself, but also the wall rhetoric was used by Trump as a geopolitical and psychological deterrent.

As explained in the second chapter, the US-Mexico border has always been a border that requires critical understanding. However, after Donald Trump won the election on

November 8, 2016, critical understanding became necessary to understand this border. For this reason, this chapter discusses the concept of the border in the context of the termination of the DACA and DAPA programs, the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy, the Family Separation policy, the Remain in Mexico policy, Executive Order 13767, and the government shutdown. In fact, all of these policies show that Donald Trump's immigration policy has declared undocumented immigrants not only a threat but also a scapegoat.

Therefore, the history of the US, which has been intertwined with border and immigration policies since its founding, has gained new momentum in the Trump era. On the one hand, racist and exclusionary discourses had reached their peak, and on the other hand, immigrants had been criminalized through identities such as criminals, rapists, and terrorists. Thus, Trump, who won the election and subsequently managed to consolidate a certain segment of society, successfully created a geopolitical space in which to implement his policies, using immigration, immigrants, and border issues as tools. Moreover, he highlighted the immigration and border issues and treated them as the most important problem facing the US, without giving importance to other important issues such as unemployment, the economy, the environment, and health.

While the wall (discourse) was used as a tool of power to prevent the flow of new immigrants, it also caused the building of a psychological wall by separating families from each other. In this sense, *The Snake Poem* is not meaningless, on the contrary, it is a significant metaphor that gives strong messages about the presidency of Donald Trump. Migration is like a snake shedding its skin. Old lives are sacrificed in order to build new ones. Unfortunately, the new lives are under too much pressure to be independent of external influences such as the power, geography and the politics that run through them. So, why are these sacrifices trapped in the limitlessness of the border, instead of talking about an unlimited space drawn in the name of family and love? Because the elements protected as nation or citizenship are too blind to the 'other' to be mere territories drawn on maps.

By reading this poem during his presidential campaign, he signalled that he would marginalize society rather than unite it. In this respect, Trump's immigration policy did not come as a surprise. On the contrary, his campaign promises, his inauguration speech, and both his official speeches and his unofficial statements on Twitter during his presidency have bound the dreams of immigrants as interconnected links in a chain.

In this respect, Trump's discourse and policies would be seen as a manifestation of Samuel Huntington. In his book *Who Are We?*, he states that the wave of migration from Mexico is a cause for concern. In this regard, the manifesto of *Who Are We?* highlights the continuous widening of the gap in American identity created by the redefinition movement and the resulting split in identity, with immigration policies shifting in favour of multiculturalism and dual citizenship gaining strength, while white assimilation loses strength and loyalty to the English language weakens. Accordingly, it is believed that migratory movements will bring the US to the point of division. At this point, it is understood that the greatest threat to the American identity is not communism or terrorism, but immigration. According to the manifesto in which Huntington embodied all the challenges and their consequences in the Hispanic threat/identity, America is turning into *Amexico*, *MexAmerica* or *Mexifornia*.²³⁰ Huntington claimed that a population that spoke Spanish, not English, and was Catholic, not Protestant, had invaded the US, and that the continuing migration of mostly Mexicans and South Americans to the US was transforming the US into a bilingual, bicultural, and ultimately dual-identity society.²³¹ Against the fear that the Hispanic population would create a separate America within America (Hispanic America), there were calls for the awakening and mobilization of nationalism and racism. All this shows that Trump's policies and discourses on the border and immigrants are the manifestation of Huntington's call for nationalism and racism.

Moreover, invocations of nationalism and racism can be both explicit and implicit. Thus, several terms have been used to describe the history of immigrant assimilation or cultural

²³⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?: The Challenges to the America's National Identity*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004),246.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 222-230.

assimilation in the US, reflecting heterogeneity in a kind of homogeneity. In this context, a melting pot is a term for a heterogeneous society that becomes more homogeneous in a common culture by ‘melting together’ different elements into a harmonious whole. The expression ‘tomato soup’ is also used, emphasising that the taste can be enriched by mixing different elements into a tomato soup, but that the ingredients should not be significantly altered. In fact, in various forms, these terms related to American nationalism and were used to represent a coherent American identity.²³² However, it seems that Hispanic identity is undesirable from the outset, because it is considered so dangerous that it can freeze the melting pot when it enters it or spoil the flavour when it is added to tomato soup.

In this context, Trump believed in the superiority of American citizens and in this respect, he dehumanized immigrants. Such marginalization led to the construction of a psychological border wall beyond the concrete border wall. In other words, the discourse of marginalization became the border-constructing tool of Trump’s policy and the justification for the border wall. Although the wall was presented as a sure-fire solution to the immigration problem, it was nothing of the sort.

As a result, the state is the main actor that determines the border discourse and defines the border as a geopolitical space. Accordingly, foreign policy is a set of policies constructed by the power in which not only geographical but also cultural borders are drawn. In this respect, the state’s border policies and discourses offer a perspective on how society should view the border. Within this framework, the reason why Trump’s statements about immigrants and the border are accepted by society lies in the relationship between power and knowledge. In the production and re-production of knowledge, Trump actively used his personal account of Twitter in order to prioritize his own policies by overshadowing the traditional workings of diplomacy and bureaucracy. Social media can be more dangerous than a firearm in these days. Accordingly, discourse, which

²³² Ibid.129.

reflects language but also social practices, functions not only as a tool to justify his policies, but also as a modern firearm that he points at 'others.'

CONCLUSION

Walls can separate states and peoples, but not dreams and hopes. Remember this! A wall does not always represent the end, it is the beginning of a new story in one way or another.

The place of borders in the international system is not solely determined by geographical variables but also by political, cultural, social, and economic variables. Indeed, the place and meaning of borders have been constructed by the policies of political leaders, which are shaped by nationalist and racial narratives as part of migration policies. For this reason, this thesis treats borders as creators of social processes rather than products. Instead of reiterating the conventional arguments pertaining to globalization that increase all kinds of connections in terms of economic, social, cultural, political, and informational and remove all kinds of borders; this thesis aims to take the concept of border one step further, expanding its traditional meaning and offering alternative perspectives in order to fill a gap that exists in border studies. In this framework, the meanings of the borders have been explored in terms of different lines of vision, which comprise the processes where discourses and socio-cultural activities take place. As a result of this exploration, it is seen that borders have been conceptualized as variables depending on their historical processes, not as fixed, stable lines. Therefore, it is demonstrated that critical geopolitics provides a possibility for a comprehensive analysis of borders and their constructed meanings together with the concepts of identity and discourse.

As with the meanings attributed to the borders, the construction of border walls has also been a consequence of these processes. While the materials used in the construction of these walls and the reasons for their erection have evolved over time, the concept of the 'wall' itself remains a central concern in the discipline of IR. It can be observed that the wall is not simply a matter of four-letter words, rather, it represents a complex web of power relations, cultural production and marginalization, and identity. In this context, one of the most important producers of this world is the knowledge, which has the capacity to build both physical and discursive walls. In this sense, the US-Mexico border wall,

which is the main subject of this thesis, is not only a wall that separates the people but an ideological tool to legitimize Donald Trump's policies.

Instead of using sand, concrete, bricks, or steel materials, Trump built this wall metaphorically through words, sentences, and discourses by actively using social media. In other words, he began to metaphorically build the wall he wanted to build on the border through tweets that he posted on Twitter. Thus, the border wall that Trump wants to build, even if it remains only in rhetoric, has been functionalized as an effective apparatus to prevent immigrants from entering the country and has become a part of the fight against immigration. In this regard, it can be said that Trump used social media as a platform to construct meanings within the framework of the border (wall), functionalizing the borders in line with his own policies and, in this context, presenting the construction of the border wall as a success.

When opportunities seem limitless, so does freedom. However, in an environment, where questions outnumber answers, contrary to the popular belief, freedom is not a part of a borderless atmosphere, but rather it means being able to tear down the walls built with clear and strong boundaries. Borders and border walls therefore draw not only physical lines but also psychological lines in the minds of individuals. As a result, their effects at the national and international levels are not temporary. For instance, even though the Berlin Wall was torn down in 1989, its shadow always remains in the international system. Although it is said that borders have disappeared with the effects of globalization and that a global world order prevails, border walls continue to rise. In this sense, it is seen that even though Mexican immigrants have crossed the physical border, cultural and political borders remain to be insurmountable obstacles.

Therefore, this thesis argues that undocumented migration, as a complicated issue with historical roots dating back to the Mexican-American War, is an issue that cannot be solved with a "big, beautiful wall"²³³ as Trump proposed. In other words, this complex problem, which involves many historical events, people, and policies, cannot be solved

²³³ "Trump Boasts He's Building a 'Beautiful' Border Wall in Colorado," *You Tube*, (Date of Access: 01.04.2024), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W989sqwb4jg>.

with such a superficial solution. It is to note that Trump, as a populist leader, already did not want to solve this problem, on the contrary, he wanted to exaggerate it and draw public attention to it. In this sense, inspired by Ó Tuathail's analysis, Trump's approach can be deconstructed as follows.

Ó Tuathail discussed the case of Bosnia and schematized practical geopolitical reasoning by answering some questions in his article. In this context, the US-Mexico border issue can be discussed within the framework of Ó Tuathail's questions as follows: "*Where? (Location specification), What? (Situation descriptions), Who? (Protagonist typification), Why? (Attribution/ imputation of causality), So what? (Interest enunciation).*"²³⁴

Looking at the US-Mexico border (wall) is considered through this analysis; it will help to draw attention to how the masses are mobilized through discourse and the role of social media in foreign policy making.

Starting with the 'location specification,' in order to answer to the 'where?' question, the issue needs to be classified as local, regional or global. For the purposes of this thesis, the question is considered under the regional classification. Mexicans do not have an identity of their own, although Mexico is located in North America from a geopolitical point of view. In this sense, they are defined via the Americans (recall the common saying that Latin America is America's backyard). In this secondary identification, America represents the 'good', including security, development, and qualification, while Mexicans represent the 'bad', including danger, threat, crime, underdevelopment, and unqualification. Therefore, the positive image of Americans reinforces the negative image of Mexican immigrants.

Secondly, it is necessary to analyze how the US-Mexico border and the border wall become an issue, since this process of becoming an issue has been led by Trump. In this sense, the US-Mexico border and the border wall are ongoing issues because Mexicans

²³⁴ Tuathail, "Theorizing Practical Geopolitical Reasoning: The Case of the United States' Response to the War in Bosnia," 601-628.

are labelled by Trump as a threat to national security, an obstacle to development, and an escalator of crime. So, while it is an issue that can even be turned into an advantage with the right policies, it has been turned into a national security issue in line with Trump's rhetoric and the American people are trying to be convinced of that. So, the perception is reality, what people believe is more real than what actually is. Trump also used this perception as a weapon to achieve his own goals.

Thirdly, the typification of actors is carried out by the Trump administration through the use of 'aggressor and victim strategies.' These strategies define the good side and the bad side, so that the Mexican immigrants have been portrayed as the people who threaten the national security of the US and damage the US economy and the social order. On the other hand, the American citizens have been portrayed as the victims of this flow of immigration. Therefore, most of the problems in the US, even those unrelated to immigration, have somehow become the responsibility of Mexican immigrants.

Fourth, the issue of the Mexico-US border and the border wall issue is the product of marginalization which is constructed around the dichotomy of 'us versus them'. This dichotomy has deep historical roots. Accordingly, the 'other' has always existed, but has changed shape. Sometimes, it is reflected to the public that the Muslims are the sources of violence and terror, sometimes the people of colour and Mexicans are the sources of crime and bring threat and lawlessness. In this context, the other is always perceived as bad, and therefore maintaining a distance from them is regarded as a sacred mission. In this regard, Trump's rhetoric and negative discourse serve to create new enemies and dangers, thereby building a wall between himself and his people and others. This serves to portray him as a hero who fights with others and saves the country from them. In the shadow of the other that has emerged throughout history, the identity of 'us' has been emphasized by triggering the selected tragedies of the masses and finding a common victimhood. In this way, Trump dehumanizes the Mexican immigrant –the other- in order to form the basis of his policies. In light of all this, the cause of the issue of the US-Mexico border and the border wall, as well as the issue of Mexican migration, cannot be only reduced to a conflict between capital and labour alone. Therefore, the answer to the

question of ‘why’ in the context of this thesis goes beyond this conflict, since geopolitical representations are the result of discursive construction.

Finally, the issue of the US-Mexican border does not represent an unusual and extraordinary threat to national security. What needs attention is the way in which the border and the border wall are become a geopolitical issue through discourses. Geopolitical knowledge has been constructed in order to legitimize the policies of political leaders. Physical separation is transformed into social, cultural, and political separation. Accordingly, the border and the border wall become the geopolitical subjects. Subsequently, migrants become the geopolitical objects because they are seen as a problem, but never as human beings. Is there anyone who describes immigrants as those who sacrifice something for a new beginning? On the contrary, they are seen as a threat. They see the beginning of migrants as their own end. While immigrants are portrayed as something to be feared, their fears, hopes, and desires are usually not talked about. All this shows that language, as more than a set of symbols and signs, can have profound effects and, in this context, produce geopolitical, political, cultural, and social norms.

The border wall, with its social and economic costs, is a symbol of fear and an instrument of alienation. People want to cross the border in order to gain humanitarian and economic benefits, but they experience a psychologically devastating attitude towards them, constructed through the political and military policies. Alongside these policies, the border wall is redefined in the context of the constant construction and deconstruction of space. Therefore, all the languages of statecraft are subject to practical geopolitical reasoning. It is within this framework that Trump’s geopolitical discourse is categorized and particularized.

The schematization of the US-Mexico border issue through the analysis of Ó Tuathail will contribute to the IR literature, because of two points: (1) there have been few works of practical geopolitics in detail compared to formal and popular geopolitics; (2) the US-Mexico border remains to be a subject that is not studied very often in Türkiye. In this sense, this thesis has endeavoured to be unique in terms of both theoretical framework and subject preference.

In conclusion, it seems that the issue of the ‘wall’ will continue to be an enigma in the field of IR. Also, the US-Mexican border is not a new issue and apparently, it seems that it will continue to be an issue that politicians keep on their agenda to justify themselves and their policies. Therefore, the border (wall) and border discourse have been the most influential issues dominating US foreign policy. It seems that they will continue to dominate in the future. As the border issue will continue to provide the field of study for the academy in the future, it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to future studies as an alternative to the traditional border studies in line with identity and discourse.

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HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞINA

Tarih: 25 /06 /2024

Tez Başlığı : Eleştirel Jeopolitik Perspektifinden Sınır Kavramı: Donald Trump Döneminde ABD-Meksika Sınırının Bir Analizi

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		Revizyon Tarihi <i>Rev.Date</i>	25.01.2024

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Date: 25 /06 /2024

Thesis Title: The Concept of Border from Critical Geopolitical Perspective: An Analysis of the US-Mexico Border during Donald Trump Period

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- Does not perform experimentation on people or animals.
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Semanur Oğuz

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	Programme	International Relations

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APPROVED
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Tarih: 25/06/2024

Tez Başlığı: Eleştirel Jeopolitik Perspektifinden Sınır Kavramı: Donald Trump Döneminde ABD-Meksika Sınırının Bir Analizi

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