

**Abstract**

Title of Thesis:

Framing the Newcomers: Asylum Seekers  
and Border Militarization in the US and  
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International Studies 2019

Thesis Advisor:

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September 11, 2001 altered the way the US political elite talk about immigration and national security. In the years since, asylum seekers in particular have become framed in progressively negative ways. Simultaneously, the US has steadily increased militarization measures at its Southern border. A similar case, in which negative framings of asylum seekers is coupled with increased border militarization practices, is also seen in Australia in the years following the August 2001 Tampa Crisis. Based on these similar trajectories in the two countries since 2001, this thesis strives to answer the question: how does the framing of asylum seekers by the political elite in the US and Australia influence the militarization of borders in each country? I use detailed case studies to support the argument that framings of asylum seekers by the political elite contribute to justifying border militarization in the US and Australia. Each case study analyzes the prominent framings of asylum seekers by the political elite and considers the roles of the framings in the justification of increased border militarization observed between 2001 and 2018. By comparing the two case studies, the thesis reveals significant commonalities in the types of framings used by the political elite when talking about incoming asylum seekers. The comparison of the cases also produces new questions for future exploration of the relationship between framing and border militarization.

Framing the Newcomers:  
Asylum Seekers and Border Militarization in the US and Australia

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the College of Literature, Science, & Arts  
at the University of Michigan in partial fulfillment  
for the requirements for the degree  
of Bachelor of Science  
International Studies with Honors  
2019

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### Acknowledgements

I am exceptionally grateful to all of my advisors, classmates, friends, and family who offered their assistance, support, and patience throughout this year. I would like to extend the first thanks to my advisor, Dr. Jaeun Kim, who took me on as a student after she'd only just met me so that I would be able to have this experience and produce this research. As her advisee and as a student in her class this year, I learned so much that contributed to my own academic growth and to the successful completion of this thesis. I also want to thank Dr. Anthony Marcum, who began leading me and my cohort through this process over a year ago, and who has been committed to helping each of us produce successful theses since. I am truly amazed by the passion he has for this program and am grateful for the advice and encouragement he has given this year.

I am also extremely appreciative of my thesis cohort, who were always supportive and helpful as we struggled through this process together. I valued the feedback I received from each of you, and am so impressed by each of your projects.

Thank you to all of my friends, you never stopped offering your amazing support. Thank you for letting me drag you to coffee shops so I could work on this thesis with company and for listening to me rant about border militarization and complain about every research setback. A special thanks to my boyfriend, whose patience and encouragement kept me motivated throughout this process. Finally, I want to thank my family, who has always believed in me and inspired me. Thank you for continuing to be the best support system this year.

## Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i> .....	<i>i</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	<i>iii</i>
<i>List of Figures</i> .....	<i>vi</i>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Argument and Approach</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Key Concepts and Definitions</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Distinguishing Asylum Seekers</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Chapter 3: US Case Study</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Pre-2001 Asylum Policies and Border Practices</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Border Militarization in the US</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>What do the Political Elite Label Asylum Seekers?</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>How do the Political Elite Talk About Asylum Seekers?</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>How does the Framing of Asylum Seekers Affect Border Militarization?</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Australia Case Study</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>The Pre-2001 History of Immigration and Asylum Policies in Australia</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>Border Militarization</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>Post-2001 Prominent Framings of Asylum Seekers</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>49</b>

<b>Comparing the US and Australia Case Studies.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Limitations and Future Research.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<i>Works Cited.....</i>	<i>57</i>

**List of Figures**

Figure 1: Material Distributed by Australian Government..... 47

Figure 2: Similarities and Differences in Framing.....49

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Introduction

The year 2001 marked the major events of 9/11 in the United States and the Tampa Crisis in Australia. In the years since, scholars have recognized the two events as critically altering perceptions of and responses to incoming immigrants in each country (Wright 2014, Holmes and Keith 2007). One implication of these post-2001 changes is the progressively negative framing of asylum seekers by the political elite in both the US and Australia. In the US, groups of immigrants entering at the Southern border have been specifically affected by these negative framings. While many are asylum seekers fleeing persecution, they continue to be described by the political elite as illegal, and as an uncontrollable “flood” bringing drugs and crime. More recently, they have been labeled as a “migrant caravan” by the political elite within the Trump Administration. Australia shares this trajectory of increasingly negative framings of asylum seekers in the period following 2001. In the Australian case, these framings have most prominently affected asylum seekers entering by boat at the country’s maritime border. The framings of asylum seekers by the Australian political elite mirror the US case, with dominant framings linking asylum seekers to illegality, immorality, and threats to national security.

In the same period of 2001-2018, the US and Australian governments each introduced increasingly militarized enforcement practices at their borders (Wright 2014, Windors 2007). Border militarization in the US has been focused primarily at the US-Mexico border and has been characterized by national guard deployments, military-grade weapons and technologies, and increases in the size and sophistication of Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). In Australia, the government has militarized its maritime borders through naval operations, military technology, and interdiction strategies. 9/11 and the Tampa Crisis are recognized as catalysts for the

increases in border militarization and negative framings of asylum seekers in the period between 2001 and 2018. However, whether there is a relationship between the framings of asylum seekers and border militarization which could account for their parallel trajectories in the US and Australia in the last 17 years remains unclear.

Based on the common features between the two countries, this thesis asks: how does framing of asylum seekers by the political elite influence the militarization of borders in the US and Australia? Through case studies evaluating dominant framings of asylum seekers by the political elite, I argue that the framings contribute to justifying border militarization in the US and Australia. I consider 1) the increase in border militarization in the US and Australia in the period of 2001 - 2018, 2) the prominent framings of asylum seekers by the political elite in each country and 3) the ways that those framings contribute to justifying border militarization.

In this introductory chapter, I thoroughly detail my argument and outline my methodology. In Chapter 2, I review existing literature on the concepts of framing and border militarization, including their application in the specific contexts of the US and Australia. I also include the definition of an asylum seeker and discuss how asylum seekers are legally differentiated from other types of immigrants in each country. Chapter 3 is the case study of the United States. It overviews the increased militarization of the US -Mexico border in the last 17 years and identifies prominent framings of asylum seekers by the political elite. In discussing the framings, I support that the framing of asylum seekers by the US political elite contributes to justifying the militarization of the Southern border. Chapter 4 analyzes the Australian case in a similar manner. The concluding chapter of the thesis considers key similarities and differences between the two cases and their implications. I will highlight the central findings of the research as well as the questions raised by this thesis for future exploration.



### Argument and Approach

I argue that the framing of asylum seekers by the political elite contributes to the justification of border militarization in the US and Australia. I support the argument through case studies in which I consider border militarization and analyze framings of asylum seekers in each country. In each case study, I describe the increase in border militarization in the period between 2001 and 2018. Militarization is shown to increase over time based on the increase in border control size and funding, the use of military equipment and strategies by border control agencies, the militaristic nature of asylum detention centers, and the presence of military personnel at the border. The framings of asylum seekers by the political elite in both countries include portrayals of asylum seekers as national security threats, immoral and illegal. The two cases also share framings in which asylum seekers are associated with human smugglers and are described as “flooding” through the border. The analyses in each case study also address framings specific to each country, including connecting asylum seekers to drugs and the “migrant caravan” in the US and labeling asylum seekers as “boat people” and “queue jumpers” in Australia.

The United States and Australia serve as effective case studies due to their key commonalities in framings, militarization measures, and timelines. Each is an industrialized Western democracy which has a long and politicized history with immigration (Grewcock 2009, Andreas 2009, Dixon 1945, Winders 2007). They are also each independent of supranational institutions, such as the EU, which may limit full state autonomy in the immigration decisions of other countries. Both the US and Australia have legal structures in place for refugee resettlement, carried out by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as asylum routes available for people who claim to meet the definition of a refugee and who enter the country directly to apply for asylum rather than registering with UNHCR and being resettled (Bohmer and Shuman 2007, Hartley and Pederson 2015). Compared to other means by which asylum

seekers enter the countries, the US and Australia particularly problematize undocumented physical entry. The political elite do not apply the same negative framings to asylum seekers who enter via air transportation or at an established port of entry. As a result, asylum seekers entering without authorization at the US Southern border and entering Australian waters by boat without authorization are talked about and treated in unique ways.

### Methodology

In this thesis, I use case studies of the US and Australia to critically analyze the framing of asylum seekers by the political elite. I focus on how the prominent framings of asylum seekers contribute to justifying increased militarization of specific borders in each country.

To identify prominent framings of asylum seekers by the political elite, I analyze sources in which the political elite comment on asylum seekers and/or the border, both directly and indirectly. The selected sources include official publications released and circulated by the government, press releases, transcripts of interviews and speeches, and direct quotes printed by major news outlets. I focus specifically on the framings of asylum seekers presented by members of the political elite whose rhetoric is most widely distributed and who most frequently discuss asylum and border issues. In the US, these people include the President, Secretary of Homeland Security, Secretary of Defense, and various officials within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and white house staff. In the Australia case study, I analyze framings by the Prime Minister, Minister of Immigration, and Minister of Home Affairs.

I use existing academic literature and information released by government agencies and credible news sources as evidence of increasing border militarization in the US and Australia between 2001 and 2018. Because militarization efforts are rarely labeled “militarization efforts” by state actors, I consider efforts relating to border enforcement and determine whether they

constitute militarization based on a set of criteria. These criteria include: 1) the political elite stressing the use of force and threat of violence as the most appropriate response to asylum seekers entering at the border, 2) the use of military-grade equipment, technology, training and strategies at the borders, 3) the presence of military personnel at the border.<sup>1</sup>

My focus is on framing and militarization occurring between 2001 and 2018. 2001 encompasses two major events which produced changes in framings of asylum seekers and border militarization in the two countries. In Australia, late August 2001 marks the occurrence of the “Tampa Affair,” in which the Norwegian ship *MV Tampa*, carrying 433 asylum seekers rescued from a capsized Indonesian boat, was denied permission to enter Australian territory. The event is recognized as being crucial to the contemporary relationship between Australia and asylum seekers arriving by boat (Wright 2014). On September 11, 2001, only weeks after the Tampa Affair, the deadly terror attacks on the World Trade Center drastically changed US international engagement and perceptions of immigration. While the hijackers involved in the attack entered the country through legal visa routes, all types of immigration into the United States have since been affected by the security fears brought on by the attack. Both the Tampa Affair and September 11 are cited in the literature as crucial moments for asylum policy and practice in the two countries. Because of the significance of 9/11 and the Tampa Crisis in each country, 2001 serves as an appropriate point from which to begin analyzing the framing of asylum seekers as a contributing factor to justifying border militarization in the US and Australia.

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<sup>1</sup> My criteria items are adapted from Kraska’s (2007) definition of militarization and Jones and Johnson’s (2016) definition of border militarization. These definitions are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

## Conclusion

In this introduction to the thesis, I state my research question, discuss my argument, and describe the methodology I use. In the following chapter, I further discuss the key concepts of framing and border militarization and expand on the definition and actual process of asylum-seeking. The concepts of framing and border militarization are critical to understanding the case studies carried out in this thesis. The case studies and the thesis as a whole illustrate that the framing of asylum seekers by the political elite in the US and Australia contribute to justifying border militarization in each country..

## Chapter 2: Key Concepts and Definitions

### Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the concepts of framing and border militarization, which are central to understanding the case studies of the US and Australia. I begin reviewing existing research on framing and its effects before turning to academic literature on framing in the specific contexts of the US and Australia. I then consider how previous research has defined and discussed border militarization. Following the literature review, I provide the definition of an asylum seeker and clarify the distinctions between asylum seekers, resettled refugees, and other types of immigrants. The chapter provides a conceptual basis for understanding the case studies I will undertake in the following two chapters.

### Literature Review

#### *Framing*

Framing is broadly understood in the social sciences as the means by which information is presented. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) define a “frame” as a prominent organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to events and weaves a connection among them. Framing is central to understanding public attitudes towards policies and issues, and has been a key mechanism for shaping public opinion. Nelson and Kinder (1996) describe framing as a way of teaching citizens how to think about and understand complex social policy problems. In particular, they argue that public opinion is group-centric in that it is strongly influenced by attitudes toward particular social groups (Nelson and Kinder 1996). Framing is crucial to understanding the success and failure of policy initiatives.

#### *Framing by the Political Elite*

Prior research has identified the political elite as those actors holding the power to influence the public through framing (Flores 2018, Druckman 2001, Druckman et al. 2013). Academics generally consider the “political elite” to include politicians, political candidates, party leaders, and other prominent government and political figures (Druckman and Nelson 2003, Van Aelst and Walgrave 2016). Because the literature recognizes framing put forth by this group as particularly influential, this thesis and the analysis in the following chapters will focus on the framing of asylum seekers presented by members of the political elite in the US and Australia. This section will serve to provide an understanding of how framing by the political elite influences the development of policies and state actions.

Framing by the political elite has the ability to reach the masses through media and communication outlets. It thus garners significant influential quality (Flores 2018). Studies have shown that the effects of elite framing change with context, producing different levels of influence when the atmosphere in which the framing is presented is highly polarized, such as in partisan debates (Druckman et al. 2013). These studies suggest that framing of asylum seekers by the political elite would be influential when their opinions are widely shared and the topic is politically salient. Between 2001 and 2018, means of communication and information sharing through technology, news outlets, and social media made statements by the political elite widely available to the public. Additionally, immigration and border control grew as a highly politicized topic subject to partisan arguments in the American and Australian political scenes (Flores 2018, Lueck et al. 2015).

Framing by political elites is a central component of the theory of symbolic politics, in which symbols used in political expressions dictate public responses. According to the theory, responses to symbolic expressions are based on predispositions people typically develop early in

life (Sears 1993). For example, most of the US public would be expected to respond negatively to something compared to Nazism in framing by the political elite because of a predisposition formed early in life to consider Nazis as evil. Likewise, we can anticipate a positive public reaction to something connected to Martin Luther King Jr. though framing based on similar predispositions to admire him. In the examples, Nazism and MLK Jr would be the symbols to which the public would have expected negative or positive reactions based on their predispositions. The theory explains these reaction processes while also analyzing how political elites utilize symbols to frame issues positively or negatively and elicit specific public responses. This theory of symbolic politics will be central to my analysis of framings of asylum-seekers as connected to drugs, crime, terrorism and as arriving in “floods” when they cross borders.

#### *Framing of Immigrants and Asylum Seekers*

I now turn to an analysis of the framing of immigrants and asylum seekers. While this thesis will focus on the framing of asylum seekers, the case studies will reveal that important aspects of asylum seeker framing rely on their association with or distinction from other immigrant groups. For this reason, I will include brief information on the framing of immigration more generally in each country. I will also discuss the framing of specific types of immigrants with which asylum seekers are frequently associated. Existing literature has begun to explore the effects of framing on immigration issues, and has found public opinion on immigration to be significantly impacted by framing (Flores 2018). The forms of framing used in relation to immigrants and asylum seekers in the United States and Australia will be central to the case studies and conclusions of this thesis.

In the US context, asylum seekers are simultaneously seen as security threats and economic burdens. Political elites frame asylum seekers as security threats, referencing them as

potential terrorists, criminals, and drug dealers, producing challenges for asylum seekers entering the country (Holmes and Keith 2010). Their apparent threat stems from the overall increase in security concerns within immigration following the events of September 11. The political elite also frame asylum seekers as part of the larger category of immigrants, or as one and the same with refugees, making the framing of asylum seekers in the US more closely tied to framing of other types of immigrants. As a result, asylum seekers are indirectly framed as undesirable through their perceived association with economically burdensome refugees and job-stealing undocumented migrants in the US (Dykstra-DeVette 2018, Jones-Correa 2013).

Framing of asylum seekers entering Australia's sea border by boat mirror the security concerns present in the US. These types of asylum seekers are likewise described using the language of "terrorist," reminiscent of Australia's own history of cooperation with the US foreign policy initiatives of the "War on Terror" (McKay et al. 2011). These asylum seekers are framed by Australian officials as illegal and immoral as a result of their decision to utilize "people smuggling" and "jump the queue" by entering by boat to request asylum (McKay et al. 2017, Lueck et al. 2015). They are framed as illegitimate through their distinction from "legitimate" refugees waiting in camps to be resettled into Australia and through their being labeled by government authorities as being "boat people" carrying out "irregular migration" (Rowe and O'Brien 2016).

The framings of asylum seekers entering at physical borders in the US and Australia share a concern for security and protection of the country against people perceived to be terrorists and criminals. Despite the commonalities between the framings, there are also distinctions between the ways in which asylum seekers are framed in each setting. In the US, asylum seekers are associated in rhetoric with undocumented economic migrants and defined as



illegal because of that connection. Knowledge of the difference between asylum seekers and refugees, almost nonexistent in US discourse, is at the forefront of the Australian framing of asylum seekers as illegal and illegitimate “queue jumpers.” While the smuggling of asylum seekers across physical borders occurs in both countries, it is much more prevalent in the Australian discourse surrounding asylum seekers and criminalizing them through association with people smuggling. Societal attitudes towards asylum seekers and the government actions affecting them will reflect the negative portrayals of asylum seekers presented by the political elite in each country. With this guiding idea, my thesis will explore the effect of framing of asylum seekers on the militarization of borders in the US and Australia.

### *Border Militarization*

Militarization is defined as the implementation of a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions stressing the use of force and threat of violence as the most appropriate means of problem-solving, particularly emphasizing military power, hardware, organization, operations, and technology (Kraska 2007). A prominent feature of militarization is the adoption and application of elements of a military model to an organization or situation in areas outside the traditional roles of the military (Jones and Johnson 2016, Kraska 2007). The concept was previously applied to understandings of the changing nature of domestic policing, particularly during War on Drugs and War on Terror time periods in the US (Kraska 2007, Hall and Coyne 2013). Literature on militarization and framing alike link militarization to the framing and representation of the object of militarization (Kraska 2007, Jones and Johnson 2016, Hall and Coyne 2013, McKay et al. 2017). The “national security syndrome” refers to the framing of objects as national security threats to rationalize and increase levels of militarization (Klare

1978). Kraska (2001) also points to the use of metaphoric language to frame issues in ways which promote thoughts and behaviors associated with those of military paradigms.

In the case of border militarization, the objects against which the state is militarizing are immigrants and asylum seekers. The specific concept of militarization of a border, which is fundamental to the argument presented in this thesis, is also specifically defined in existing literature. The militarization of the border is defined as the characteristics of militarization applied to border protection strategies and taking shape in the space of a physical border. While most visibly recognized by the deployment of the military to border spaces, it may include the use of military strategies and technologies and the hiring of combat veterans for the purposes of border security (Jones and Johnson 2016). Border militarization also hinges upon the framing of a particular group against whom the nation must militarize (Jones and Johnson 2016, McKay et al. 2017). The existing frames of immigrants, and specifically of asylum seekers, addressed in the previous section serve as examples of frames classifying incoming immigrants as threats which legitimize the use of militarization at the borders in the United States and Australia.

#### *War Terminology and Militarization*

I will argue that the US framing of asylum seekers as terrorists, criminals, and drug dealers contributes to justifying border militarization through associations of each term to the “war on terror,” “war on crime” and “war on drugs.” Framings of asylum seekers in which these war-centric metaphors are used and normalized by the political elite produce changes in the types of state action against asylum seekers which the public will consider justifiable. The resulting justification for the mistreatment of asylum seekers allows for the militarized responses at the border. This thesis will employ the concepts of framing and border militarization to consider the specific situations of incoming asylum seekers in the US and Australia.

## Distinguishing Asylum Seekers

### *Refugees and Asylum Seekers*

In the United States, resettled refugees and asylum seekers are frequently mislabeled, and the distinction between the two legal pathways for entering the country is unclear to many. Alternatively, the Australian case study reveals that the political elite and general public are acutely aware that a distinction between refugee resettlement and asylum seeker pathways exists. However, many Australians' understanding of the nature of that distinction is skewed, and they view asylum seekers as less worthy of entry into the country than their resettled refugee counterparts. Clear understandings of the actual definition of asylum seekers and the true distinction between asylum seekers and refugees is essential within this thesis. The legal definition of a refugee in the US and Australia is that of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Based on this definition, a refugee is someone who "owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UN General Assembly 1951).<sup>2</sup>

People entering a country through formal refugee resettlement and those seeking asylum both must meet this definition of a refugee. The process of seeking asylum requires that a person request asylee status once within a country or at its border. This differs significantly from refugees seeking resettlement, who are registered by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

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<sup>2</sup> Here I will quickly note that, although not investigated in this work, there also exist other classifications of displaced people, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who meet similar criteria as that of a refugee but who are displaced from their homes while remaining within their country of origin

(UNHCR) and often (but not always) live in a refugee camp prior to UNHCR placing them in a country for resettlement (Bohmer and Shuman 2007).

The processes which a person legally classified as a refugee will experience are much different than that which an asylum seeker will experience. One way to consider the difference is to think of the refugee process as a three-state process and that of an asylum seeker as two-state. A refugee will flee his or her country into a second, typically neighboring country. They will register with UNHCR and live in a camp or, less commonly, in a town in the second country while they await being selected for resettlement. The wait is years, even generations, long. If a refugee is selected for resettlement, they do not get to choose to which country they will go. Both the US and Australia have rigorous procedures for vetting refugees resettled by UNHCR at every stage of the resettlement process. In each country, there are also specific programs for resettled refugees once they move to the country of resettlement (US Dept. of State n.d, Australian Human Rights Commission 2015).

Alternatively, asylum seekers flee their countries of origin and request to remain in a second country. During the entire process, they are dealing with the government of the state in which they are seeking asylum rather than with the UN. They may announce that they are seeking asylum upon arrival at a port of entry, or may submit an asylum application from within the country. Their cases will be decided by immigration authorities based on whether or not they meet the definition of a refugee. If a case is successful, the person will remain in the country but will not have access to the same resources as refugees who were resettled there. If it is unsuccessful, they will not have legal status and may be subject to deportation. For the purposes of this thesis, asylum seekers will be the primary focus. Nevertheless, the framings of asylum seekers in each country deals intimately with the socially perceived (rather than legally exact)

distinctions between refugees and asylum seekers. Further, the general public in each country is typically unaware of the differences between asylum seekers and refugees and so confuse the two, an issue which is only perpetuated by inexact use of the terms by the political elite (Flores 2018). It is important that the reader have a clear understanding of what an asylum seeker is and how asylum relates to the category of refugee.

### *Asylum Seekers and Other Types of Immigrants*

The nature of the asylum seeker definition lends itself to confusion and misinterpretation beyond that of its distinction from refugees. A likely reason for such confusion is the wide variety of means by which asylum seekers may enter a country prior to initiating the legal process of claiming asylum. Asylum seekers may enter at any port of entry in the two countries being considered, including air and sea in both and land borders in the US. Many enter with legal temporary visas for business or travel and then petition to stay, thus blurring the line between themselves and other migrants utilizing such visas solely for work or travel. Furthermore, asylum seekers may enter a country without authorization or through the use of false documentation or other such means. For this reason, they are often associated with other groups of unauthorized migrants in the two countries. These overlapping statuses and the confusion between them is defined by Bohmer and Shuman (2007) as the migration-asylum nexus.

Nevertheless, asylum seekers are distinct from both visa-holding and unauthorized migrants. Firstly, the status of asylee is a completely legal one in both countries. Within the content of asylum laws, it is also legal for people to enter the countries in which they seek asylum by any means, including entering without authorization. However, societal stigma and sometimes even law enforcement action works against asylum seekers who take this route, which is at times the only one available to them. Secondly, asylum seekers face unique challenges upon

applying for asylum in the United States or Australia as they are severely limited while their applications are being evaluated, a process which takes months, and sometimes years. Even before that point, the application processes and their legal rights as an asylum seeker are often not made clear to them.

### Conclusions

Framing by government officials guides public attitudes and position on policy issues. Framing is central to existing understandings of militarization of borders. The themes discussed in this chapter serve as a conceptual basis for the case studies which I carry out in the following two chapters. The case studies will demonstrate that the framing of asylum seekers by the political elite has contributed to the justification of border militarization in both the US and Australia.

### Chapter 3: US Case Study

#### Introduction

The period following the September 11 attacks shifted the framework of immigration policies and public sentiment toward immigrants in the United States. While none of the terrorists involved in 9/11 entered the country through refugee or asylum status, refugees and asylum seekers have since become viewed as particularly threatening (Gorman 2019, Holmes and Keith 2010). This was exemplified in the Bush administration's decision to temporarily halt the refugee resettlement program directly following 9/11 (Schoenholtz 2005). There are various potential reasons for the scrutiny of refugees and asylum seekers while business, student and tourism visas have received little attention. One possible explanation is that the US public considers refugees and asylum seekers a financial drain while it expects business, tourism, and international student migrants to produce revenue and serve the interests of corporate America.<sup>3</sup> Another explanation might suggest that the US public considers the granting of refugee or asylee status an act of generosity and good will by the government, the exploitation of which may be emotionally hurtful. Contrastingly, the exploitation of a business visa would be seen as breaking a contract, with fewer emotional implications. The result of these or other potential reasonings is that specific types of asylum seekers in the US are exposed to heightened levels of scrutiny and mistrust (Acer 2004, Holmes and Keith 2010).

The category of asylum seekers can be further broken down into four subgroups based on the means by which they enter the US. The first are people who apply for asylum immediately at

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<sup>3</sup> The idea that refugees and asylum seekers present a drain on the economy has been discredited in various scholarly work and government-supported research which revealed that the presence of refugees and asylum seekers has actually stimulated economies rather than burdened them. See the September 2017 Department of Health and Human Services Study published at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/09/19/us/politics/document-Refugee-Report.html> (last accessed April 14, 2019)

a US port of entry. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) officers interview these asylum seekers at the port of entry to determine whether they will be allowed to enter the country and complete the remainder of the asylum application process. The other three groups apply for asylum after they enter the country by various means. The second category of asylum seekers enter the US using a legal temporary visa prior to applying for asylum. The third and fourth, respectively, are those who enter at a port of entry with false documentation and those who enter without authorization, almost always by crossing the US Southern border. Most of this thesis will be applicable to asylum seekers in the first and fourth categories: those who initially enter at the Southern border. I chose to focus on the Southern border because the research question specifically concerns border militarization, which in the US is heavily centralized at the US-Mexico border. Those entering at the border with documentation, whether real or fraudulent, and later applying for asylum are not given comparable levels of public attention. As a result, this thesis will focus on only those who request asylum at the border or enter across the border without authorization. In the US, the major framings of asylum seekers revolve around the border. Asylum seekers who enter at the border have been and continue to be the most discussed and problematized asylum seekers entering the country.

I will begin the chapter describing an increase in militarization at the US Southern Border between 2001 and 2018. This chapter asks the questions of why such an increase in militarization has been able to occur and how the political elite justify continuous and increasingly severe border militarization practices. I will present changes in the framing of asylum seekers by the political elite following 9/11 as a significant contributing factor to answering those questions. By identifying prominent terms the political elite use to describe asylum seekers and changes in framings of asylum seekers over time, I will demonstrate how the political elite use framings of



asylum seekers to justify border militarization. I organize the section on prominent framings chronologically by presidential administration in order to clearly show changes to framings over time, as well as to articulate which framings were most consistent across the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations. The sections will consider the implications of framings in relation to concerns of national security and connect these framings to historical “wars” in the US. The chapter will provide evidentiary support for concluding that the political elite use framings of asylum seekers to justify border militarization in the United States.

### Pre-2001 Asylum Policies and Border Practices

The United States has a long history of welcoming immigrants, and an equally long history of inequality and mistreatment plaguing its immigration system. Immigration concerns expressed by the US public and political elite have historically included protecting American workers, “American values,” and an “American lifestyle.” The government has attempted to address those concerns through efforts to stop undocumented immigration, promote cultural assimilation, and encourage immigrants to learn English (Holmes and Keith 2010, McBride 2002). In particular instances throughout history, the US has regulated the entrance of immigrants based explicitly on ethnic origin, as in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. In the midst of offering opportunity and genuine relief for many immigrants, the country has excluded others and placed them at the margins of US society.

The US began participating in official refugee resettlement in 1980, although prior to that point it had already accepted refugees into the country and participated in temporary refugee assistance programs (Refugee Council USA n.d.). That earlier activity included accepting Eastern European refugees during World War II and refugees fleeing the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The Refugee Act of 1980 produced the current US refugee resettlement program, in

which the President sets an annual cap on the number of refugees who will be allowed to enter the country through UNHCR's resettlement program. Since 1975, the US has accepted over 3 million refugees through the program (US Department of State 2019). In addition to being the official beginning of the refugee resettlement program, 1980 marked the highest number of refugees accepted in a single year, with 207,116 refugees resettled. Contrastingly, and with only 22,491 refugees resettled, 2018 marks the lowest resettlement numbers to date. Prior to 2018, the lowest amount recorded was in 2002, when the US resettled only 27,131 refugees following 9/11 (US Department of State 2019).

The Refugee Act of 1980 also established the process of seeking asylum in the United States. Similar to refugee resettlement, the US had been accepting asylum seekers through temporary and situational programs earlier, recorded beginning in 1973. Since 1973, over 750,000 people have been granted admission to the US as asylees (Refugee Processing Center 2019 and US Immigration and Naturalization Service 2002). Since 1995, the annual number of asylum approvals has consistently been in the 20,000s and 30,000s, with a peak in 2001, when nearly 40,000 cases were approved. Between 1973 and 2004, those approved cases constituted an average 28 percent of all asylum applications the US government received.<sup>4</sup>

The US government significantly reformed the asylum application process in 1993 during changes to immigration policy at large after the World Trade Center bombing. The security-focused reforms implemented improvements in immigrant background screenings and increased the level of scrutiny with which immigration officers and immigrant court judges were to review applications. Policy reform specifically affecting asylum seekers in the years following the 1993 bombing included the regulation that all asylum seekers must submit their asylum application

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<sup>4</sup> Total asylum applications received, and the corresponding approval rates, cease to be made available in DHS records following 2004.

within a year of entering the country and the stipulation that asylum seekers could no longer apply for employment authorization while their asylum application is pending. The 1993 changes shifted the legal process of applying for asylum and altered the experience of asylum seekers living in the US. However, it was not until after 9/11 that changes to border security became intrinsically linked to stopping asylum seekers from entering the country. That shift began the process of continually increasing militarization which has taken place at the US Southern border since.

### Border Militarization in the US

Chapter 2 provided an explanation of the concept of border militarization, and this section will follow with a description of how border militarization is enacted and experienced in the context of the US-Mexico border. The first prominent characteristic of US border militarization is deployment of military troops to the border. While the 2018 deployments under President Trump were made highly visible by media sources and are currently ripest in the public memory, it was far from the first deployment of military forces to the border. The military was present on the border even as early as the 1800s, and has been a nearly continuous presence since the early 1900s (Matthews 2007). Joint Task Force 6, based in Texas and established in 1989 to serve at the border in the War on Drugs, was repurposed and renamed Joint Task Force North (JTF North) in 2004. The new task force permanently served at the border with a new set of objectives in the War on Terror. JTF North also provided military engineering expertise and added perimeter lighting, fencing, and vehicle barriers along the border (Matthews 2007). In 2006, President Bush ordered the deployment of 6,000 national guard troops to the Southern border in Operation JUMP START (Matthews 2007). Four years later, the Obama administration initiated Operation Phalanx, which authorized 1,200 troops to be deployed to the border (US

Army 2011). In 2018 the Trump administration announced Operation Faithful Patriot and Operation Guardian Support. By October 2018, the two Operations had placed over 7,000 troops on the Southern Border (US Northern Command 2018).

The 2018 deployment represented the largest deployment to the Southern border to take place in the seventeen years following September 11. It also signaled a shift in practice to further normalize the presence of military troops at the border. In October 2018, the Department of Defense (DOD) publicly eliminated the use of the name “Operation Faithful Patriot” and instead elected to address the National Guard involvement at the border as a continuous DOD mission at the border (Rempfer 2018). Removing the name signals that the deployment of troops to the border will no longer be presented to the public as singular events during extreme circumstances, but a continuous military mission.

In addition to the use of National Guard troops at the border, militarization has taken shape in the technologies and strategies used, the training and activities of non-military border patrol agents. In addition to increased military presence, Andreas (2009) points out that resources developed for military use are becoming more frequently used at the border. A primary example of such resources is military grade technology and equipment, including magnetic footfall detectors and infrared body sensors. The increase in military-grade resources has also meant an increase in the cost of monitoring the border (Andreas 2009). The training of border patrol officers to operate the military-grade equipment and to employ military-style force when necessary and militaristic strategizing techniques are additional indicators of increased militarization of the Southern border.

The militarization of the Southern border did not occur automatically and should not be considered a natural progression over time. Rather, the militarization took place through a series

of government actions, including the deployment of troops and the allotment of funding for CBP agent training and military grade equipment. Some changes in militarization were made quietly, without attention from news media and the general public. However, most were publicized and known, with varying degrees of familiarity, by the US public. The fact that the border militarization was publicly acknowledged raises the question of how the political actors involved justified militarization actions to US citizens. In the remainder of this chapter, I will argue that the political elite have used framings of asylum seekers as one way of justifying the militarization of the US Southern border.

#### What do the Political Elite Label Asylum Seekers?

The first major point to address in this discussion of how asylum seekers are framed is their position related to refugees. Ask any US immigration attorney and they will tell you that the two separate statuses, while containing shared aspects, are legally distinct from one another. Ask the average US citizen, however, and the most likely response will be that a difference does not exist or that they do not know what it is. In everyday discussion, news reports, and in the statements of public officials, the terms ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘refugee’ are used incorrectly and interchangeably (Bohmer and Shuman 2007). In some instances, either of the two terms is used to encompass both groups. The two groups also frequently lumped together under the single phrase ‘refugees and asylum seekers.’ The fact that the distinction between refugees and asylum seekers is unclear or nonexistent in the minds of the public makes it essential for us to consider the framing of asylum seekers and refugees together. This thesis must include the rhetoric surrounding refugees which, even when unintentional and unknown by members of the public, changes public opinion of people who are legally classified as asylum seekers.

In addition to being frequently connected to refugees, asylum seekers entering at the Southern border are also frequently talked about as the same as unauthorized migrants. This framing holds important implications. The terms “unauthorized,” “undocumented,” and “illegal” cease to hold the emotional implication of humanitarian need with which the words “refugee” and “asylum seeker” remain charged. Rather, the terms produce feelings of a threat to public safety. The term “migrant” following any of those three terms additionally raises economic concerns to the public, propagated by the notions that unauthorized migrants in the US are taking jobs, draining financial resources, and avoiding taxation. As a result of this classification, some instances of framing discussed in this chapter may pertain to the use of the terms migrant and unauthorized, but only when the word is used to describe those who should actually be classified as asylum seekers.

#### How do the Political Elite Talk About Asylum Seekers?

On September 5, 2001, President George W. Bush concluded a state visit from Mexican President Vicente Fox and issued a press release outlining the five points on migration on which the meeting focused: a humane approach to migration issues, protection of American workers, fairness, the countries’ joint commitment to migration issues, and a temporary worker program. The statement made no mention of the phrase “border security.” While the Bush administration and its predecessors addressed the need to regulate the borders to limit the entrance of illegal drugs into the country, migration was not frequently coupled with security rhetoric, but rather a focus on employment regulation. White house press releases in the weeks following the state visit from President Fox indicate that September 11 shifted that focus. On September 15, 2001, when President Fox spoke on the phone to President Bush, he expressed solidarity with the United States and expressed a commitment to border security in the US effort to fight against

terrorism. On October 4, 2001, the Mexican President was back in Washington DC discussing border security with President Bush.

October 2001 also marked the official establishment of the Department of Homeland Security. The agency's mission was stated as follows: "The mission of the Office will be to develop and coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive national strategy to secure the United States from terrorist threats or attacks. The Office will coordinate the executive branch's efforts to detect, prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks within the United States" (The White House Office of Homeland Security & the Homeland Security Council 2001). One of the specific actions stated for the purpose of achieving that mission was to "coordinate efforts to improve the security of United States borders... in order to prevent acts of terrorism within the United States" (The White House Office of Homeland Security & the Homeland Security Council 2001). On October 29, 2001, in press remarks following a meeting with senior cabinet members and the new office of homeland security, the President stated that, in an effort to combat terrorism, "we're going to be very diligent with our visas and observant with the behavior of people who come to this country" (The White House Office of the Press Secretary 2001).

Discussions of the border and immigration in the months following 9/11 shifted in focus to become primarily centered around security concerns. Each of the two subjects was placed within the prerogative of fighting terrorism and protecting the country from criminals seeking to enter through the immigration system. Bush's presidency remained largely focused on the "War on Terror" and safeguarding against any repetitions of the 9/11 attacks. Nevertheless, even in the year following 9/11, Bush attempted to make clear in his public commentary the distinction between the terrorists responsible for the attack and the vast majority of immigrants entering the

country. In an October 2001 press release on immigration reform, he states: “September the 11th taught us an interesting lesson, that while -- by far, the vast majority of people who have come to America are really good, decent people, people that we're proud to have here. There are some who are evil. And our job now is to find the evil ones and to bring them to justice, to disrupt anybody who might have designs on hurting -- further hurting Americans” (The White House Office of the Press Secretary 2001). Even within this presumably well-intentioned statement, however, Bush implies that the US must fear a portion of immigrants who are “evil.” The statement also encapsulates the government’s changing mandate relating to immigration following 9/11. What had historically been the task of protecting the American worker through immigration policy became the task of “finding the evil ones and bringing them to justice.”

Bush’s attempted distinction between dangerous and positive immigrants, however, became blurred as the administration continued to promote anti-terrorism efforts and a commitment to national security in the wake of 9/11. Those priorities guided the way his administration addressed immigration matters and the US-Mexico border during his presidency. The slow but significant shift in how immigration, including that of asylum seekers, was viewed is evidenced in the transition of immigration matters from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to the newly-created Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003. The transition fortified and institutionalized the connection between immigration and national security in the United States. The administration was heavily focused on migration from countries in the Middle East, including when discussing people entering at the Southern border. Gordon Johndroe, deputy assistant to President Bush, addressed the entrance of Iraqis specifically at the Southern border in an August 2007 press conference. Interestingly, he made clear during the press conference that a majority of Iraqis crossing the border were applying for



asylum and that a smaller group were entering illegally (The White House Office of the Press Secretary 2007). In addition to illustrating the focus the administration had on migration from the Middle East, this is one of few instances during the Bush presidency in which a member of the administration distinguished seeking asylum as a specific and legal means of entry into the United States, however briefly.

The scarcity of direct references to “asylum seekers” specifically is made apparent by the content of the Bush White House digital archives. While a search for “immigration” on the George Bush White House archives website yields 78,000 results, “border” yields 6,990 results, and “refugee” yields 1,519, a search for “asylum” produces only 230 results and “asylum seeker” only 38. The shortage of discussion surrounding asylum seekers is disproportionately small relative to the fact that approximately 232,204 asylum applications were approved during the eight years of the Bush presidency.<sup>5</sup> A look at the Obama white house archives reveals a continuation of this trend. A total of 41,449 results are produced by a search for “immigration,” 3,458 for “border,” and 1,156 for “refugee.” Meanwhile, “asylum” yields only 157 results and “asylum seeker” only 27.<sup>6</sup>

The Obama administration continued to connect immigration matters to national security and, notably, framed and responded to a “large influx” of migrants at the Southern border. The fear of foreign terror organizations entering at the Southern border receded, but the idea that other types of criminals were crossing remained prevalent. In support of a 2014 border security proposal, the White House published a press release stating that the proposal “creates new

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<sup>5</sup> While there are 232,204 recorded approved asylum applications, this is only a small portion of the total number of asylum applications filed with the government in that time frame. DHS records used to calculate the number of approvals do not report the total numbers of applications received.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that searches of the Bush White House yield significant numbers of duplicate results, which do not exist in comparable quantities on the Obama website. This is potentially a result of technological advancements between the time frames of the two administrations.

criminal penalties dedicated to combating transnational criminal organizations that traffic in drugs, weapons, and money, and that smuggle people across the borders” (Continuing to Strengthen Border Security 2014). The final part of that statement reveals an emphasized attention given to the role of smugglers in the border-crossing process. In statements emphasizing deterrence, Press Secretary Josh Earnest warned that “parents who are considering putting their children in the hands of a criminal with only the promise that that child will be welcome with open arms in America should not do so” (The White House Office of the Press Secretary 2014). Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson likewise commented in October 2014 that the Department had “dedicated resources to the prosecution of the criminal smuggling organizations – the Coyotes -- that were inducing people to take the long, dangerous journey from Central America” (US Department of Homeland Security Press Office 2014).

The attention to smugglers grew with the 2014 focus on a “massive influx” of Central Americans, particularly children, crossing the border. In the period of May through September, 2014, the administration focused on convincing the public and congress of the need to allocate resources to the Southern border to address the rise in numbers. The political elite spoke about the 2014 “influx” as an influx of migrants or of illegal immigrants and largely left out of the framing the reasons the asylum seekers had for entering at the border. In a statement on immigration in November 2014, President Obama addresses the influx with the following statement:

Today we have more agents and technology deployed to secure our southern border than at any time in our history, and over the past 6 years, illegal border crossings have been cut by more than half. Although this summer there was a brief spike in unaccompanied children being apprehended at our border, the number of such children is now actually

lower than its been in nearly 2 years. overall, the number of people trying to cross our border illegally is at its lowest level since the 1970s (Obama 2014).

Many of the children to which he is referring arrived for the purpose of seeking asylum. Yet, this fact is obscured and instead the reference to the children is preceded and followed by commentary on illegal border crossing. The structure and content of the statement clearly associates the children and families who entered at the border during the “influx” with illegality.

While the period of the 2014 “influx” brought the border and those crossing it to national attention and forced an increase in discussion of the subject by the political elite, significant framings of asylum seekers crossing the Southern border took place throughout the entirety of Obama’s presidency. The Office of National Drug Control Policy released statements on the Southwest border, describing it as “a major transit zone for drugs, weapons, and money” and recognized “the Southwest border’s significance in domestic drug trafficking” (The White House Office of Drug Control Policy 2012). In the period between 2001 and 2016 during the Bush and Obama administration, asylum seekers were infrequently referenced directly, but were instead labeled as “illegal. The Bush administration’s focus on counter-terrorism following September 11 led to a focus on border security for the purposes of keeping potential terrorists from entering at the border. The Obama and Trump administration border policies share the goal of preventing members of foreign terrorist organizations from entering through the Southern border, but do not prioritize it to the same degree. Rather, they frame incoming asylum seekers as large “influxes” threatening to overwhelm the border and gain illegal entry.

The current Trump administration framed the entrance of asylum seekers in 2018 in a similar fashion as the Obama administration during the 2014 “influx” of people arriving at the Southern border. The political elite focused on a “migrant caravan,” composed of people,

including many asylum seekers, from Central America. In other ways, the Trump administration has deviated from the norms of the two previous administrations. After two years of his presidency, the content of the Trump White House website highlights some of those deviations. While a search produces 48 results for “immigration,” 125 for “refugee,” 73 for “asylum,” and 14 for “asylum seeker,” there are 2,083 for “border.” The high number of references to the border in his two years when compared to the total number in the eight-year presidential terms of his successors displays the heightened attention to the border and those crossing it as a security threat. In 2017 and 2018, the political elite framed the border by discussing a need for a “border wall” in order to respond to a “crisis at the border.” The current attention by the political elite to combatting a surge of people crossing the border is a repetition of the similar situation of 2014, now being carried out in a larger scale as the perceived threat of those crossing the border has grown over time.

In its first two years, the Trump administration has maintained the norm of infrequently referring to asylum seekers as “asylum seekers.” However, on the occasions that the political elite do refer to asylum seekers directly, they have differed from the past in the way that they do so. In the past, the political elite typically reassured that those who merited asylum would be protected in the midst of necessary border security measures. This was typically coupled with the implication that most didn’t *truly* qualify for asylum. President Trump has been more explicit about his negative views of asylum seekers. In June 2018, he stated that “people that come in violate the law. They endanger their children in the process. And frankly, they endanger all of our children” (The White House June 19 2018). Several months later, he reiterated that “the biggest loophole drawing illegal aliens to our borders is the use of fraudulent or meritless asylum claims to gain entry into our great country” (The White House Nov. 2018). In advocating for

immigration reform policies, he said “the illegal aliens will no longer get a free pass into our country by lodging meritless claims in seeking asylum” (The White House Nov. 2018). Former Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly shared the sentiment that most asylum seekers did not have credible claims to asylum, saying at a press conference that “the vast majority of the people who come up here—in fact I would say the overwhelming number—say exactly the same words because they are schooled by the traffickers to say certain words to give certain scenarios which generally speaking will get you to remain in the United States in the system because of a credible fear claim” (Kelly 2017).

President Trump has repeatedly stated that gang members, particularly from MS-13, are among the primary abusers of the asylum system. In press remarks published by the White house on the subject, President Trump stated that, as a result of MS-13 “your sons and daughters are attacked violently. Kids that never even heard of such a thing are being attacked violently, not with guns, but with knives because it’s much more painful” (The White House June 19 2018). The following statement made by current Secretary of Homeland Security in a June 2018 press briefing articulates the current dominant framing of asylum seekers: “The system is broken. The only people that benefit from the system right now are the smugglers, the traffickers, those who are peddling drugs, and terrorists” (The White House, June 19 2018). Her remarks encapsulate the framings unique to the current administration and those which have persisted over time since September 11, 2001.

#### How does the Framing of Asylum Seekers Affect Border Militarization?

This section will discuss the implications of the dominant framings of asylum seekers by the US political elite. The previous section described how asylum seekers who enter the US at the Southern border are often depicted as criminals in framing by the political elite. This can be

understood most easily through their association with unauthorized migrants. Many references to the asylum seekers as criminal is a result of the commonly held belief that the act of crossing the border is itself illegal and a crime.<sup>7</sup> However, as explained in the description of asylum seekers in chapter 1, crossing the border without documentation in order to seek asylum does not hold the same legal implications as doing so out of other motivations. Asylum seekers entering at the Southern border are further depicted as criminals in framing by public officials through the same rhetorical processes which criminalize undocumented immigrants in the US. They are often described as rapists and drug dealers and alleged to be committing crimes upon their arrival to the country. Statements by members of the political elite have likewise implied that asylum seekers may be potential terrorists (Spencer 2008). Associations of asylum seekers to crime and drugs typically come about when they are depicted as similar to or the same as unauthorized migrants, while fears of terrorism arise from the intense focus on all immigrant groups following September 11.

Each of the labels of criminal, illegal, drug dealer, and terrorist hold connotations of immorality and danger. When the political elite are framing asylum seekers as immoral in ways which contradict the imagined values of the nation, increasingly extreme measures to keep them from entering the country begin to be viewed as acceptable and appropriate. It is in such an environment that the militarization of the Southern border, at which large numbers of asylum seekers enter, may be carried out by the US government with some, but relatively little, visible opposition or reduction in public support of the government's actions. The specific types of framings of asylum seekers as immoral and threatening to public wellbeing justify militarization

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<sup>7</sup> Illegality and criminality overlap considerably but are in fact not the same concepts. However, the distinction between them is not crucial to my argument that they are both associated with immorality.

strategies at the border as acceptable means for maintaining safety and upholding the country's value system.

*Dominant Framings and "Wars" of US History*

Three of the major framings which the political elite use in reference to asylum seekers entering the US are that they are terrorists, criminals, and drug traffickers. The power of associating asylum seekers with crime, drugs, and terrorism through framing should be understood in the specific history of the United States. The three terms, in the US political context, are much more than words with negative connotations. Each has been the target of a "war" fought against it on both domestic and foreign land in relatively recent US history. The "war on crime" of the 1960s, the "war on drugs" of the 70s and 80s, and the "war on terror" of the early 2000s each evoked militaristic sentiment in the general public. Each "war" brought about significant changes in the treatment of particular groups by the US government, always out of a necessity based upon national security and emergency response. The "wars" also brought about moral disengagement, in which the use of war rhetoric sparks fear of war and removes questions of morality from peoples' focus. It thus results in ambivalence rather than moral outrage at the knowledge of violence and otherwise unjustifiable action carried out by the state (Catledge et al. 2015). Labeling each period of action against crime, drugs, and terrorism as a "war" is also an example of symbolic politics. Evidence of the effectiveness of symbolic politics for driving public opinion, discussed in detail in Chapter 2, supports the claim that the use of symbolic wars when framing the issues of crime, drugs, and terrorism at key points in US history produced justification for the government's militaristic actions (Sears 1993).

Understanding the sociological mechanisms utilized in the 'wars' on crime, drugs, and terrorism is important for conceptualizing the effects of all three terms when used in the present.

These terms are able to affect Americans in unique ways due to the country's history and shared memory. As a result, even when the political elite do not use the words 'war' or 'military' in their framings of asylum seekers, any of the three key frames discussed may connect the asylum seekers to the mentality of war which the frame provokes. The terms "crime," "drugs," and "terror" were previously associated with militarization, especially within domestic policing, during periods of "war." Since September 11, the political elite using those terms when framing asylum seekers has produced a context in which militarization of the Southern border is justified.

Particularly in the Obama and Trump administrations, another dominant framing of asylum seekers entering at the Southern border has been that of a massive "influx," "surge," or "invasion." The idea of an invasion at a US land border is immediately associated with the situation of being at war. The threat or warning of invasion prompts fear. More importantly than prompting fear, however, is the fact that it prompts rapid and extreme response. This is the potential effect of framing asylum seekers as invaders quickly approaching our borders. The framing goes further than merely influencing public opinion against asylum seekers by also serving as a call to action. On its own, the invasion frame of asylum seekers at the border is a powerful tool for justifying border militarization. When the invasion frame is paired with the criminal, drug trafficking, and terrorist framings associated with historical US "wars," the potential for justifying militarization grows further.

### Conclusion

This chapter provided a case study focused on the influence of framings of asylum seekers on the militarization of the US Southern border. I began the chapter with a brief look at the history of immigration and border security in the US, from which I transitioned to an overview of the border militarization measures of the past 17 years. I considered the framing of



asylum seekers by the political elite as a potential means of justifying increased border militarization. The discussion on framing pointed out and addressed the implications of the common use of the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘unauthorized’ as synonymous and interchangeable with ‘asylum seeker.’ It then provided analyses of the prominent framings of asylum seekers. These analyses addressed the potential for the framings to portray asylum seekers as security threats associated with crime, drugs, and terrorism. Relating to the three framings of asylum seekers as criminals, drug smugglers, and terrorists, I considered the effect of the historical “wars” carried out against each category in the US. In its entirety, the case study supports the likelihood that the framing of asylum seekers was used by the political elite to justify militarization of the US-Mexico border between 2001 and 2018.

## Chapter 4: Australia Case Study

### Introduction

This chapter will undertake a case study of the prominent framings of asylum seekers by the Australian political elite. The case study analyzes the influence such framings have on justifications for militarizing Australia's maritime border. The chapter will begin considering Australia's pre-2001 immigration and asylum practices in order to establish the foundation of contemporary framings of asylum seekers. It will then consider the increase in border militarization in Australia between 2001 and 2018. It will conclude by drawing upon evidence from statements by political elites to identify key framings of asylum seekers in the country. The overarching goal of the chapter will be to demonstrate how the framing of asylum seekers by the political elite in Australia contributes to the justification of border militarization.

### The Pre-2001 History of Immigration and Asylum Policies in Australia

Following Australia's independence from Britain in 1901, the first major immigration policy in the country was the Immigration Restriction Act (New South Wales Migration Heritage Centre 2006). In conjunction with other immigration practices, the Act produced the "White Australia" migration period in which the country actively sought to limit non-white, and specifically Asian, immigration. The policy was Australia's reaction to experiences of Chinese temporary migration during the "gold years" in Australia. Many Australians viewed Chinese migrants as taking the gold wealth of Australia and returning home without contributing to the prosperity of the country. A history of worker strikes beginning in the late 1800s, particularly in the boating industry, targeted the problem of employers offering jobs to Chinese workers who would accept worse conditions and lower wages. As a solution, the Australian government removed Chinese workers from the industry and from the Australian workforce more broadly

(Dixon 1945). In the early 1900s, which constituted the first decades of Australian independence, immigration into the country was regularly limited based on race and nationality, regardless of individual circumstance (New South Wales Migration Heritage Centre 2006). During both World Wars, potential migrants considered to be from enemy countries were not welcomed in Australia. However, rather than being turned away, they were more typically interned upon their arrival.

During World War II, those individuals interned included Jews fleeing Nazi Germany, as they were still recognized as coming from an enemy country at that time. The establishment of the United Nations in 1945, of which Australia was a founding Member State, began to shift the country's relationship with the outside world, and therein its immigration and asylum policies. The first recognized instance of displaced people (DPs) arriving on the shores of Australia took place in 1947, when a group from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania arrived in Melbourne (New South Wales Migration Heritage Centre 2006). The country did not have a precedent for handling the arrival and did not have the legal structures in place for a clear response. The result was an eventual agreement that the people would work for the government while receiving assistance for two years. This arrangement of two-year contracted labor for displaced arrivals did not end with that first group, but became the standard program for DPs entering Australia. Standard procedure became that every displaced male entering Australia worked in jobs involving physical labor, and every woman, unless pregnant or possessing young children, worked in a domestic role. The policy did not account for family unification, so that families arriving together after displacement confronted the likelihood of a two-year separation (Dellios 2016). During that time period, the demographics of the Australian population began to shift away from the largely Anglo-Saxon majority the country lauded in the past. While fewer were of

British heritage, however, most remained white migrants from Eastern European countries coming to Australia after being displaced by Soviet invasion and conflict.

Despite Australia signing onto the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1954, the increase in migration numbers came about faster than improvements to the treatment of migrants and DPs. “Migration houses” used to house migrants during their obligatory work periods often offered poor living conditions. Throughout the 50s and 60s migration became more regularized and migrants from non-European countries more accepted. A quota system was briefly enforced within immigration policy, but quickly replaced in 1973 by Minister of Immigration Al Grassby, a member of the first Labor party government to hold power in nearly 3 decades. Labeling the quota system and other considerations of country of origin in immigration decisions as discriminatory, Grassby enacted new practices of migration based on skill, credentials, and market needs (Dellios 2016).

In 1975, a new group of asylum seekers, now commonly referred to as “boat people,” arrived in Australia. Asylum seekers of this type continued to enter primarily by boat after that point, mainly coming from East and Southeast Asia. The first arrivals by boat came to Australia largely as a result of the Indochinese crisis and included many Vietnamese asylum seekers. By the late 1980s, Australia saw asylum seekers from South China and Cambodia (McKay et al. 2011). The prevailing practice for responding to asylum seekers since the 1970s has been internment and detention for at least the period of time in which an asylum application is being processed. In 1992, the detention of all unauthorized migrants was made mandatory under the Labor government headed by Prime Minister Paul Keating (Rowe and O’Brien 2016). By the late 1990s, the demographics of asylum seekers shifted again, with people coming from Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.

As in the case of the United States, 2001 marked a major transition in the framing of and response to asylum seekers entering the country. This transition is attributed to the events of August and September 2001, commonly referenced as the Tampa Affair (McKay et al. 2011, McKay et al. 2017). On August 24, 2001, the Norwegian ship *MV Tampa* rescued 438 asylum seekers from a sinking ship en route to Australia. When the *Tampa* requested to enter Australian waters with the asylum seekers on board, the Australian government refused. The asylum seekers on the ship threatened suicide and mutiny if the captain were to return them to Indonesia, and the *Tampa* entered into Australian territorial waters in August 29. The government, headed by former Prime Minister John Howard, dispatched Special Air Service (SAS) troops to board the ship and prevent it from continuing any further toward Australian shores. It was not until September 2 that the Australian government reached an agreement with Nauru and New Zealand and allowed the *Tampa* to bring the asylum seekers to those countries to be processed.

### Border Militarization

The Australian government's response to the Tampa Affair sparked significant political debate within the country and around the globe. Following the incident, Australia implemented the Pacific Solution, a new policy for responding to asylum seekers arriving by boat. The policy established that asylum seekers would be unable to request asylum when arriving without authorization at an "offshore" Australian territory. This meant that islands outside of mainland Australia would not be an option for asylum seekers arriving by boat. The new law also established sites of offshore processing on islands of Nauru and Papua New Guinea. This globally controversial practice meant that asylum seekers were housed in often overcrowded and inhospitable detention conditions for extended periods while their asylum applications were processed.

Directly following the Tampa Crisis, the 2001 Border Protection Bill also strengthened the power of the Australian government to enforce border protection and, importantly, include the military in the enforcement of border security. Since then, the border has become increasingly militarized, with the use of more extreme measures of force both when intercepting incoming boats of asylum seekers and when handling the asylum seekers in detention centers prior to the approval of their asylum cases. Michael Grewcock (2009) describes the situation of detention centers housing asylum seekers, describing them as “centres of organized abuse, where even young children were drawn into systemic patterns of violence and self harm.” The centers were frequent sites of hunger strikes and other forms of protest by the asylum seekers housed in them. Each such strike was a response to the poor conditions the asylum seekers were facing within.

Operation Sovereign Borders, initiated in 2013, labeled the entrance of asylum seekers a national emergency and assigned the primary responsibility of responding to the Australian Defense Force (Emerton and O’Sullivan 2015). The Operation includes a Disruption and Deterrence Task Force operated by the Australian Federal Police, as well as a Detention, Interception and Transfer Task Force operated by the Maritime Border Command, a joint agency composed of the Australian Defense Force and the Australian Border Force. The Department of Home Affairs is likewise involved in Processing, Resettlement and Return efforts of Operation Sovereign Borders. Australia has thus progressively militarized its maritime border through the deployment of troops beginning in 2001 and expanding into the multi-agency Operation Sovereign Borders. The consistent presence of military personnel has been coupled with the treatment of asylum seekers as enemies and submitting them to inhumane detention conditions.

### Post-2001 Prominent Framings of Asylum Seekers

In support of Australia's actions to prevent the Tampa asylum seekers from arriving on Australian land, PM John Howard said "I believe it is in Australia's national interest that we draw a line on what is increasingly becoming an uncontrollable number of illegal arrivals in this country" (National Museum Australia 2019). His commentary foreshadowed what would become a dominant framing of asylum seekers as illegal and flooding through Australia's maritime borders in unmanageable chaos. The use of the SAS troops to divert the Tampa likewise signaled the increased involvement of the military in future border security measures.

While the Pacific Solution was being finalized and PM Howard was on a diplomatic visit to Washington DC, the terrorist attacks of September 11 changed the future of international politics. Australia mourned with the rest of the world the deaths of the nearly 3,000 people, including 11 Australian nationals, who were lost in the attacks (National Museum Australia 2019). The country quickly pledged its support in US President Bush's global "War on Terror." In the years since 2001, the security and moral concerns raised by the Tampa Affair and 9/11 have continued to shape the framing of asylum seekers entering Australia by boat. As the following analysis demonstrates, the way that the Australian political elite have framed "boat people" as threatening and immoral has likely contributed to justifying the current militarized state of the country's maritime borders.

#### *The Line Between Refugee and Asylum Seeker*

One characteristic of the post-2001 framing in Australia is a prominent moral distinction between resettled refugees and asylum seekers entering by boat. Australian society, unlike that of the US, has a fairly clear understanding of the distinctions between refugees who are resettled through UNHCR and people who enter the country to apply for asylum upon arrival. Rather than being considered one-and-the-same as refugees entering through resettlement, asylum seekers

are negatively framed through their difference from refugees. Refugees who enter through the UNHCR resettlement program apply for their status and wait, typically in a refugee camp, prior to arriving in the country. Because they enter the country before requesting status, asylum seekers who arrive by boat are framed as “queue jumpers” and as less legal and less legitimate in comparison to their resettled refugee counterparts. In interviews conducted in the midst of the Tampa Affair, PM Howard made various statements explicitly labeling the asylum seekers aboard the Tampa as “queue jumpers.” In one statement, he said: “we are a generous people, but there are a lot of people waiting in the queue in pitiful conditions in refugee camps all around the world and we are happy to do more than our share in taking refugees but they should go through the United Nations High Commission for Refugees” (Howard & Munro 2001). In another interview during that time, he stated “you can't have people pushing their way to the front of the queue particularly based on a capacity to buy their passage to this country” (Howard & Mitchell 2001). This framing imposes a value assessment that these asylum seekers are also less patient, less cooperative and less deserving than refugees entering through resettlement.

The “queue jumper” framing implies that asylum seekers who arrive by boat are not waiting their turn nor following the rules. Existing research describes the framing as ascribing negative values and poor moral standing to asylum seekers (Rowe and O'Brien 2016, McKay et al. 2017, Hartley and Pederson 2015). Scholars have shown that framing asylum seekers arriving by boat as “queue jumpers” is correlated to increased negative perceptions of that group. These negative perceptions include feelings of fear or prejudice towards asylum seekers which Australians do not feel towards resettled refugees (Hartley and Pederson 2015, Croucamp et al. 2017). The distinction which has been coined the “good refugee/bad asylum seeker dichotomy” has also been shown to increase Australians' beliefs that asylum seekers are illegitimate or



illegal. When Prime Minister John Howard spoke about asylum seekers, he frequently emphasized that “every person who comes here illegally keeps somebody else out” (Howard & Mitchell 2001) and “they must understand that they are coming ahead of people who seek to come here in an authorised way” (Interview with Kerry O'Brien ABC 7.30 2005). Scholars have extended their analysis to also connect this “queue jumper” framing to the justification of militarized measures in response to asylum seekers who enter by boat and/or without authorization (Rowe and O'Brien 2016, McKay et al. 2017). As a result, the good refugee/bad asylum seeker dichotomy serves an important role in the process of Australian border militarization.

When prominent framings of asylum seekers by the political elite depict them as morally inferior and cheating the system, public perceptions of asylum seekers become increasingly negative and/or apathetic. Existing research has already identified a difference between the way Australians think about resettled refugees and the way they think about asylum seekers arriving by boat, with the latter being significantly more negative (Hartley and Pederson 2015). It has likewise connected those negative perceptions of asylum seekers to the ability to justify certain types of policy initiatives producing deterrence and punitive measures (Rowe and O'Brien 2016, McKay et al. 2017). The general societal understanding that results is that asylum seekers are breaking rules and cutting corners. Queue-jumping is additionally a symbol for rude and inconsiderate behavior. A symbolic politics approach posits that the symbolic nature of the specific phrase “queue-jumper” enhances the frame's power to impact public opinion. The political elite may also frame militarization measures taken against those who “cut the line” as efforts to send people to wait their rightful turn rather than as inhumane treatment. This is exemplified by PM Julia Gillard's declaring that “the message is if you do get on a boat, you'll

end up at the back of the queue in Malaysia” (Interview with Sabra Lane, ABC AM 2011). This is a sentiment she expressed throughout the period of the 2011 Malaysia Swap, in which Australia accepted refugees from a Malaysian refugee camp through UNHCR resettlement in exchange for the ability to send to Malaysia asylum seekers they intercept attempting entry into Australia.

Framing asylum seekers as queue jumpers invokes negative public perceptions of asylum seekers and diminishes opposition to their mistreatment. This mistreatment includes abuses taking place within militarized responses at the border. The political elite utilize the valueless queue jumper framing as an imperative to protect the country not from a physical threat of violence or terrorism, but from the threat of moral deterioration which the entrance of asylum seekers is presented as producing. The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate humanitarian migration illustrated by the good refugee/bad asylum seeker dichotomy produces justification for forceful response against asylum seekers who arrive by boat. The symbolic depiction of asylum seekers as queue jumpers puts their morality and value systems into question and produces a shared understanding that a superior set of “Australian values” must be protected against asylum seeker immorality.

#### *Asylum-Seekers and People Smuggling*

Asylum seekers are also framed based on their means of arriving to the Australian border. As a third party is often involved in transporting the asylum seekers, the Australian government has made the issue of asylum seekers also an issue of “people smuggling.” Section 233A of the 1958 Migration Act defines people smuggling as occurring when a person “organises or facilitates the bringing or coming to Australia, or the entry or proposed entry into Australia, of another person” wherein the person being transported is not an Australian citizen and has not

been granted a legal right to enter the country (Australian Parliament 1958). A focus on people smuggling has been utilized to criminalize asylum seekers who arrive by boat by virtue of their connection to the crime of smuggling (Muytjens and Ball 2016, McKay et al 2017).

Criminalization of asylum seekers through such framing began as early as the 1970s under the government of PM Malcolm Fraser, and has continued since (Smit 2010). Every administration of the 2000's has addressed the issue of people smuggling, with frequent calls to end the practice and "stop the boats." Prime Minister Kevin Rudd famously stated that "people smugglers are the vilest form of human life... and that's why they should rot in jail and in my own view, rot in hell" (Rudd & Griffiths 2009) following a series of asylum seeker deaths at sea in 2009. The association of criminality and evil with people smuggling meant increased levels of distrust of the asylum seekers who are framed as inseparable from people smugglers.

While asylum seekers are criticized as accomplices in the crime of people smuggling, they are also framed as the victims of their smugglers. Strategies of "compassionate deterrence" took hold in the early 2000s, when Australian officials were balancing their interest in stemming the entrance of asylum seekers by boat while simultaneously presenting themselves as committed to humanitarian efforts. Their messages highlighted the need to eliminate people smuggling because they considered it the primary cause of tragic deaths of asylum seekers in failed attempts to enter the country. Government officials affirmed that the end of people smuggling would mean safer ways for people to gain asylum status. The Australian political elite employed similarities in terminology to relate people smuggling to human trafficking, although the two crimes are very distinct from one another. This connection resulted in justification for stopping asylum seekers entering by boat for the purposes of maintaining law and order and ending the

flow of headlines announcing deaths of humanitarian migrants at the country's shores (McKay et al. 2017, Lueck et al. 2015).

Asylum seekers and the people smuggling with which they are associated by the political elite are also framed as posing a threat to Australia's sovereignty. Control over entry and exit into a country is considered crucial to sovereign power. Illicit migration therefore consistently raises the issue of the government's ability to control migration into the country. The Howard government of the early 2000s was particularly effective in producing a public fear that people smuggling meant taking control of the country away from its leaders. He frequently warned that the people smugglers were trying to decide who should enter Australia, but that ultimately the Australian government needed to maintain control and decide who to allow in (Peterie 2016).

The association of asylum seekers with people smuggling has the potential to influence border militarization in several respects. Firstly, the criminalization turns public attitudes against asylum seekers and reduces any protest of militarized force in response. The "boat people" against whom Australian naval officers are fighting cease to be recognized by the public as humanitarian victims but as criminals. Secondly, and paradoxically, the characterization of people smugglers as victimizing asylum seekers calls for swift action by any means necessary to put an end to the practice. Any victimization of asylum seekers at the hands of the Australian border patrol and military may be overlooked due to the perception that smugglers are the ultimate evil-doers. The Australian government is using the evil nature of people smuggling to keep asylum seekers from attempting to enter. This approach is evidenced by the Australian government's production and distribution of materials telling potential asylum seekers that they should not attempt to pay "people smugglers" for assistance entering the country by boat (Figure 1). Lastly, the threat against state sovereignty and the fear of a loss of control implies the threat

of impending chaos should the government be unsuccessful in reclaiming its power over who it allows to enter its territory. Drastic measures in the form of border militarization become palatable and potentially even seen as necessary when framing by the political elite encourages hatred and fear of people smuggling and, by association, incoming asylum seekers.



*Figure 1: Material Distributed by Australian Government<sup>8</sup>*

## Conclusion

The case study of Australia carried out in this chapter illustrates that the prominent framings of asylum seekers in the country contribute to the justification for militarization of the border. The political elite distinguish asylum seekers from refugees who enter through resettlement in order to cast asylum seekers as less genuine and as queue jumpers whose

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<sup>8</sup> Image source: <https://www.australiantimes.co.uk/news/no-way-asylum-posters-draw-criticism/>

disregard for the rules and refusal to wait their turn make them a threat to an imagined set of Australian values. Framings criminalizing asylum seekers by highlighting their connection to people smuggling likewise facilitates negative public opinion and an allowance for militarized measures to fight the criminal activity of smuggling and protect Australian sovereignty and stability.

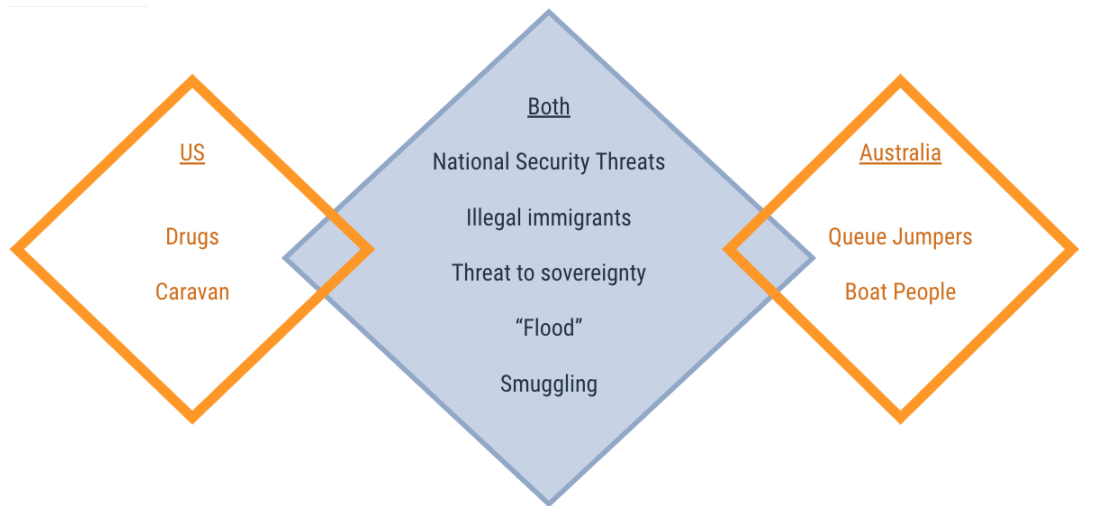
## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### Introduction

This chapter will discuss key similarities and differences between the two case studies of the US and Australia. It will consider the implications of the similarities and differences identified. In the chapter, I will articulate that the case studies support the argument that the political elite use framings of asylum seekers to justify border militarization in the US and Australia. I will conclude by identifying the limitations of this thesis and discussing the relevance of the findings for future research.

### Comparing the US and Australia Case Studies

#### *Types of Framing*



*Figure 2: Similarities and Differences in Framings*

The ways in which the political elite frame specific asylum seekers in both the US and Australia are tailored to the countries' histories and societal norms. Nevertheless, there are clear similarities between the types of framings that are used in both countries. Figure 2 illustrates the country-specific and shared framings I identified in the case studies. In addition to several

differences between the two case studies, many of the shared framings are experienced differently or to different degrees within the two countries.

The political elite in both countries frequently use framings of asylum seekers as national security threats. Within the security threat framework, the political elite in both the US and Australia highlight fears that international terrorist groups will abuse immigration pathways to enter the countries. Using the framing of asylum seekers as terrorists also connects asylum seekers to the rhetoric of the US “war on terror,” which Australia supported in the years following 9/11. In the war on terror, US government officials justified military action abroad and militarization domestically in the name of counter-terrorism, and the Australian government used counterterrorism to justify military participation in the “global war on terror.” When the political elite frame asylum seekers as criminals and potential terrorists to be feared, they likewise justify militarized responses to asylum seekers arriving at the borders.

Additionally, the political elite in both the US and Australia label asylum seekers “illegal immigrants.” The political elite and members of the public in both countries associate illegal immigrants with economic burdens in the forms of taking jobs from citizens, avoiding taxes, and using publicly funded resources such as public school systems. The governments of each country consider the ability of immigrants to illegally enter the borders as a threat to sovereignty as the government is no longer in charge of who may enter and reside in the country. In instances of a declared “flood,” “influx,” or “surge” in incoming asylum seekers, the political elite were particularly adamant about the danger the asylum seekers posed to maintaining border control. In those instances, and through the framing of asylum seekers as illegal immigrants threatening the right of the national government to regulate entry, the political elite justified border militarization measures in the US and Australia.



While political elite in both the US and Australia raise concerns about the smuggling of persons across their borders, the framing has become more central in the immigration rhetoric of Australia than in the US. “People smugglers” are regularly referenced by the political elite, to the point that it is a common phrase among both the political elite and the Australian public. “People smuggling” and the need to end it is often discussed with no mention of “asylum seekers” or other words referencing the people fleeing violence and persecution. In the United States, the smugglers - colloquially called “coyotes” - are also discussed, but the terms used to describe them do not appear as frequently and are not part of public common knowledge in the same manner as “people smuggling rhetoric” in Australia. When smuggling of asylum seekers has been given more attention than normal, it is done when placing excessive blame and accusation on asylum seekers would be politically damaging, such as when the asylum seekers crossing the border are mostly children. Despite the different degrees to which the political elite frame asylum seekers in relation to smuggling in the two countries, the results in each are similar. Framing asylum seekers using rhetoric of smuggling places the asylum seeker in the position of the victim, implying that they do not have agency and are dependent upon their smuggler in a pattern of dependency which will persist into their becoming dependents of the host country government and become an economic burden should they be allowed to enter. At the same time, linking asylum seekers to smugglers associates them with crime, questions their morality based on their decision to participate in and fund “people smugglers,” and implies that they are not genuinely in need of asylum since they are financially able to pay a smuggler to assist them.

The divergence in the way that the political elite in the US and Australia frame asylum seekers as related to illegal drugs is also telling. In the US, the framings of asylum seekers as drug smugglers, drug traffickers, and drug dealers produces a context in which *drugs* crossing

the Southern border and *people* crossing the Southern border become indistinguishable. The implication of the drug framing in the US is that the political elite justify border militarization by establishing that the government must restrict people crossing the border in order to restrict illegal drugs crossing the border. In Australia, the political elite do not connect any group of incoming immigrants to the problem of illegal drugs entering the border. The entrance of illegal drugs is a customs issue which has not been made an immigration issue. This thesis does not answer the question of why this difference in framing exists. However, a potential reason may be that drugs crossing land borders holds different connotations and produces different responses than do drugs crossing maritime borders or arriving via air travel. Another explanation may be differences in the prevalence of drug use within the US and Australian population. Future research can continue to explore the reasons for the difference in framings and perceptions of incoming drugs in the US and Australia

Another key distinction between the two cases worthy of further exploration is the Australian notion of asylum seekers as “queue jumpers” and the good refugee/bad asylum seeker dichotomy. This dichotomy is based on an understanding by the political elite and the Australian public of the differences between the legal processes of applying for asylum versus registering for refugee resettlement with UNHCR. This clear recognition of the difference between asylum and refugee resettlement processes does not exist in the United States. Instead, the US political elite and public talk about asylum seekers and resettled refugees as one-and-the-same while also labeling asylum seekers crossing at the Southern border as illegal immigrants. This thesis discusses the use of the “queue jumper” rhetoric by the political elite for the justification of border militarization. However, the research does not venture into determining the reasons for

the differences in how US and Australian citizens and political elite understand the relationship between the asylum process and refugee resettlement.

Finally, some terms used in the US and Australia when framing asylum seekers differs by country, such as the “caravan” framing in the US and the “boat people” rhetoric in Australia. Nevertheless, the terminologies share the characteristic of dehumanizing asylum seekers. The dehumanization of asylum seekers through framing is a common theme between the two case studies and is an essential component of the process by which the political elite justify increased border militarization in each country.

### *Border Militarization*

The use of framings which dehumanize asylum seekers, create a fear of their presence, and portray them as an enemy in styles reminiscent of wartime invasions serves as justification for continued militarization of borders in both the US and Australia. The increasing intensity of border militarization in each country is demonstrated by the growth of immigration patrol officers stationed at the borders as well as the presence of military personnel at borders, including during specific military operations at the borders. The US government has carried out border-focused military operations throughout the period following 9/11, beginning in 2003 with the deployment of troops to the Southern border under Operation Liberty Shield. In 2018, the Trump administration carried out similar military deployment under Operation Faithful Patriot and Operation Guardian Support. Australia shares the experience of military operations within the realm of border security. Operation Sovereign Borders is the Australian naval Operation which began in 2013 and continues in 2019 at the time this thesis is being written. It deploys the Australian Navy to intercept boats bringing asylum seekers to Australian territory by sea.

Beyond incorporating military personnel into border security operations, the US and Australia each militarize their borders by incorporating military-grade strategies and technologies. In both countries, the principal agencies responsible for border protection, the US Customs and Border Protection and the Australian Border Force, have dramatically changed in the past 18 years. The training for border patrol has developed to closely resemble that of the militaries, including combat training. The border patrol agencies of both countries have also initiated the use of military grade technology, including radar detection, security cameras and fencing. In the case of Australia, that technology has expanded to the technological advancement of the naval ships used for the protection of the sea border and the country's ocean territory.

*Key Events in 2001*

A final unique comparison between the US and Australia is between the two specific historical events which have come to shape the framing of asylum seekers and the militarization of borders in each country. In the United States, the events of 9/11 are regularly cited as a turning point in attitudes towards immigration overall. It has further been cited as influencing decisions about whether to permit asylum seekers and refugees into the country. While there were concerns connected to immigration policies and the asylum process prior to 9/11, the fear of security breaches through immigration pathways escalated following the event. The political elite's focus on the Southern border and those crossing it intensified following 9/11, and militarization measures have increased since. In Australia, the most-cited incident relating to asylum seekers is the 2001 Tampa Crisis, in which the Australian government refused to accept 433 asylum seekers the Norwegian freighter *Tampa* had rescued at sea. 9/11 and the Tampa Crisis occurred within weeks of one another, and their chronological proximity makes the comparison of the two cases particularly interesting and unique. Apart from their chronological

proximity, however, the Tampa Affair and 9/11 were extremely different events. The fact that the two events have shared similar roles as catalysts for change in framings of asylum seekers and border militarization raises further questions.

### Limitations and Future Research

I will continue by discussing several limitations of the research. First, while there is evidence for the likelihood of a causal connection between the framing of asylum seekers and border militarization in both the US and Australia, this thesis does not intend to show nor does it result in a causal connection between the framing of asylum seekers and border militarization. Rather, the research reveals that the framing of asylum seekers by the political elite in the US and Australia likely contributes to justifying border militarization.

Second, the reader should also recognize that the findings in this thesis are based on thorough research on the US and Australia and are not automatically applicable to any other countries. However, the methodology and form of analysis undertaken in this thesis may be applied to research on other countries to determine whether framings of asylum seekers by the political elite are used to justify border militarization beyond the US and Australian contexts. Future research could also determine if there are important relationships between framings of asylum seekers and border militarization in other countries which are not present in the US and Australian cases.

Third, while this thesis establishes the likelihood that framings of asylum seekers are used to justify border militarization, it does not claim that these framings are the only ways by which the political elite justify border militarization. There are likely additional factors, including other forms of rhetoric and underlying racial biases, which contribute to the justification of border militarization. International pressures also likely contribute to perceptions

of immigrants and border militarization in both the US and Australia. The focus of the thesis is on the ability of framings by the political elite to justify border militarization. As such, it does not discuss the international and domestic pressures and outside influences which shape those framings.

### Conclusion

This thesis explores the framing of asylum seekers by the political elite in the US and Australia and considers the potential of that framing to justify increased border militarization in the two countries. It does so through individual case studies highlighting the central framings of asylum seekers in the two countries and the ability of the framings to justify border militarization. In each case study, I show that the political elite's framings of asylum seekers likely serves as justification for border militarization measures. The case studies also provide evidence that the framings of asylum seekers to justify border militarization have contributed to the overall increase in border militarization observed in both the US and Australia since 2001. Overall, the thesis supports that the framing of asylum seekers by political elites in the US and Australia contributes to the justification of border militarization measures within each country.

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