
Review

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erally careful not to overstate her conclusions. Unions are not enthusiastic about immigration but they have calculated that if governments will not or cannot effectively curtail immigration, all-out opposition is a non-starter. This is a decision of the leadership that leaves open the question of rank and file support.

Immigration and the Politics of American Sovereignty, 1890-1990. By Cheryl Shanks. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001. Pp. 390. \$59.50

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Cheryl Shanks offers a unique perspective on immigration policy in the U.S. Drawing on an international relations background, she argues that governments control immigration in order to control sovereignty. She emphasizes that this is a conscious policy choice, and that changes in U.S. immigration policy are related to changes in the perceived threat to U.S. sovereignty. Through a very thorough examination of 100 years of Congressional records, Shanks methodically disproves the commonly held thesis that periods of immigration policy reform are caused by economic recession or other domestic political factors. Instead, she shows that changes in immigration policy are related to shifts in the international system, leading to a reinterpretation of national identity. When the U.S. began to restrict immigration in the 1870s with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Acts, it did so because of a perceived racial threat to American identity. More importantly, in upholding the Acts in *Fong Yue Ting v. U.S.* (1893), the Supreme Court established the plenary power doctrine, which declared that because immigration law governs sovereignty, it is not subject to judicial review and, indeed, the Court has exercised deference to Congress on immigration ever since. With the inception of the Cold War, immigration restriction shifted to barring those posing an ideological threat. The most recent major

change in the nation's preferences for immigrants to those with particular skills or wealth is a reaction to globalization and economic competition. Shanks proves that while political and economic forces may influence how rigorously immigration law is enforced, they do not lead to major policy overhaul.

Shanks clearly lays out her arguments and supports them by making a stylized argument about what types of claims win public support and how they do so. While this may convince the field of international relations to take social construction more seriously, it is not necessary to prove her point, which she does through careful exposition of arguments in Congress. Indeed, her thesis echoes the work of political and legal historians such as Mary Dudziak, who has convincingly argued that the Civil Rights movement was bolstered by international condemnation of segregation and America's need to consolidate allies in the incipient phases of the Cold War. As such, it is more a work of American political history than it is of international relations theory.

Instead, her main innovation is that she links migration with sovereignty and firmly situates immigration policy as foreign policy. This connection has been neglected, as the majority of the literature on immigration takes an economic or cultural studies approach, and international relations tends to ignore immigration altogether. Whether immigration policy should be seen primarily as foreign policy, even granting the validity of Shanks' argument, however, remains questionable. Given globalization, domestic and international factors are more intertwined than ever. Tracing how and why they are intertwined is one of the most interesting questions in immigration scholarship today. Cheryl Shanks has made a major contribution to the literature by bridging approaches to the study of immigration, requiring both Americanists and international relations scholars to broaden their fields of inquiry.

Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico

Boundary. By Joseph Nevins. New York and London: Routledge, 2002. Pp. 286. \$17.95.

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Since 9/11, the question of undocumented immigration along the Mexico-U.S. border has been eclipsed by concerns over terrorism, national security and the need for a cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security. This might, at first glance, cause one to lament the timing of the 2002 publication of Joseph Nevin's *Operation Gatekeeper*, a finely written work on the Mexican border and immigration policy. However, a careful reading of the book reveals its important entrée into larger arenas of thinking about the social, political and psychological meanings of international boundaries, and the wider agendas of those groups that seek to control them. As a result, I am pleased to say that this book will be helpful in bringing the illegal immigration debate into the larger discourse about globalization and the post-9/11 future of the Mexico-U.S. border.

First and foremost, Nevin's book is an exhaustively researched and well-organized compendium of information on the history and making of the Mexico-U.S. boundary and its changing immigration control functions, specifically with respect to the California-Mexico border. The book's strength lies in its conceptual emphasis on immigration policy as a political-economic process rooted in deep-seated sociocultural agendas that materialize across time and space. The selection of one contemporary immigration program – Operation Gatekeeper – as the focus of the entire book would have been problematic had the author placed a microscope of analysis solely on Gatekeeper; however, this is not the case. Nevins takes an exceedingly broad view of his subject, continually pulling back to wider-angle points of view, so that the latter chapters of the book are more theoretical than the central chapters.

Indeed, the author effectively uses the Operation Gatekeeper policy as a vehicle for making two salient arguments about immi-

gration policy and borders: first, that despite the evolution of a more transnational world, national governments continue to cling to the concept of sovereignty in the form of strict immigration controls, and second, that this hyper-maintenance of the international boundary tends to reinforce the reproduction of inequality. I believe the author is more effective in proving the first point than the second one.

The book's chapters build toward these two points. Chapter 1, the Introduction, sets the stage for the emergence of the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) creation of Operation Gatekeeper in 1994. It defines key terms and describes the temporal, socioeconomic, and geographic contexts in which this policy emerged. Chapter 2, "The Creation of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary..." (some of the chapter titles are a bit long winded), outlines the history of the Mexico-U.S. border from the 1700s through the twentieth century. It emphasizes the shift of immigration policy from its origins as a means to enhance national security to its evolving role in allowing inexpensive Mexican workers to be funneled into regions where they could help expand the U.S. economy. Chapter 3, "Local Context and the Creation of Difference in the Border Region," describes the regional context for Operation Gatekeeper – mainly the San Diego-Tijuana border area. We see a region that gradually became more socioeconomically integrated during the twentieth century, with changing implications for Mexicans and Mexican immigrants.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 represent the central empirical chapters of the book. Chapter 4, "The Bounding of the United States and the Emergence of Operation Gatekeeper," offers a detailed analysis of the political history of immigration policy in California, emphasizing the gradual shift toward a "migrant as criminal" mentality among immigration policy makers, leading to the creation of the Gatekeeper project. Chapter 5, "The Ideological Roots of the Illegal..." reflects on the sociopolitical reasons for scapegoating Mexican immigrants,

in effect creating the rise of the idea of the “illegal alien.” Chapter 6, “The Effects and Significance of the Bounding of the United States,” continues this discourse by analyzing the gradual criminalization of illegal immigration, and the evolving construction of what Nevins terms a “landscape of control and fear.” This landscape is starkly visceral, taking the form of steel fences, walls, Border Patrol vans, helicopters with spotlights, and warning signs of the dangers of crossing the border and its nearby freeways.

Chapter 7, “Nationalism, The Territorial State and the Construction of Boundary-Related Identities,” steps back and views the question of immigration in the broader perspective of nationalism and national identity. In Chapter 8, “Conclusion: Searching for Security in an Age of Intensifying Globalization,” Nevins reasserts his central argument that immigration policy in the United States is firmly rooted in what he terms “autonomous yet interrelated roles of race, class, gender and nation-based ideologies of exclusion and inclusion” (p. 169). *Operation Gatekeeper*, he notes, is yet another example of boundary enforcement as a response to a perceived loss of control by government in an increasingly transnational world.

It is this latter concept – the transnational world – which is referenced in the conclusion’s mention of “an age of intensifying globalization” that deserves further discussion. Globalization poses both a theoretical and practical challenge to much research on immigration policy. Nevins argues that despite globalization, nations like the United States continue to cling to their sovereignty when it comes to border enforcement and immigration policy. But do they? Shortly after the release of Nevins’ book, newly elected Presidents Bush of the U.S. and Fox of Mexico were poised to push through sweeping legislation that would have made it easier for Mexicans to work and live in the United States. Only the events of September 11, 2001 put these changes on hold. It seems inevitable, however, that the United States and Mexico, recognizing the advantages of a closer socioeconomic relationship, will begin

to tailor immigration laws that are more friendly toward Mexican visitors. This would fit in with the myriad of cross-border programs coming on line in the areas of environmental policy, free trade, health care, police and fire prevention services and so forth.

This is not to say that Nevins’ arguments about immigration policy are not historically correct. Globalization, however, poses a number of new questions. How much will immigration policy change as Mexican and U.S. societies continue to become intertwined? Will changes in policy be cosmetic or structurally profound? Can the U.S. federal government make a distinction between cross-border terrorist threats to the national security and cross-border migrant worker flows? I suspect Nevins would wax pessimistic on these possibilities. But, the globalization process is a work in progress, and some outcomes may be more hopeful than Nevin’s *Operation Gatekeeper* envisions.

Seeking Community in a Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles. By Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001. Pp. 292.

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Seeking Community presents a detailed analysis of the arrival of thousands of Guatemalans and Salvadorans to Los Angeles during a time when that city was undergoing a pronounced restructuring of its economy and neighborhoods. The authors’ conclusion is that the characteristics of their migration interacted with the economic and demographic transformation of Los Angeles to produce a new community built upon associations of people who come together around shared experiences, both current and in the past, and both in their homelands and in Los Angeles. As the authors note, this “encounter” between Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrants and Los Angeles also