PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA
DO RIO DE JANEIRO

Beatriz Rodrigues Bessa Mattos

Climate Change and Ontological (In)security in the Marshall Islands

TESE DE DOUTORADO

Thesis presented to the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Relações Internacionais of the Instituto de Relações Internacionais, PUC-Rio in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doutor em Relações Internacionais.

Advisor: Prof. Kai Michael Kenkel

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Prof. Kai Michael Kenkel
Advisor
Instituto de Relações Internacionais – PUC-Rio

Prof.a Flavia Guerra Cavalcanti
Instituto de Relações Internacionais e Defesa - UFRJ

Prof. Marcelo Mello Valença
Escola de Guerra Naval – EGN

Prof.a Monica Herz
Instituto de Relações Internacionais – PUC-Rio

Prof.a Paula Orrico Sandrin
Instituto de Relações Internacionais – PUC-Rio

Rio de Janeiro, November 19th, 2019.

Beatriz Rodrigues Bessa Mattos

The author graduated in International Relations from the Universidade Candido Mendes in 2009 and obtained her M.Sc Degree in Political Science from the Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro in 2014.

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Abstract

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This thesis seeks to analyze the ways through which issues related to the environment, especially climate change, interact with local conceptualizations of security in communities which are severely threatened by these problems and, at the same time, profoundly excluded from security studies' debates. Within International Security Studies (ISS), the climate crisis persists in being analyzed through state-centered, militarized and "us x others" dynamics. When this is not the case, environmental challenges are placed within a human security logics, animated by a modern and liberal understanding of what is supposed to be secure and thus, disregarding the role of local understandings and needs. (Shani, 2017) By focusing on non-scientific security narratives, I expect to unveil the contingencies of the hegemonic discourses within ISS that, rather than being rational and based on an "authentic" description of reality, contribute to aggravating the security challenges faced by some individuals, such as the Marshallese. Animated by "rational" security discourses promoted by realist and strategist thinkers, during the Cold War, the Marshall Islands was turned into a testing ground for 67 thermonuclear weapons. The bombs - considered by security theorists and policy-makers both as a source of power and as a legitimate way to obtain security – vaporized islands, forced the permanent evacuation of entire communities, disrupted the Marshallese land-based matrilineal organization and their ancestral ties to their atolls. Nowadays, the Marshallese archipelago and its inhabitants are once again being challenged: not by the military security goals of superpowers, but by an unintended and de-personalized threat. Climate change is the latest form of intervention, being preceded by a long list of other colonial and violent practices. As a low-lying atoll nation, it is very likely that the Marshall Islands will become inhospitable until the middle of the century as a result of the deteriorating climate effects. For the islanders, it will represent an immeasurable loss of territorial, spiritual and cultural references. In relying on cases such as the Marshallese, I aim to explore what new meanings and rationalities of security can emerge, or become more prominent, in

the face of the challenges brought on by climate change. With this aim, the ontological security theory is presented as an insightful framework for the analysis of these cases where, what seams at risk is not only a physical survival of states, individuals and ecosystems, but also the preservation of a stable social and material environment of action and a sense of biographical continuity. (Giddens, 1990) With this critical move, I seek to emphasize other ways of thinking and experiencing (in)security; thus, enlightening how the meaning of this concept is undissociated from the political, cultural and emotional contexts from which security discourses emerge.

Keywords

Resumo

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A presente tese visa analisar como questões relacionadas ao meio ambiente - em especial, às mudanças climáticas - interagem com os entendimentos locais acerca da segurança, em comunidades que se mostram profundamente afetadas por esses problemas e que, ao mesmo tempo, encontram-se profundamente excluídas dos debates teóricos de segurança. Em meio aos Estudos de Segurança Internacional (ESI), a crise climática persiste em ser analisada a partir de uma dinâmica estadocêntrica, militarizada e de "nós x outros". Quando não é esse o caso, os desafios ambientais são enquadrados a partir de uma lógica de segurança humana, animada por um entendimento moderno e liberal acerca do que a segurança deveria ser e, portanto, desconsiderando entendimentos e necessidades locais. (Shani, 2017). Ao focar em narrativas não-científicas sobre segurança, esta tese visa expor as contingências dos discursos hegemônicos verificados em meios aos ESI que, longe de se mostrarem racionais e fundamentados em uma descrição "autêntica" da realidade, contribuem para agravar os desafios enfrentados por alguns indivíduos, como os Marshalleses. Animados pelos discursos "racionais" promovidos por pensadores realistas e dos estudos estratégicos, durante a Guerra Fria, as Ilhas Marshall se tornaram palco de testes de 67 armas termonucleares. Tais armas – consideradas pelos teóricos e pelos *policy-makers* como fonte de poder e como meio legítimo de se obter segurança – vaporizaram ilhas, forçaram a evacuação permanente de comunidades, romperam com a organização social matriarcal e baseada na posse de terras característica das Ilhas Marshall e com os laços ancestrais entre indivíduos e seus atóis. Mais recentemente, o arquipélago e seus habitantes se mostram novamente em risco, dessa vez, não pelas práticas de segurança das superpotências, mas por uma ameaça não intencional e despersonalizada. As mudanças climáticas se caracterizam como a mais recente forma de intervenção, sendo precedidas por uma longa lista de práticas coloniais e violentas direcionadas ao arquipélago. Como uma nação constituída por atóis, é muito provável que, como resultado dos efeitos climáticos, as Ilhas Marshall se

tornem inabitáveis ainda ao longo deste século. Para os Marshalleses, tal cenário significaria uma perda incomensurável em termos territoriais, espirituais e culturais. Ao analisar casos como o das Ilhas Marshall, a tese busca explorar quais novos significados e racionalidades de segurança podem emergir, ou se tornar mais proeminentes, face aos desafios trazidos pela mudança do clima. Desta forma, a teoria da segurança ontológica é apresentada como um marco teórico fértil para analisar casos em que o que parece em risco não é apenas a segurança física de estados nacionais, indivíduos e ecossistemas, mas também a preservação de espaços sociais e materiais e de um senso de continuidade biográfica. (Giddens, 1990) A partir deste movimento crítico, busca-se enfatizar outros modos de se refletir e de se vivenciar a (in)segurança, de modo a lançar luzes sobre como o significado deste conceito mostra-se indissociável dos contextos políticos, culturais e emocionais em meio aos quais os discursos de segurança emergem.

Palavras-chave

Estudos de Segurança Internacional; Segurança Ontológica; Mudança Climática; Estética; Ilhas Marshall

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Abbreviations

COP	Conference of the Parties
ENCOP	Environment and Conflict Project
ESS	Environmental Security Studies
GHG	Greenhouse gases
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change
ISS	International Security Studies
IR	International Relations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States of America
WWI	World War II
WWII	World War II

We should not be defined by the smallness of our islands,

but by the greatness of our oceans. (...)

Smallness is a state of mind

– Epeli Hau'o

1.
Introduction

The lengthy process of defining the subject of this thesis was deeply intertwined with my personal experiences and identities – an identity that goes much further than the label of female Brazilian PhD student. Since my childhood, I have always felt a deep connection with nature. Thus, the deteriorating effects of pollution, climate change and other human-induced transformations in natural ecosystems and biodiversity have always sounded like an ontological security issue to me, even though I had never heard about this concept until some years ago.

As soon as I came across International Security Studies (ISS), I was puzzled by the overwhelming emphasis of the security literature – even within critical security studies – on militarized and exceptional logics, especially when it comes to environmental problems. I was confused, because none of those theories, concepts or practices were able to address my concerns about the preservation of biodiversity and traditional human communities, which are highly dependent on these vulnerable ecosystems.

Throughout this thesis, I am motivated by the aim to centralize marginalized narratives of (in)security made by individuals directly affected by environmental problems, which continue to be framed by state-centered, militarized "us x others" dynamics within ISS. When this is not the case, environmental challenges are located within the logic of human security, animated by a modern and liberal understanding of what 'security' is supposed to be, thereby disregarding the role of local conceptualizations and needs. (Shani, 2017)

Departing from this critical position, I seek to analyze the ways through which issues related to the environment, especially climate change, interact with local conceptualizations of security in communities which are severely threatened by these problems and, at the same time, profoundly excluded from security studies' debates. By focusing on these testimonies, I expect to unveil the contingencies of the hegemonic discourses within ISS that, rather than being rational and based on

an "authentic" description of reality, contribute to aggravating the security challenges faced by some individuals.

The case of the inhabitants of the Marshall Islands are an unambiguous example of it. Animated by these "rational" security discourses promoted by realist and strategist thinkers, during the Cold War, the Marshallese archipelago was turned into a testing ground for 67 thermonuclear bombs. At that time, it had just been designated as the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, being formally administrated by the United States (US). Together, the UN and the US were supposed to "safeguard the life, liberty and the general well-being of the people of the trust territory" (The Marshallese People, 1954, p. 1); however, the superpower's security practices proved to be the antithesis of these formal commitments, depriving the Marshallese people of any sense of security and denying their claim on humanity.

The devastating outcomes of the US' security experiments with nuclear weapons – considered by security theorists and policy-makers both as a source of power and as a legitimate way to obtain security – have not been forgotten by the Marshallese. The bombs vaporized islands, forced the permanent evacuation of entire communities, disrupted the Marshallese land-based matrilineal organization and their ancestral ties to their atolls. The experiments also resulted in increasing cases of thyroid cancer and abnormal births and a widespread feeling of ontological insecurity amongst individuals, who were unable to recognize themselves from the minute they were forced to leave their inherited atolls behind.

Nowadays, the Marshallese islands, the communities' traditional ways of life and cosmovision, are once again being challenged: not by the military security goals of superpowers, but by an unintended and de-personalized threat. Climate change is the latest form of intervention, being preceded by a long list of other colonial and violent practices.

Despite the fact that the Marshall Islands is not a great emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG) – it contributes merely to 0.00001% of the global emissions (RMI, 2018) – in terms of climate effects, it is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world. (IPCC, 2018)

As recognized by Jon Barnett (2005, p. 204):

> climate change is a global justice issue: The societies that are most responsible for greenhouse gas emissions are those who are least vulnerable because of their adaptive capacity conferred upon them by the wealth that they have generated through dirty industrial production.

As a low-lying atoll nation comprised of 1,156 individual islands with an average elevation of only six feet above the sea level and a national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of only US$ 180 million (RMI, 2018: 6), it is very likely that the Marshall Islands will become inhospitable – or even partially submerged – before the end of the century. (IPCC, 2018)

In these circumstances, climate change would make the islands not only inhospitable to human life, but also incapable of providing a sense of biographic continuity to its people. It will lead to the loss of their territorial, spiritual and cultural references. That is the reason why I argue that climate change can also endanger individual's ontological security – which refers to "to the desire and urge of a social actor to survive and surpass not only as a physical identity, but also as a certain sort of (social) being." (Innes; Steele, 2014, p. 17, italics in the original) In this sense, climate change has been posing an "existential threat" not only to the physical survival of low-lying islands and its people, but also to the preservation of individual self-identities of those who experience an extremely anxiety about their likely future away from their atolls.

In relying on cases such as the Marshallese, I aim to explore what new meanings and rationalities of security can emerge, or become more prominent, in the face of the challenges brought on by climate change. Ontological security theory proves an insightful framework for the analysis of these cases where, what seams at risk is not only a physical survival of states, individuals and ecosystems, but also the preservation of a stable social and material environment of action and a sense of biographical continuity. (Giddens, 1990)

With this critical move, I do not aim to reinforce the traditional readings of Environmental and Climate Security Studies, which are deeply embedded in a state-centered, militarized and exceptional relationality inherited from the mainstream

thinking of ISS. Differently, I seek to emphasize other ways of thinking and experiencing (in)security; thus, enlightening how the meaning of this concept is undissociated from the political, cultural and emotional contexts from which security discourses emerge.

In order to fulfill the double challenge of making sense of these distant contexts and, at the same time, identifying and foregrounding these marginalized security discourses, I turn to what I have called a *thicker signifier approach* of security. Inspired by Jef Huysmans' (1998) insightful thick signifier – that proposes the analysis of the wider framework of meanings from which security acquires its content – the *thicker signifier approach* seeks to explore the wider cultural and emotional contexts that make specific interpretations of (in)security possible. In this sense, this framework is equipped with an aesthetical curiosity, which means that it turns to the analysis of the ways these contingent contexts are being aesthetically represented through artistic performances, movies, storytelling and paintings.

Aesthetics represent my most fundamental encounter with Pacific islanders. At the initial stages of this thesis, I had planned to go to the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COPs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to interview members of the low-lying countries' delegations. As soon as I arrived in Bonn, Germany, where the conference was held, I realized the challenges inherent to my method of election. From the beginning, I knew that during the COPs I would be able to contact very few members of civil society. It was also clear that, in contrast to fieldwork, during the few days of the conference, I would not have time enough to share with the interviewees the details of my thesis, which could make them feel uncomfortable to share their private experiences with me.

It was during the People Summit – an event organized by civil societies' movements which usually happens in parallel to the conference – and other side events, that I had the opportunity to learn much more about the links between climate change and ontological security. I heard a (US) Native American, a Christian priest from Tuvalu, a young woman from Fiji and a student from the Marshall Islands speaking about ontological (in)security through storytelling, dance presentations and poetic performances. Throughout these aesthetic representations,

they were trying to present to the audience how climate change affects their daily lives and challenges the preservation of their customs, heritage and cultural practices. These narratives had an emotional charge that cannot be transmitted through language-based methods. Even though some of these artistic presentations were permeated by legends, myths and fiction, they allowed me to make sense of their realities in a more profound way than the diverse scientific panels, political and technical discourses that I attended as an observer during my participation at COPs. From that moment, I was convinced by something that authors such as Bleiker (2001) and Shapiro (2008) have claimed for quite some time: aesthetics makes it possible to feel, see and hear through a diverse perspectival position, challenging the objectivist belief about an unequivocal reality that is waiting to be neutrally described.

In this thesis, the Marshallese aesthetic representations are a medium of resistance to the political and theoretical hegemonic discourses of security, showing how these limited and exclusionary approaches to security help to authorize violent practices while de-legitimizing local narratives about non-traditional threats, such as climate change.

As claimed by Xavier Guillaume (2013) studying security critically necessarily requires consciousness and clarity about our epistemological positions as academics. In this sense, I join authors such as Jacques Rancière (1991) who states that: "the role of the philosopher is not to give his/her voice to the silent aspirations of the dominated, but to add his/her voices to theirs, to hear their voices, rather than interpret them, to make them resound, to make them circulate (…)" (Deranty, 2003, p. 1) Thus, by employing an aesthetic curiosity, I attempt to turn my academic research into an amplification channel for local voices, giving up a presumed observer condition and choosing to adopt a much more participatory role with regards to my subject of analysis. (Deranty, 2003: 1) These efforts are organized according to the following structure.

Chapter 2 of this thesis aims to present the theoretical trajectory of ISS, in order to illustrate how the realist mainstream currents started to coexist with other interpretations, especially after the "broadening" and "deepening" movements within ISS. It will also cover how security theories have approached environmental

issues, in that the militarized, state-centered and exceptional discourses encouraged by realist readings occupy a prominent place within the subfield of Environmental Security Studies (ESS). The chapter will turn to the presentation of ontological security theory, highlighting its origins in psychoanalysis, but conferring a special emphasis on how it has been approached through a social lens by authors such as Anthony Giddens. Finally, the last sections of the chapter will consider how ontological security has been inserted within the ISS' body of literature.

Chapter 3 launches efforts to present culture, aesthetics and emotions as a potential analytical avenue for the study of security, especially when it comes to ontological security. It sets out the presentation of these three different, but interrelated concepts that, in my view, provide meaningful insights on alternative security narratives. The first sections of this chapter are dedicated to the analysis of the context in which culture, aesthetics and emotions were brought to the studies of International Relations (IR) and how they have challenged the mainstream thinking within the discipline. Then, based on the method proposed by Cynthia Enloe (2004) of a "feminist curiosity", the chapter presents an "aesthetic curiosity" as a guiding thread of this thesis. I argue that a curiosity about how security is being aesthetically represented in diverse spatial and temporal contexts can disrupt the state-centered, militarized and exceptional conceptualizations that permeate the ISS field of knowledge.

Chapter 4, in turn, is dedicated to the presentation of the argument of this thesis, which was drawn from the observation of a gap within the literature of security and environmental security studies but, most of all, from the identification of marginalized narratives, promoted by individuals who are unauthorized to talk in the name of security. The chapter equally draws attention to the methods employed in this research, providing an explanation of the *thicker signifier approach,* as proposed by this thesis, inspired by Jef Huysmans' (1998) thick signifier. Unlike the former, the *thicker signifier approach* suggests an aesthetic curiosity that may make sense of the cultural and emotional contexts in which security acquires its meaning. In addition, the chapter also provides some explanation of the discourse analysis to be employed to the aesthetics in the search for signs and statements of (in)security.

Chapters 5 and 6 are the empirical chapters of this thesis. Chapter 5 provides both an overview of the historical past of the Marshall Islands and its people – focusing on lively testimonies of individuals who saw their lives drastically change after the nuclear detonations – and an analysis of the current political, social and environmental challenges faced by its inhabitants. Chapter 6, in turn, is mainly dedicated to the analysis of Marshallese aesthetic representations. These representations provide us with valuable insights into the particular cultural and emotional contexts that mediate local conceptualizations of security and climate change, while also incorporating unconventional security narratives. Based on the method of discourse analysis, it will try to identify narratives of (in)security within films, poetic performances, stories and legends, to reveal a different way of conceptualizing security.

2.
Security in a Tug of War: The Theoretical Trajectory of International Security Studies

One of the main goals of this thesis is to analyze how climate change effects engender new ways of understanding and conceptualizing security. This environmental phenomenon presents a risk not only to the physical security of states and individuals, but also to identities, systems of beliefs and traditions. This work employs an ontological lens to analyze how climate effects result in various types of insecurity for people of the Marshall Islands. In order to consider this overriding concern, this theoretical chapter is divided into three main sections.

To situate the debate within which the theoretical framework of this thesis emerged, the first section of the chapter presents the trajectory of ISS, permeated by diverse approaches, the focus of which differs in terms of ontology, epistemology and ways of conceptualizing security. By adopting the changing referent object of security as a guiding thread of this bibliographic review, it shows how traditionalist approaches - which considered the state as the main referent object to be protected from threats and until nowadays represent the hegemonic discourse within ISS - started to coexist with diverse theories that highlighted individuals, groups, non-human species and the entire planet as subjects of security. This initial section also considers how this body of literature has approached environmental issues, and the reasons why this topic is, even after the consolidation of Environmental Security Studies (ESS), subject to much criticism up to the present day. This first section ends with an analysis of how the "deepening" and especially the "opening" movement of ISS, led to innovative ways of thinking and analyzing security, so as to challenge the militarized and exceptional rationalities that used to permeate this theoretical and political field.

Both movements opened doors to more creative reflections on the possible meanings of security, in a way to disrupt the regimes of truth which have been stablished through the reproduction of realist discourses within the theoretical and political field of security. These movements had also offered a fertile intellectual ground for approaches such as the theory of ontological security. As synthesized by

Alexandria Innes and Brent Steele (2014, p. 17, italics in the original): "ontological security refers to the desire and urge of a social actor to survive and surpass not only as a physical identity, but also *as a certain sort of (social) being*". Thus, this section provides a contextualization of ontological security by discussing how this concept was first launched by the psychoanalyst R. David Laing (1965), inserted within social sciences by Anthony Giddens (1991) before being settled within IR and ISS through the works of authors such as Jef Huysmans (1998), Bill McSweeney (1999), Catarina Kinnvall (2004) and Jennifer Mitzen (2006). Departing from Giddens' studies on the destabilizing effects of modernity in ontological security, I argue that environmental problems like climate change can potentialize those effects. I then offer some considerations on how ontological security and environmental issues interact in the modern context.

Finally, the chapter aims to present ontological security as the theoretical framework of this thesis. It discusses how some IR and ISS authors have approached ontological security in order to highlight commonalities and differences noted within this body of literature. Departing from the literature review, these last sections provide reflections on where the proposed theoretical framework falls within the broader body of ontological security studies, and how this theory may both challenge mainstream conceptualizations of security and address critiques against the inclusion of environmental-related issues in the security agenda.

2.1.
Traditional Security Studies

The traditional security perspectives - heavily based on realist and neorealist assumptions and Hobbesian thoughts regarding the national/international binomial - argue that ISS should turn to the analysis of threats that endanger the territorial integrity of states. Following Thomas Hobbes' thought, the problem of security - the main concern of the individual in the state of nature - would be solved through the creation of the Leviathan, an artificial man whose body is animated by a soul with an artificial character, an aspect the author calls "sovereignty". The Leviathan would be able to ensure the fulfillment of the pacts and laws of nature, constituting therefore a product of the rational pursuit of men for their own preservation and for

their desire to escape the state of nature, which is seen as a miserable situation that constantly tends towards war. (Hobbes, Tuck, 1996)

Based on Hobbesian ideas, Realist approaches argues that the creation of the sovereign state would guarantee the resolution of domestic security challenges, causing the problem of survival to be transferred to the international sphere - seen as anarchic and unstable, given the absence of a sovereign power – thus, reducing individual security to the state's survival. (Fierke, 2007:14) Consequently, these approaches advocate the primacy of the political unit as a referent object of security[1] and consider the use of military force as a constant concern. (Buzan; Hansen, 2009:21) From this perspective, concepts such as balance of power, security dilemma, rational deterrence and relative gains acquire a critical role in realist analysis, while security policies receive an exceptional status that allows them to address existential threats, usually military in nature, originating in the international environment.

In addition to sharing the same ontology, ISS mainstream theories also depart from a rationalist and positivist epistemology, especially from the 1980s when they were influenced by the debate between traditionalists and behaviorists within International Relations (IR). (Buzan; Hansen, 2009: 21) These approaches seek cumulative knowledge on issues such as the role of military forces, alliance formation and, especially during the Cold War, deterrence strategies. It can be said that they also engage in the discovery of causal, objective and general laws that would be above time-space considerations (Krause; Williams, 1997) promoting the naturalization and normalization of their own discourses about security, in a way to establish a regime of truth, power and knowledge (Foucault, 2008) within ISS.

Realist approaches are thus characterized as problem-solving because they seek to connect the political demands of policy makers to their epistemological assumptions. (Cox, 1986; Valença, 2010) In this sense, the rational deterrence theory stands as a particularly elucidative example. Extremely influential during the Cold War, these approaches point to deterrence as a general condition in which military aggressions would be dissuaded by the guarantee of nuclear retaliation.

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[1] Referent object of security refers to the object that should be protected from threats. While realist approaches usually consider the state as the main referent object, there are also other theories that point to individuals, groups or even the planet as referent objects.

(Krause, 1998) Animated by these theories, superpowers like the United States (US) and the Soviet Union aimed to enhance the credibility of their retaliatory threat, resorting to security measures such as the construction of powerful delivery systems – bombers, submarines and missiles – and the realization of several nuclear tests – usually conducted in the territories of the Global South. According to these theoretical approaches, in pursuing these "rational" security practices, policy makers promote a stable balance of power between the two great powers, thus decreasing the chances of a nuclear war. Hence, for more than 40 years, nuclear deterrence strategies – heavily informed by models of rational decision-making and mathematical calculations of probability - became the main security concern of policy makers and ISS scholars, clearly demonstrating an affinitive relationship between theory and practice. (Valença, 2010: 60)

The expositions of Stephen Walt (1991) are quite enlightening when it comes to the epistemology shared by mainstream security studies. As noted by the author, as well as other social scientists, security theorists should turn to three primary activities: the formulation of theories as causal prepositions that are able to explain a certain phenomenon; the exercise of falsifying and testing these theories and, finally, the application of such theories in order to address a given problem. (Walt, 1991: 222) Walt's statements reveal his understanding regarding ISS as a scientific field that fallows a linear progression and aims to achieve a form of knowledge that goes beyond time and space. (Krause, Williams, 1997: 37)

In addition, in striving to determine the "adequate" epistemology for security studies, Walt also seeks to delimit the boundaries of the discipline, highlighting the alleged undeniability of a specific ontology:

> The main focus of security studies is easy to identify, however: is the phenomenon of war. (...) It explores the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent, or engage in war. (Walt, 1991, p. 212)

Walt's ideas are an effort to delegitimize the attempts to promote a broadening notion of security that distances it from the exclusive and overly militarized view promoted by realist approaches. (Krause; Williams, 1997) For realist authors like

Walt, maintaining ISS as an area limited to studies on the use of force was considered a means of safeguarding the "intellectual coherence" of this academic field and ensuring that ISS would continue to promote useful knowledge to bureaucrats. (Valença, 2010) By defining the security object of study and pointing to a specific model of knowledge production, those realist analysis have not only established the baselines of ISS, (Krause; Williams, 1997: 37) but have also naturalized a hegemonic discourse which conferred legitimacy only to certain subjects – as realist theoreticians, strategists and policy-makers - to speak and act in the name of security. At the same time, these hegemonic discourses inevitably became the main correspondent of the emerging theoretical approaches that would point to other sources of threats than the military and other referent objects. The key assumptions of some of these approaches will be briefly presented in the following subsections.

2.2.
Broadening Security

From the 1980s onwards, some authors (Ullman, 1983; Kolodziej, 1992) began defending the existence of other "security dimensions" that were not covered by mainstream approaches and to denounce the irresponsibility of theoreticians and policy-makers that insisted on a restrictive and inefficient agenda that could intensify the challenges both in the international and in the domestic scenario. However, to some extent, the state remained the primary referent object of such analyses, set amid the so-called broadening movement of ISS. As Richard Ullman's influential article, *Redefining Security*, reveals:

> Defining national security merely (or even primarily) in military terms conveys a profoundly false image of reality. That false image is doubly misleading and therefore doubly dangerous. First, it causes states to concentrate on military threats and to ignore other and perhaps even more harmful dangers. Thus it reduces their total security. And second, it contributes to a pervasive militarization of international relations that in the long run can only increase global insecurity. (Ullman, 1983, p. 129)

Ullman (1983) criticizes US policy makers when he states that placing too much emphasis on military dimensions while neglecting threats like the scarcity of essential resources and environmental disasters will make the world more insecure. Therefore, the author makes clear his claim to develop a problem-solving theory (Cox, 1986), able to provide information and solutions to politicians and to reflect on the construction of reality. Ullman asserts that security does not represent a zero-sum game, as advocated by realist strands, but a negative sum game where both domestic and international threats could jeopardize the security and stability of all nations.

The fact that the Cold War ended without a direct confrontation between the superpowers, the outbreak of civil wars, crimes of genocide, environmental challenges and the HIV epidemic have reinforced the ontological failure of mainstream approaches, enabling the rise of a more diversified security agenda compatible with contemporary challenges. (Buzan; Hansen, 2009:188; C.A.S.E., 2006: 446; Rodrigues, 2012) The broadening of security is characterized by the attempt to make the agenda more comprehensive so as to encompass not only military matters, but also topics such as economic development, epidemics and environmental degradation. (Krause, 1998)

Amid this expansion context, liberal approaches also gained prominence. These theories offer a new reading on the state's responsibilities, not limiting its scope to the management of external threats. These should still ensure individual freedoms and interests and act as guarantors of its citizens' needs, which make the political legitimacy of governments a security issue. (Morgan, 2007; Valença, 2010) Failing to verify such legitimacy could result in violent movements of self-determination and in the outburst of domestic instabilities, such as the ones that took place in Global South countries with the decolonization movements. Therefore, the broadening of the security agenda allows for critical reflections that were previously marginalized by the mainstream, such as the potential that the state itself may perpetrate violence against its citizens after adopting authoritarian forms of government. Thus, it was seen by liberal authors as a fundamental condition for the maintenance of the link between theoretical production and political practice (Valença, 2010: 69-71) in order to make sure that liberal approaches – like the

realist readings – continue to offer useful knowledge to policy makers in that they can also function as problem-solving theories.

The defense of political legitimacy as a security question is reinforced by approaches such as the Democratic Peace Theory. This approach transferred the legitimacy issue to the international context by arguing that when democratic states address the concerns of its citizens and employ peaceful mechanisms to solve controversies, they do not trigger wars. (Doyle, 1986) Thus, although the liberal argument makes it possible to transform, to some extent, the security referent object by marking the need for the state to act as a *locus* of legitimate representation and protection of its citizens, the sovereign state continues to be interpreted as the main security guarantor, as maintained by realist theories. (Valença, 2010: 77) The state supremacy would only be questioned by the deepening movement of security, when authors started to ask whose security is at stake (Tarry, 1999) and what are the productive effects of treating something as a security problem.

2.3.
Deepening Security and Critical Security Studies

The diverse theoretical perspectives that enable this movement in ISS have been named critical security theories by Keith Krause and Michael Williams (1997). These approaches are considered critical, since they challenge the fundamental assumptions of mainstream theories, thus disrupting the naturalization and normalization of the hegemonic discourses within ISS. It can be said that the critical security studies were born during a conference held at York University in Canada in 1994. Theoretical contributions presented in this conference were compiled and edited by Krause and Williams, resulting in the anthology entitled *Critical Security Studies.* (Valença, 2010: 79)

Critical studies suggest a distancing from the determinism promoted by mainstream theories in order to examine certain issues, such as the construction of threats, the definition of referent objects and the role of power and knowledge in shaping the security agenda. In this sense, critical security literature points out a plurality of threats without necessarily making desirable the broadening of security. Some critical theorists argue that by expanding this agenda, a liberal approach "has

not really dealt with the meaning of security". (Huysmans, 1998: 226) Further to this, according to Krause and Williams (1997, p. 34-5): "simply articulating a broad range of newly emerging or newly recognized threats to human survival or well-being will not in itself move security studies away from its traditional concerns." Thus, these authors are not necessarily opposed to the inclusion of new threats in ISS analysis, but argue that such inclusion demands attempts at re-theorizing security.

The deepening movement also enables the identification of multiple security referent objects - such as the global community, states, individuals, groups and non-human beings as the nature itself - and reflects on the limits and possibilities of the sovereign state to preserve or even threaten those actors.

In addition, critical approaches illuminate ideas of how state-based practices – including speeches, institutions and principles - would be able to authorize decisions, exert and legitimize violent methods, and reproduce or transform contexts in which the exercise of force is understood as a necessary and crucial part of contemporary political life. (Krause; Williams, 1997: 43-47; Walker, 2006:198)

Despite the theoretical plurality of critical studies – which covers, among others, constructivist, feminist, postcolonial and post-structuralist perspectives - Krause highlights six fundamental assumptions that are common to these approaches:

> The principal *actors* (subjects) in world politics – whether these are states or not – are *social constructs*, and products of complex historical processes that include social, political, material and ideational dimensions;
> These subjects are *constituted* (and reconstituted) through political *practices* that create shared social understandings; this process of constitution endows the subjects with identities and interests (which are not "given" or unchanging);
> World politics is not static and unchanging, and its "structures" are not determining, since they are also ultimately socially constructed;
> Our knowledge of the subjects, structures and practices of world politics is not "objective", since there exists no objective world separate from the collective construction of it by observers or actors;

> The appropriate *methodology* for the social sciences is not that of natural sciences, and there is no methodological unity of science. *Interpretative* methods that attempt to uncover actors' understandings of the organization (and possibilities) of their social world are the central focus of research;
> The *purpose* of theory is not prediction (control) or the construction on transhistorical, generalizable causal claims; contextual understanding and practical knowledge is the appropriate goal. (Krause, 1996, p. 6, italics in the original)

In view of such fundamental assumptions, it is evident that the contraposition of epistemological positions is crucial in the debate between traditionalist and critical approaches, having at its center discussions on what can be accepted as legitimate knowledge – thus, bringing to the core the power struggles among different conceptualizations of security - and the role of moral considerations in scientific production. (Huysmans, 2006: 22) Opposing mainstream and problem-solving approaches, most of the critical currents indicate the impossibility of producing neutral knowledge. For those authors, as all human endeavors, security analysis would be permeated by moral values, ideologies and beliefs, preventing them from "discovering" objective and universal laws which transcend time and space. In this sense, critical security studies challenge the rationalist and problem-solving claims presented by mainstream (Buzan; Hansen, 2009) in highlighting the contingency and context-dependent character of knowledge production.

As defended by Krause and Williams (1997: ix), the various perspectives of the contemporary discussions of ISS can only be understood from the assimilation of the contingent nature of the political in IR. This statement stems from the understanding that security is not self-referenced, which assumes that the concept of security can only acquire meaning through the identification of a referent object that should be protected. (Krause; Williams, 1997: ix, xii) In this sense, contrary to what the traditionalist authors argue, the meaning and the object of analysis in security are not characterized as apolitical and fixed, being the result of theoretical choices and preferences. Thus, the epistemological model dictated by realist approaches is regarded as a particular interpretation of ISS, which, being widely

defended as the only possible way to reflect on security, may be seen as an exercise of power and academic authority. (Krause; Williams, 1997: 36-39; Krause, 1998)

This literature review does not intend to present an exhaustive overview of all the theoretical approaches that can be labeled as part of critical security studies. The following subsections will include a discussion of two distinct schools that summarize two main and opposite logics of security: a positive logic, as presented by the Aberystwyth School with its conceptualization of security in terms of human emancipation, and a negative logic, represented by the Copenhagen School, in which security is related to exclusion, violence and exceptional measures[2]. (Lupták; Walach, 2015: 52) At the heart of these debates emerges the following question: can security be achieved through positive practices or it is necessarily attached to conflictual and militarized logics? (Lupták; Walach, 2015: 52)

2.3.1.
The Aberystwyth School

Based on Frankfurt School's thinking, the Aberystwyth School understands security as a synonym for human emancipation. As argued by Ken Booth (1991), one of the main exponents of this school, emancipation, and not power or order, results in security.

The security analysis offered by the mainstream theories contributed to obscure acts such as violence against poor and women, the oppression of minorities and human rights violations (C.A.S.E, 2006: 456). The need to ensure the protection not only of states but also of the smallest units of the system (i.e. individuals) therefore reveals the urgency to understand security as a holistic and not merely state-centered concept. (Burke, 2008: 152)

> (...) researches should avoid seeing the world through the eyes of the state as implied by use of the "national security" concept. The state is often the problem as much as the solution and the aim of research should be defined in relation to human beings. The best way to conceptualize security in a way that aligns it with people

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[2] In addition to the Aberystwyth and the Copenhagen School, the authors of the Paris School can also be conceived as other important contributors to this critical movement. The Paris School offers a sociological and empirical analysis on the productive power of security professionals in creating a "truth regime" through dynamics that involve power and knowledge. (C.A.S.E, 2006: 457, 458)

> instead of the state is to define it in terms of emancipation. (Waever, 2012, p. 52)

The multiplication of threats that could endanger human emancipation indicate the urgent need of rethink security, contrasting it with the insistence of mainstream approaches in maintaining an anachronistic vision regarding such concept (Booth, 2008). Unlike the realist thinking that consider violence an instrument for achieving political purposes, the Aberystwyth School frames it as an obstacle to individual freedoms. It would be sustained not only by means of militarized practices but also through structures of repression (Valença, 2010: 94). As defended by the authors of the aforementioned school, security would be subject to the building of a fairer society through the destruction of repressive structures that prevent the achievement of human potentialities. (Burke, 2008; Galtung, 1969)

It is possible to emphasize that the Aberystwyth School has a clear political and theoretical proposal of breaking with the established order and challenging the alleged scientific neutrality advocated by mainstream chains by means of a politically conscious approach. (Valença, 2010: 93). In this sense, understanding that the meaning bestowed to security, the definition of the referent objects and the agenda construction should be directed to an emancipatory praxis, the Aberystwyth School aims to establish a close relationship between theory and practice. (Waever, 2004:7 *apud* Valença, 2010: 93)

However, in attempting to denaturalize the state in order to promote changes in security practices and rid individuals of structural violence, that prevent them from achieving emancipation, this school has been accused of promoting an ethnocentric and liberal narrative, assuming the Western "particular" as a universal standard. (Valença, 2010: 98)

2.3.2.
The Copenhagen School

Within the context of a broadening critical perspective, the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute - more often termed as the Copenhagen School - stands out. This research group engaged in creating alternative approaches and concepts

in order to analyze the dynamics of security on the European continent (C.A.S.E., 2006). Among these approaches, the theory of securitization is particularly relevant.

By developing this framework among debates that opposed the traditionalist to defenders of a broader understanding of security, Buzan, Waever and Wilde aimed to create an innovative analytical model that could include the agenda's enlargement without damaging the "intellectual coherence" of the field, as pointed out by Walt's (1991) influential paper. Such an objective was pursued through the understanding of security as a sphere marked by a particular rationality, whose policies are usually endowed with an exceptional character. (Buzan; Waever; Wilde, 1998, vii)

Opposing the objectivism common to mainstream approaches, the Copenhagen School's innovation lies in its emphasis on the socially constructed nature of threats and the relevance of speeches in this process; thus, reflecting the wider "linguistic turn" in IR. By seeing the construction of threats as *speech acts*, the theory of securitization approaches security as a social practice, triggered by means of the intersubjective and discursive determination of a specific topic as a threat.

Therefore, speeches are understood not as a means to describe an objective reality, but as capable of influencing and constructing reality itself. By labeling a given topic as a threat, securitization actors mobilize specific meanings to give a sense of urgency to a problem, justifying the need for exceptional politics. The securitization process is therefore defined as "the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics." (Buzan; Waever; Wilde, 1998, p. 23)

However, it is important to emphasize that the inclusion of a specific issue in the security's political agenda is not limited to a discursive practice. The securitization attempt can only be considered successful when the securitizing speeches manage to co-opt a significant part of the audience[3], acquiring the necessary legitimacy for established procedures to be violated. Such acquiescence

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[3]According to the Securitization Theory, the audience is defined as target actors of the securitization speech, to which they can respond positively - legitimizing the creation of exceptional methods - or negatively, therefore avoiding the securitization attempt's success. (Buzan; Waever; Wilde, 1998)

result from a shared understanding that a specific issue is considered a threat, demanding an immediate and exceptional reaction.

By admitting the construction of threats through *speech acts*, the theory of securitization clearly points to a flexibilization and broadening of the concept of security, including new threats and new referent objects in its analysis, therefore going beyond the state. In view of the multiplicity of issues that are likely to be addressed by this perspective, the authors use five different analytical frameworks with the aim of making possible analysis about the dynamics adopted by military, political, economic, social and environmental sectors in between the securitizing process. (Buzan; Waever; Wilde, 1998)

Despite the innovations this theory introduces to ISS, it can be said that the theory of securitization retains influences of traditionalist readings of security. By implying that security issues tend to be addressed by militarized and exceptional practices, it not only provides insufficient instruments to analyze non-traditional threats - such as those arising from environmental concerns - but also ends up reinforcing certain normative assumptions present in mainstream analyses.

Therefore, the Copenhagen School opposes other critical theories - such as that of the Aberystwyth School[4] - as it conceptualizes security not as an ideal situation and a goal to be pursued, but as a political sphere marked by exceptionality, the practices of which usually present adverse consequences. Its theoreticians argue that the policies developed to answer a securitizing act are constantly linked to state-centered and militarized practices, frequently proving to be inefficient to address threats of a different nature than military ones. In this sense, Waever (1998) warns that the environmental securitization could result in the conception of challenges as climate change under the bias of threat, vulnerability and defense. The aforementioned understanding made Waever (1998) recommend the opposite movement to securitization: desecuritization. This process allows the withdrawal of topics from the security agenda, so that the question could be addressed through ordinary - and not urgent - policies.

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[4] As argued by Ken Booth (1991), one of the main exponents of this school, emancipation, and not power or order, results in security.

If, on the one hand, the theory of securitization allows the inclusion of new threats and new referent objects in the security agenda, while, on the other, suggesting that security is an exceptional political arena and that certain topics - such as environmental related issues – should not be securitized, then such an approach ends up limiting the security agenda to issues that are prone to be addressed by militaristic and exceptional methods as already anticipated by the mainstream.

Despite these limitations, the theoretical framework posited by the Copenhagen School leads to important questions regarding the topic of this thesis: Who is threatened by climate change? Is it the environment itself (including not only the survival of the human species but also of animals and ecosystems), the individuals, the state's sovereignty or the survival of specific groups such as the populations of islands states? In this scenario, where referent objects undoubtedly become intricate, who is responsible for the creation and execution of exceptional policies, according to the logic of securitization? What actors count as an audience capable of sanctioning or rejecting the securitizing movement? Such questions have proven crucial to examining the limits and the possibilities of including environmental-related issues in the theoretical and political security agenda without falling in the "security traps" pointed out by critical theorists. (C.A.S.E, 2006: 460) In the next subsection, I will try to summarize how Environmental Security Studies have emerged from these attempts.

2.4.
Environmental Security Studies

There are as many distinct definitions of the concept of environmental security as narratives which try to frame environmental-related issues as a threat to different referent objects. (McDonald, 2018) The diverse conceptualizations of security and the multiple environmental phenomena studied contribute to making the literature of Environmental Security Studies very diffuse and difficult to access. (Hardt, 2018: 44) Some of these approaches cannot be considered part of the deepening movement of ISS, since they still see the state as the main referent object to be protected from environmental threats, while others also reify realist readings

on security by arguing that the lack of natural resources may result in the outbreak of domestic and international military conflicts.

As highlighted in the previous subsections, discussion of the environment within ISS date back to the 1980s. (Ullman, 1983; Myers, 1989; Westwing, 1989) These theoretical efforts were still related to state-centered conceptions of security in that the sovereign state was regarded as the main referent object threatened by environmental threats. Thus, most of these analyses shared the argument that environmental-related issues were comparable to military threats (Hardt, 2018) and could be identified through an objective conception of reality, as proposed by mainstream approaches. Following the broadening movement within ISS, some of those authors (Ullman, 1983) highlighted the need to include issues such as breathable air; potable water; the protection of the ozone layer and the conservation of fertile soils in the interests of national security. Despite reifying the state as the referent object, these analyses are considered innovative since they confer a more preventive – and not defensive - character to security agenda. (Hardt, 2018: 47)

These attempts to broad security to encompass environmental threats encountered enormous resistance. This resistance was demonstrated not only by traditionalists authors such as Walt (1991, p.222), who insists that security studies are limited to the search for "cumulative knowledge about the role of military force" and that a focus on non-military issues could jeopardize its ability to address the omnipresent military threats, but also by sceptics like Deudney (1990). Anticipating the criticism that some critical security authors would make later (Krause, Williams, 1997; Huysmans, 1998; Waever, 1998), Deudney argues that environmental security does not lead to a redefinition, but to a "de-definition" of security, resulting in the loss of its conceptual meaning.

Despite this theoretical resistance, events in national and international levels helped to strengthen narratives based on the links between environment and security. At the time, chemical and nuclear disasters such as the ones that happened in Bhopal in 1984 and Chernobyl - then part of the Soviet Union – in 1986 helped to legitimize these theoretical efforts of bringing environmental security to the political realm. This became particularly apparent with the publication of the World Commission on Environment and Development's report, *Our Common Future,* and

after Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet president, made references to environmental risks. (Hardt, 2018: 46)

Although these accidents provide indications that environmental threats go far beyond state security, realist hegemonic discourses were – and still are – very influential in ESS, as illustrated by the so-called environmental conflict thesis. Some of these empirical research projects were carried out by the Toronto Group during the 1990s. Led by Thomas Homer-Dixon, the Toronto Group searched for evidence of causal connections between the scarcity of renewable resources and the outbreak of violent conflicts. The research results were published in the *International Security* journal and were unable to establish direct relationships between the two variables; however, it indicated that shortage of essential resources, in certain conditions, might result in social instabilities such as ethnic tensions and de-legitimization of national governments. (Homer-Dixon, 1994) These studies also indicated the high probability that domestic instabilities increase while scarcity worsen, bringing challenges not only to national but also to international security. (Hardt, 2018: 49)

Despite being focused on conflict instead of security (Hardt, 2018: 49), the Toronto School helped to legitimize, to a greater extent, a militarized rationality within ESS, which is far from being limited to the beginning of its trajectory. Homer-Dixon's work inspired other empirical research projects such as the Environment and Conflict Project (ENCOP) - conducted by the Center for Security Studies and Conflict of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology and the Swiss Peace Foundation - and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) pilot project named *Environment & Security in an International Context.* (Hardt, 2018: 49, 50) While the first aimed to describe the diverse roles that environmental issues can play during conflicts – as the reason, the trigger, the target and the channel to catalyst (Baechler, 1998) – in order to analyze the interrelationship between environmental degradation, maldevelopment and conflicts, the latter seeks to integrate environmental and security policies within a national and international context. (Hardt, 2018: 50)

In addition, the environmental conflict thesis and its focus on the shortage of natural resources also helped to legitimize Neo-Malthusian analyses about the

"dangers" of indiscriminate demographic growth (Meadows et al, 1972) and made room for apocalyptical predictions about a future of anarchy, permeated by multiple wars for resources. (Kaplan, 1994; Klare, 2001)

Already in the 2000s, authors such as Steven Hearne (2008, p. 217) defined environmental security as a situation that "implies a freedom from environmental threats that can contribute to instability and the outbreak of conflicts." The prominence of this militarized view within environmental security approaches reflects the privileged position occupied by realist thinking in ISS and show how the regime of truth, power and knowledge raised by these traditionalist approaches have been disseminated in time and space, so as to unauthorize other forms of making sense of security. (Epstein, 2008). It made possible the perpetuation of a militarized and state-centered reading of environmental security that continues to the present day.

Despite its preeminence, the environmental conflict thesis received a wide range of criticism. It ranged from the skepticism about the existence of conflicts triggered by environmental causes - due to the understanding that conflicts are multifaceted, which makes the identification of direct casual relations extremely difficult – to feminist critiques of the analyses that sees demographic growth – and, therefore, female fertility - as a risk to security. (Hardt, 2018: 52) It also faced criticism from authors who argued that environmental challenges could lead to cooperation and not necessarily to conflict. (Conca, Carius, Dabelko, 2005)

As a result, the traditionalist and militarized understanding verified within ESS started to coexist with other interpretations, following the same process discussed more comprehensively in ISS. The deepening movement in ISS provided grounds to argue, not only that every topic can be framed as a security issue – since the security agenda is a product of perceptions, speech acts, practices and power relations – but also that a wide variety of actors – individuals, communities, identities, ecosystems, non-human species, the planet, states – could be configured as referent objects of security.

At this time, it was clear that theoreticians, strongly encouraged by the United Nations' (UN) agencies, did not exclusively lead the efforts towards a broader understanding of security. Still in 1994, the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) published the Human Development Report, introducing the concept of human security. The report was strongly influenced by Peace Studies, a body of literature[5] that emerged at the end of the 1960s of which Johan Galtung (1969) was the main exponent. Within the context of Cold War, Peace Studies were extremely innovative. Not only did it see individuals as the primary reference of security, but it also called attention to two different types of violence - direct and structural – that put peace at risk. Galtung's categorization of diverse sources of threats – not to state's but to individuals' security - was crucial for the definition of the two main components of the UNDP's human security, which are *freedom from fear* and *freedom from want*. Based on this understanding, the report recognized that threats to individuals go beyond physical violence and presented seven categories of security,[6] environmental security being one of these. Among the threats that put environmental security at risk, the report highlights water scarcity, desertification, soil salinization, air pollution and natural hazards. (UNDP, 1994, p. 28, 29)

The launching of the report, together with the recognition of the concept of human security, provided space for approaches that placed individuals as the primary referent object to be protected from environmental threats (Barnett, 2001) These approaches present deep connections with development studies, revealing a focus on the prevention and resolution of sources of structural violence, as already noted by Galtung. In this sense, human security approaches began to define environmental security as "the process of peacefully reducing human vulnerability to human-induced environmental degradation by addressing the root causes of environmental degradation and human insecurity." (Barnett, 2001, p. 129) so as to challenge the prominence of a realist rationality within ESS.

More recently, another body of literature, that can be located close to Environmental Security Studies, gained prominence. The works of authors such as Audra Mitchell (2014, 2016); Anthony Burke et al (2016) and Stefanie Fishel (2017) raise relevant critiques against the human as the ultimate subject of security

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[5] It is worth noting that, since it is mainly concerned with peace and not security, there is no consensus on the role of Peace Studies as part of the ISS literature, despite its remarkable contribution to the deepening movement of security.

[6] The seven main categories approached in the UNDP report are: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.

to the detriment of diverse non-human beings that also demand protection. By means of a post-human approach, these authors call attention to the need of an Earth- wordly politics that recognize the interconnections between human and non-human worlds. (Burke *et al*, 2016)

However, despite these prior efforts, human and non-human beings did not remain as the principal referent object of environmental security studies, as climate security approaches show.

2.4.1.
Climate Security Studies

At the time the concept of human security was first theorized, knowledge about the effects of climate change was still in its infancy. The Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), a UN scientific body designated to access and provide knowledge on implications and risks of climate change[7], was only created in 1988. However, its work was popularized after 2007 when it won, jointly with Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Nobel Peace Prize. At this moment, discussions about the multifaceted implications of climate change dominates studies on the relationship between environment and security. (McDonald, 2018: 159, 160) This new focus resulted in the emergence of a distinct body of literature, increasingly separate from the ESS, synthetized by the concept of climate security. (Hardt, 2018: 55)

Climate security studies faced similar criticisms of environmental approaches; however, this time the scientific support provided by the IPCCC and the increasing visible effects of climate change helped to make climate security more feasible. As emphasized by Hardt (2018: 56) the vocabulary of climate scientists presented several affinities to securitization discourses, as it raises awareness of the risks of catastrophic and unpredictable events. By using concepts and vocabulary such as tipping points, planetary boundaries, and the limited carrying capacity of Earth, climate security studies provides images of uncertainty and fear, causing the increasingly political recognition of climate change as a security problem. This recognition culminated in debates within the United Nations

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[7] IPCC Official Website. Available: https://www.ipcc.ch/ (accessed on: 02/01/2019)

Security Council (UNSC) from 2007 and references in state security strategy documents[8].

The multifaceted implications of climate change and the multiple conceptualizations of the referent object of security led to the emergence of diverse narratives on the links between climate change and security, as analyzed by McDonald. (2013, 2018) Following the same rationality as the early studies in environmental security, many of the analyses of climate security conceive it mainly as a challenge to physical integrity and the national interests of states. The topic has been extensively approached by US think-tanks, as the Council on Foreign Relations, the CNA and the New American Century, all of which have followed the same realist rationality in highlighting how climate change can represent harm to US national strategies. (McDonald, 2018: 160)

In addition, climate change has also been identified by analysts and international organizations as a threat multiplier that played a significant role in conflicts in Darfur (UNEP, 2007), Syria (Gleik, 2014, 2015; Selby at al, 2017) and even in the rise of Daesh (Strozier, Berkell, 2014). It therefore represents a threat to regional and international peace. (McDonald, 2018)

In contrast to the previous two perspectives, there are also analyses that frame the relationship between climate change and security in a way that puts other referent objects, especially individuals' well-being, as the primary subject to be protected. Aligned to the concept of human security, this sort of narrative has gained prominence within aid agencies and the UN General Assembly reports.

Nevertheless, there are studies that put not only humans, but also non-human beings such as animal and plant life, ecosystems and landscapes as subjects of security. Audra Mitchell (2014, p. 7) makes the case for a worldly approach to security in arguing that a human security rationality attempts "to secure human subject by dominating non-humans in the same way the states secure their subjects by colonizing territory". Thus, Mitchell rejects the concept of environmental

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[8] According to a study made by Scott (2015), around 70% of the countries who have released national security documents recognize climate change as a threat to national security. (McDonald, 2018)

security – as presented by the UNDP – for being essentially concerned with the insurance of natural resources for human needs.

These diverse narratives do not merely attract attention to distinct referent objects that can be threatened by the multiple manifestations of climate change, but these narratives also entail different political responses from diverse actors. While narratives that frame climate change as a threat to national security may reinforce practices which show useless to address the problem, reifying dangerous militarized and state-centered rationalities, human and worldly narratives encourage different political actions such as coordinated efforts to mitigate emissions and the adoption of disaster risk reduction strategies. (McDonald, 2018: 161, 162)

Thus, there is nothing inevitable about approaching climate change as a security problem. (McDonald, 2018) The diverse political practices endorsed by these different narratives indicate how security does not follow a single and fixed rationality. Based on this understanding, I argue that environmental related issues have the potential to disrupt meanings, practices and rationalities that have been characterizing the political and theoretical field of security for so long. However, I tend to agree with Krause and Williams (1997: 35), who advocate that new approaches to security necessarily require a re-theorization effort. This effort was conducted by a number of critical security authors and will be discussed in the next sections, so that their respective approaches may inform this work in a way that enables the analysis of environmental security through an ontological lens.

2.5.
The opening of the concept of security

Part of the discordance amongst these multiples theoretical approaches within ISS can be explained by the different meanings conferred to security. In his article *Security! What do you mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier*, Jef Huysmans (1998) asserts that, despite the fact that the debate on the broadening of the security agenda has raised interesting questions in ISS, the debate neglected deeper investigations of the concept of security itself. Annick Wibben (2008, p. 457) calls the efforts to challenge the meaning of security an "opening movement".

It is precisely this opening movement that Huysmans (1998) proposes via the interpretation of the concept of security as signifier - that is, as a chain of sounds - and not as signified - the image we usually correlate with the signifier. Based on Ferdinand Saussure's (1968) linguistic studies, the author states that there would be no natural correlation between the signifier (in this case, security) and a specific understanding, since the signified is constructed by historical, social and linguistic contexts. Thus, analyzing the meaning of security through the contexts in which the concept is articulated would be what the author calls a *thick signifier approach.* (Huysmans, 1998: 228)

According to Huysmans (1998: 226-229), there are three distinct forms of accessing meanings: the definition, the conceptual analysis and the *thick signifier approach*. The definition is the act of epitomizing meanings by means of statements, therefore determining the essence of a category. Its main function is to identify objects of analysis, separating them from distinct understandings. Although the definitions are limitless, the author acknowledges that this process is often constrained by pre-existing understandings. The academic community itself often works to constrain innovative definitions to ensure secure boundaries for disciplines. (Huysmans, 1998: 230) A clear example of such pressures would be the negative reaction of some traditional theorists like Walt (1990) to a broader understanding on security.

A conceptual analysis also seeks to concentrate meanings in order to grant a certain uniqueness; however, it is not based on a single definition, just as it does not seek to produce new definitions. In a different way, the conceptual analysis tries to reach a common denominator between the different conceptions in order to create an organizational matrix; that is, an analytical scheme of security studies that allows deeper reflections on the policies, ideas and debates that characterize the field. (Huysmans, 1998: 230, 231)

Finally, the thick signifier approach comes from the understanding that the concept of security involves questions and specific material arrangements, peering into key dimensions of a wider order of meanings. Therefore, its focus lies on the order of meanings articulated within the field of security, which makes it possible

to pose questions about how the security language produces specific forms of relationship and specific practices. (Huysmans, 1998: 230, 231)

> In a thick signifier analysis, one tries to understand how security language implies a specific metaphysics of life. The interpretation does not just explain how a security story requires the definition of threats, a referent object, etc. In other words, interpreting security as a thick signifier brings us to an understanding of how the category "security" articulates a particular way of organizing forms of life. (Huysmans, 1998, p. 231)

According to Huysmans (1998: 232, 233, 249), such an approach allows for deeper reflections on policies engendered by the security signifier, making room for a more ambitious research agenda, capable of analyzing how the security signifier works in distinct contexts:

> What does security mean when women involved in a guerrilla movement in Latin America speak it? How does security work in the current ways of regulating migration to Western Europe? What does security signify in gangland? Is security a central concept in the interaction between particular tribes or clans in Africa? Answers to these questions would contribute considerably to the awareness of what security (or, most probably different securities) are about and what security policies imply. They would also make it possible to start a comparative analysis of the meaning articulated by security practices. Further, a thick signifier approach raises the question how the discursive formation of security we are used to in International Relations maybe changing as a result of uttering "security" in the context of a transformation of modernity. (Huysmans, 1998, p. 249, 250)

This particular way of conceptualizing security is one of the main focuses of this thesis. Throughout the analysis of different narratives of (in)security, I show how climate change engenders new security rationalities that cannot be grasped by traditional approaches.

The bibliographical analysis briefly presented here raises important questions for this thesis: Which new meanings and rationalities of security will emerge or become more prominent in the face of the transformations brought on by

climate change? Will security be merely linked to the physical survival of the referent objects? And finally, in view of Huysmans's (1998) *thick signifier approach*, could the environmental problem result in other meanings and other organizational security systems that are not necessarily produced by language?

Considering the questions and insights inspired by Huysmans' work (1998), this research project will focus on a theoretical framework that may be considered as part of this critical effort to look for different meanings and rationalities of security. The ontological security theory challenges the dominant understanding and practices in ISS; thus, showing how the security signifier varies in time and space, not being fixed to an unescapable rationality. The next section will analyze the key assumptions of the ontological security theory as well as the influences that it inherited from other study areas such as psychiatry, sociology and critical security studies. It will also show how climate change, together with its multifaceted effects, can lead to a condition of ontological insecurity.

2.6.
Beyond Physical Survival: Ontological Security as the security of the self

Introduced by the psychiatrist Ronald David Laing in the 1960s and introduced to social sciences by Anthony Giddens in the late 1990s, the concept of ontological security was innovative since it was not strictly linked to physical survival. At the end of the 1990s, the academic work of authors such as Jef Huysmans (1998) and Bill McSweeney (1999) made it possible to analyze ontological security within ISS. For Huysmans (1998), the post-Cold War context and the broadening movement of the security agenda contributed to a condition of ontological insecurity. Huysmans argues that the multiplicity of threats and the difficulty of states and security agencies face in hierarchizing and managing them create a sense of chaos. (Huysmans, 1998: 243) By contrast, McSweeney presents ontological security as the ability to "find the meaning of security from the common experiences of individuals" (McSweeney, 1999, p.154), which supports the ideas surrounding the flexibility of the concept depending on temporal and spatial contexts.

However, the way in which ontological security was firstly approached by Laing (1965) differs profoundly from both understandings. Laing (1965: 41) describes an ontological secure person as someone who has a sense of presence in the world "as a real, alive, whole and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person." An individual who has a firm core of ontological security does not question her or his identity and autonomy, because that individual understands it as a continuum that coexists spatially with her or his body throughout her or his lifetime. (Laing, 1969: 43) On the other hand, an ontological insecure individual would be someone who lacks this sense of personal consistency and "whose experiences may be utterly lacking in any unquestionable self-validating certainties." (Laing, 1969, p. 41)

Despite being a psychiatrist, it was Laing who was responsible for the first attempts to situate ontological security not only as a mental, but also as a sociological subject. His work challenged the conventional and medically-based position in psychiatry that mental health is solely a biological condition. For Laing, mental health must also be analyzed socially. (Croft, 2015: 220)

This task was conducted by Giddens (1990, p. 92), who defines ontological security as "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action". By self-identity, the author presumes reflexive awareness, which means that it is not "given", but something that "has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual". (Giddens, 1990, p. 52) In this sense, self-identity is defined as "the self as *reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography*. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent." (Giddens, 1990, p. 53, italics in the original) Thus, differently from Laing (1969), Giddens "established an intersubjective link between self-reflective individuals and the social structures they produce and participate in" (Vieira, 2018, p. 147)

Building especially on the work of Giddens (1990), Jennifer Mitzen is one of the pioneers in the studies of ontological security in IR. Her studies about the ontological security of states relies especially in a stable understanding about the individual self as a basic pre-requisite of state's agency. (Mitzen, 2006: 344) Then,

action and identity could be seen as co-constitutive, and any sort of uncertainty that can put agency at risk would also imply a threat to identity:

> In order to be themselves and to act, therefore, individuals need to bring uncertainty within tolerable limits, to feel confident that their environment will be predictably reproduced. Importantly, this confidence is independent of the objective level of uncertainty, which might remain high. It is an internal, subjective property. (Mitzen, 2006, p. 346)

In addition to the close relation between agency and identity, routines also play a central role in ontological security as they have the power to stabilize identities. Mitzen (2006: 24) argues that our deep need for ontological security helps to explain our attachment to cognitive and behavioral routines, since they are imperative for the construction of certainty about the world and our relations with others. (Mitzen, 2006: 24)

Giddens (1990) also points to the role of routines when asserting that ontological security is directly attached, in cognitive and emotive terms, to what he calls "practical consciousness":

> Many of the elements of being able to 'go on' are carried at the level of practical consciousness, incorporated within the continuity of everyday activities. Practical consciousness is integral to the reflexive monitoring of action, but it is 'non-conscious', rather than unconscious. Most forms of practical consciousness could not be 'held in mind' during the course of social activities, since their tacit or taken-for-granted qualities form the essential condition which allows actors to concentrate on tasks at hand. (Giddens, 1990, p. 35, 36)

Both Giddens (1990) and Mitzen (2006) would also point to the role of society in preserving ontological security. As routines play a central role in the production of practical consciousness which, in turn, is deeply related to the feeling of ontological security, the role of society is also critical for the creation and maintenance of ontological security. Society is produced and reproduced by the repetition of social practices through which its members engage in co-constitutive

processes between individual routines and the societal structure. In this sense, Mitzen (2006, p. 348) relies in Giddens' theory of structuration to argue that: "Individual-level routines thus constitute society, which in turn stabilizes each individual's sense of self."

In sum, by studying ontological security through a sociological perspective, these authors argue that the stability of self-identities and material and social environments of action would show as prerequisites for the maintenance of ontological security. However, this condition proves to be fragile and unstable. This leads us directly to the argument that will be approached in the next subsection: the role of modernity in sustaining or threatening ontological security.

2.6.1.
Modernity, Climate Change and Ontological (In)security

Since the 1960s, Laing (1969) had pointed out the coldness and inhumanity of modern societies. For him, the multiple threats and the existential anxiety that arise from modern social relations contribute to depersonalizing individuals. (Kinnvall, Mitzen, 2016: 1) Giddens is also worried about the effects of modernity. He is primarily interested in analyzing how modern institutions and practices have long-range effects on individuals and societies, thereby establishing dialectical relations between the local and global.

In his previous Theory of Structuration, Giddens (1984) had argued that agents and structures were mutually constitutive. Therefore, agents are influenced by the structure to the same extent that the structure would be the product of agents' choices and practices. This co-constitutive understanding justifies Giddens' choice of analyzing ontological security through a structural approach. (Kinnvall, Mitzen, 2016: 2) For Giddens, in the period of late modernity, the individual is deeply embedded in an intersubjective whole, which makes a separated and asocial analysis impossible. (Croft, 2015: 222)

In this sense, part of the socialization of the individual would be derived from the stability of routines and practices. It enables a certain degree of predictability that, in turn, assists in the constructing and preservation of individual identities. (Inner; Steele, 2016: 16) This viewpoint leads Giddens (2002: 155) to

claim that the development of stable environments of action is crucial for the preservation of ontological security. Consequently, the abrupt disruption of these routines, relations and understandings would alter the ordinary circumstances of everyday life, endangering the *self* (Giddens, 2002: 155) in a way that could cause existential crises, anxieties or even violence. (Kinnvall, Mitzen, 2016: 2)

Thus, ontological security may be undermined in critical situations, described by Giddens (1984, p. 50) as "circumstances of radical disjuncture of an unpredictable kind which affect substantial numbers of individuals, situations that threaten or destroy the certitudes of institutionalized routines". However, for Giddens (2002:11), the maintenance of conditions that encourage the preservation of ontological security becomes an extremely arduous task in the modern context when risks acquire far-reaching consequences.

Due to these extensive consequences, modernity may be characterized by processes of reorganization of time and space associated with what Giddens calls *disembedding mechanisms*. These mechanisms decouple social relations from their specific locations, recombining them at vaster temporal and spatial distances. (Giddens, 2002: 09) Hence, regardless of their local contexts of action, modern institutions and practices are able to exert global influence.

These *disembedding mechanisms* fundamentally alter the content of everyday life, creating dynamics of suppression of the self: (Giddens, 2002: 2, 6)

> Transformations in self-identity and globalisation, I want to propose, are the two poles of the dialectic of the local and the global in conditions of high modernity. Changes in intimate aspects of personal life, in other words, are directly tied to the establishment of social connections of very wide scope. (Giddens, 1990, p. 32)

Gidden's notion of *disembedding mechanisms* faithfully illustrates the temporal and spatial decoupling of climate change. Despite being the product of human induced practices – as current production and consumption partners - conducted and shared mainly by industrialized societies, climate effects move smoothly in time and space. It is a global problem, although it presents more intense

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effects in southern countries, due to their geographical characteristics and their scarce resources for investment in adaptation measures.

The far-reaching social, economic and political effects of climate change are a good example of Gidden's (1990: 5) reading of modernity. Climate change is perhaps the clearest illustration of how modern relations and institutions turn daily life into a dialectical interplay between the global and the local. (Giddens, 1991: 5)

As stated by Laing and Giddens, to live our lives as ontological secure persons, we must take for granted a stable environment of action, as issues regarding the preservation of self-identities. In some communities, these features are deeply related to the role of tradition. Tradition makes it possible to establish a bridge between the past and the future, helping to decrease uncertainty and enhance the feeling of biographical continuity, as Giddens asserts (1990, p. 29):

> In pre-modern contexts, tradition has a key role in articulating action and ontological frameworks; tradition offers an organising medium of social life specifically geared to ontological precepts. In the first place, tradition orders time in a manner which restricts the openness of counterfactual futures. People in all cultures, including the most resolutely traditional, distinguish future, present and past, and weigh alternative courses of action in terms of likely future considerations. (…) where traditional modes of practice are dominant, the past inserts a wide band of 'authenticated practice' into the future. Time is not empty, and a consistent 'mode of being' relates future to past.

However, all these elements are seemingly challenged in the modern context. That is the reason why Giddens (1990, p. 16) defines modernity as a post-traditional order in which institutions and modes of behavior "increasingly have become world-historical in their impact". The far-reaching consequences of climate change are contributing to a decrease in the role of tradition in some communities, which in turn leads to the collapse of the bridge between past, present and future. If in pre-modern times, space and time were connected by tradition so that local practices, routines and beliefs were able to shape the content of the future and provide a stable sense of self-identity, modernity and its *disembedded mechanisms* open up an empty dimension of time, causing existential uncertainty, anxiety and fear about the future. (Giddens, 1990)

Thus, climate change not only endangers the physical security of states and individuals but also poses a threat to the stable environment of action, sense of biographic continuity and agency of some traditional communities, such as the islands states. Their ontological security is at risk because their islands are not merely where they live but are part of who they are. At this point, it is worth noting that it does not mean that identities are fixed and stable. Identities are fluid and vary from individual to individual; however, it can be said that there is a core of identity shared by traditional communities, and this core is connected to their material and social space of action, which is severely threated by the climate effects.

In the following chapters of this thesis, I will turn to a more detailed analysis of how climate change has been disrupting what Giddens (1990, p. 16) calls "the situatedness of place" in islands states as the Marshall Islands, generating a condition of ontological insecurity. The following sections will turn on how ontological security has been employed within ISS and how it will be operationalized as the theoretical framework of this thesis.

2.6.2.
Ontological Security in ISS

Ontological security gave significant contributions to ISS by stimulating an understanding of security which differs from the one propagated by traditionalist theories and by emphasizing how the search for ontological security can trigger instabilities and conflicts through dynamics that differ than those previously considered by the mainstream. (Mitzen, 2006; Kinnvall, Mitzen, 2016) From the early 2000s, ontological security has been mobilized to shed light on the role of "identity and memory for the construction of security." (Innes, 2017, p. 2)

In a special issue of the scientific journal *Cooperation and Conflict,* Kinnvall and Mitzen (2016, p. 3,4) argue that, despite being a heterogeneous field, it is possible to identify a conceptual core of the studies on ontological security:

> A focus on ontological security puts the emphasis on what goes into the stories or narratives we tell ourselves about ourselves and our relations to others. It is a call to investigate cognitive and

> affective reasons why individuals, groups and even states experience insecurity and existential anxiety and to explore the emotional responses to these feelings. (Kinnvall, Mitzen, 2016, p. 3, 4)

Thus, in a broad sense, ontological security theory is focused not exclusively on the relationship between identity and security, but on the relationship between identity and political outcomes as well, while taking into account both subjective and socially constituted elements. (Kinnvall, Mitzen, 2016) Nevertheless, unlike what happens in other social sciences, where the notion of ontological security is specifically applied to individuals or groups, part of the literature produced in the context of ISS transfers the search for ontological security to the state level. That makes the research community of ontological security in IR wide-ranging and varied in terms of its focus on different referent objects, political outcomes and methods of inquiry. (Kinnvall; Mitzen, 2016:1)

As noted by Stuart Croft and Nick Vaughan-Williams (2016: 03), it is possible to identify two trends in ontological security studies within IR. While one preserves influences from the social sciences by emphasizing routines, practices and discourses, other incorporates to ISS mainstream thinking, assuming that not only individuals but also states are social actors that perform to protect their self-identity. But in contrast to these mainstream approaches, these authors draw attention to the fact that insecurity would not result from the use of force alone, but also from transformations and processes that can endanger both the way states perceive themselves and how they are seen by others.[9] (Steele, 2008); (Innes; Steele, 2014: 16)

In *Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma*, Mitzen argues that, like individuals or groups, states also seek ontological security. Since it is achieved through the routinization and the stabilization of relations with others – regardless of whether these relations are friendly or hostile - they can even put in risk their physical survival in choosing to maintain conflictual

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[9] It is worth noting that, although based on a state-centered ontology, such movements differ from mainstream studies as they deny the idea that states act exclusively to ensure their physical survival in the midst of an anarchic environment. As defended by Steele (2008: 2, 3), the physical security of states is undoubtedly a relevant concern; however, focus on the ontological security of these actors prevails, as this would guarantee their self-identity by preserving the way states see each other and how they want to be seen.

relations. In this sense, in opposition to realist premises – which point to the security dilemma as a product of uncertainty about the others states' intentions – Mitzen (2006: 354) assumes that conflict can derive from the states' desire to preserve their ontological security: "Because routines that perpetuate physical insecurity can provide ontological security, states can become attached to physically dangerous relationships and be unable, or unwilling, to learn their way out."

Thus, in introducing ontological security and the role of identities in the studies of IR, Mitzen (2006: 343) shows how the security dilemma - a fundamental concept for the traditional ISS approaches – could be triggered and sustained by a different rationale than the search for physical survival; thus, offering insights into different sources of conflict. By casting a light on the role of identities in the state's security strategies, state-centered approaches such as Mitzen's have contributed to an explanation of what might seem to be counterintuitive security initiatives. (Innes, 2017)

However, by linking security strictly with state identity and reproducing the traditional narrative on the state as the main subject of security, the state-centered approach in ontological security has been a target of criticism. (Innes, 2017: 2). In this sense, Croft (2015: 219) argues that these state-centered analyses show how the ISS field still holds the marks of its IR origin, where the focus lies heavily on inter-state relations. The author also claims that ontological security studies should concentrate on "the understandings of individuals about their own security, intersubjectively constructed" (Croft, 2015, p. 219) and that ontological security must be grasped in order to access not only the nature of collective insecurities across state boundaries but specially within it, thereby encouraging the development of more sociological readings of security.

In this sense, Kinnvall's article, entitled *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, may offer a fruitful approach. Influenced by Giddens, Kinnvall (2004: 742) claims that globalization produces structural conditions of insecurity. For her, the new character of the social and economic relations brought about globalization, by promoting changes in terms of time, space and cognition, may destabilize "the definitions of who we are and where we come from".

In this way, Kinnvall (2004, p. 73) claims that globalization contests individual and group lives, producing a search for "constant time and spacebound identities." For her, these current dynamics would reveal the connections between globalization and the ISS field, in terms of the securitization of migrants and asylum-seekers, for example, searching for ways to ensure the ontological security of individuals who see their self-identities as threatened.

Kinnvall states that ontologically insecure individuals try to reduce their insecurity and anxiety by seeking the reaffirmation of their self-identity. In this sense, nationalism and religion emerge as two important "identity-signifiers" that can provide the desired security and stability. (Kinnvall, 2004: 742) While seeking to comprehend what happens with the notions of "self" and "other" within this process of rescuing self-identities – which she calls a process of "securitizing subjectivity" – Kinnvall (2004, p. 751) combines a structural approach with psychoanalytical studies, which allows an analysis of the emotional aspects of identity creation:

> What psychoanalysis is able to do, however (…) is to give emphasis to the inner life of human beings by seeing individuals as linked not only structurally but also through emotional intersubjectivity in which they continually receive and give emotional messages that often exist at an unconscious level. (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 751)

Kinnvall (2004: 755) also claims that, when trying to securitize subjectivity, ontologically insecure individuals typically create a figure of an enemy, reducing both self and others to cultural characteristics to be understood as natural and unified. In this sense, "nationalism and religion supply particularly powerful stories and beliefs (discourses) through their ability to convey a picture of security, of a "home" safe from intruders." (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 763)

In her later work *Globalization and Religious Nationalism in India*, Kinnvall (2006, p. 31) highlights the material and emotional importance of "home" for ontological security. Quoting authors such as Dupuais and Thorns (1998: 30), Kinnvall asserts that home has the ability to link a material environment with a set

of emotional meanings in order to offer a sense of permanence and continuity. Thus, since "home is able to provide a site of constancy in the social and material environment (…)" (Kinnvall, 2006, p. 31), it works as a powerful promotor of ontological security.

Other authors such as Croft (2015) choose to focus on the fragility and impermanence of ontological security. For him, since ontological security always evokes a sense of precariousness, the fear of becoming ontologically insecure is a constitutive and unescapable element of it. Croft argues that its impermanent character would become even more apparent in those "critical situations" described by Giddens (1991). These would bring radical disjunctions that may destabilize ordinary routines, trust structures, agency and identities:

> Critical situations are crises, events, and processes that are constructed into fundamental moments in time requiring a choice about response. (…) Critical situations emphasize the fragility of ontologically secure entities: that established, everyday routines that allow a foundation to life can be interrupted; that trust structures – tokens, experts' roles – may lose their centrality; that agency may be questioned, as the actor considers means of action that conform to his/her self-identity; and that the sense of biography could suffer temporal dislocation. It is in the construction of critical situations that the robustness or otherwise of the ontologically secure is put to the test. (Croft, 2015, p. 223)

In contrast to these last authors, Giorgio Shani (2017) adopts a post-colonial approach on ontological security in order to address critiques of human security analysis. For him, since the "psychological security of the self" (Shani, 2017, p. 3) is a *sine qua non* condition for the right to live "free from fear and free from want", as defined by the UNDP report, ontological security should be understood as a pre-condition to human security.

Following Giddens, Shani (2017: 3) states that the prior existence of a stable sense of self is crucial for individuals to live with freedom and dignity. The author suggests that human security approaches prioritize an ethnocentric conception of the human and therefore neglects diverse ideas about the 'human' and 'security'. (Shani, 2017, p. 3) Because human security approaches do not comprehend how elements such as culture and religion could provide answers to existential questions

– questions which are crucial for the preservation of ontological security. Shani argues that these approaches are not only unable to preserve ontological security, but also seem to reduce the individual – especially the individual of the post-colonial world – to a 'bare life' in Agamben's (1995) terms.

There are still other insightful works that mobilize ontological security in the analysis of diverse topics such as memory and trauma (Innes; Steele, 2014), securitization of identities (Browning, Joenniemi, 2016), terrorism (Combes, 2016), peacebuilding (Kay, 2012), foreign policy (Subotic, 2015), affects (Solomon, 2012), as well as works that address the limits of an ontological security approach (Rossdale, 2015). This section does not intend to provide a complete bibliographic review on ontological security, but to offer a general idea of the different ways by which it has been approached within ISS. Taking this into account, the following section shows how ontological security will be approached as the theoretical framework of this thesis.

2.7.
Ontological Security as a Theoretical Framework

As stated by Mitzen (2006), by seeking ontological security, actors can confront physical insecurity. This same dynamic could also be noted when analyzing the case of the Marshallese, who face the hard choice of abandoning their islands due to challenges posed by climate change or staying and putting their survival at risk. Many of these inhabitants, especially those who are elderly, refuse to migrate, even though their islands are increasingly becoming uninhabitable due to water scarcity, soil salinization, food cultivation difficulties and the spread of disease.

The association of the concept of security in militarized and antagonistic relations between "us x others" and the idea of environmental problems merely as causes of physical insecurity have proven misleading in the case of the Marshall Islands. Therefore, this thesis intends to go beyond works that, on the one hand, assume a unique and inflexible rationality to security and, on the other, frame climate change simply as a threat to national and global security. Human security approaches, as usually verified in ESS, also seem unable to grasp the specificities

of the islanders' situation. Despite not limiting its analysis to threats to physical security – since it encompasses both freedom from fear and freedom from want – these approaches fail to conceptualize how the permanent transfer of these individuals from their ancestral lands – with which they have historical, cultural and emotional bonds – generates a condition of insecurity.

Thus, considering the inability of these approaches to conceptualize the environmental challenges and comprehend the different ways by which individuals frame their security, this thesis will rely both on Huysmans' thick signifier approach and on the theory of ontological security. It aims to analyze how climate change can also be seen as a potential threat to the cosmovision[10], self-identities of some individuals whose sense of security is intimately connected to nature as their material and social environment of action.

In order to present how ontological security will be used throughout this work, it is useful to think in terms of the three criteria employed by Kinnvall and Mitzen to synthetize some points of dissonance within this body of literature. For them, studies on ontological security could be categorized in three different ways: 1) whether ontological security is a trans-historical need or a product of modernity; 2) whether the analysis can be located as problem-solving (having in mind a closed conception on subjectivity) or following a critical/emancipatory approach and 3) whether the notion of self is inter-subjective – meaning that it is always related to others – or intra-subjective or internal – thus, fulfilling particular preconceptions. (Kinnvall, Mitzen, 2016: 4)

With regards to the first criteria, this thesis draws on the work of authors such as Giddens (1990) and Kinnvall (2006, 2017), who state that modernity (or globalization, in the case of Kinnvall), creates uncertainty and ontological insecurity. That is not to say that the ontological insecure condition did not exist before modernity. In a different way, these authors argue that modern institutions trigger new dynamics that, through the recombination of time and space and the disruption of tradition, makes it harder to sustain a biographical continuity and a stable sense of self.

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[10] Cosmovision is defined as a "worldview (that) consists of the suppositions, premises, and ideologies of a socio-cultural group which determines how they perceive the world". (Sanchez, 2010, p. 79 *apud* Eisenstadt; West, 2017, p. 10)

In terms of the second criteria, this thesis tries to avoid any closed definition of security/insecurity. My objective here is not to present the "correct" meaning or the more "suitable" way to understand the concept of security. By contrast, I rely in critical security approaches and in the opening movement of security to argue that there is no natural relation between the signifier of security and a specific meaning. Hence, I attempt to offer contextual understandings regarding realities that depart from those where ISS approaches have been developed, revealing the inadequacy of certain ideas and practices when they are applied to different contexts. In this sense, it will be possible to unveil how hegemonic narratives about security do not correspond to a timeless and incontestable description about what security "is". Rather, they rely on authoritative claims that create an effect of truth (Foucault, 1998) within ISS.

In this way, this work converges with Huysmans in its aim to provide not a closed, but a contextual understanding of security through the operationalization of a thick signifier approach. As Kinnvall (2004: 75) states, analyzing security as a thick signifier provides insights into how structural conditions of insecurity are connected to emotional aspects and the mobilization of identities. In this sense, the Marshallese conceptualization of security will be analyzed through a search of key dimensions of (in)security at the center of a wider order of meanings. It is worth noting, however, that these meanings are not necessarily built through linguistic practices. In the following chapters, I will argue how meanings of security may be strengthened or disrupted by diverse aesthetics representations, both oral and visual.

Finally, with regards to the third criteria relating to an inter-subjective or intra-subjective notion of self, this work diverges from Kinnvall (2006) and Mitzen's (2006) understanding on the dichotomous relation between "self" and "other". This is not to say that the Marshallese do not see themselves as different from the Japanese, the Americans or other ethnic groups. It is indisputable that their diverse colonial encounters with external others has helped them shape local understandings about themselves. (Roudiak-Gould, 2013: 21) However, in the following chapters I argue that the Marshallese self-identities are not deemed threatening by a stranger otherwise it may have been neutralized to guarantee their sense of ontological security. In this way, their conceptualization of security challenges not only the militarized rationality that permeates ISS, but also the

conflictual and dichotomous identities that are usually present in ontological security studies.

2.8.
Final Considerations

This chapter pursued two core goals: in the first place, it presented an analysis of the ISS theoretical trajectory, seeking to shed light on referent objects, meanings, practices and rationalities usually attached to security. Throughout the presentation of this trajectory, it aimed to demonstrate how conceptualizations of security within ISS are still very much attached to state-centric, exceptionalist and euro-centric notions, in a way to build a hegemonic narrative on what security "is" and how it should be handled. In the name of an objectivist and problem-solving approach, these mainstream approaches do not comprise the complexities, contingency and specificities of spatial and social contexts such as is the case with the Marshall Islands.

For authors in favor of this later rationality (Walt, 1990), keeping ISS limited to problems of war and violence guarantees that security theories would remain useful and capable of offering practical solutions to "real" security problems. By contrast, I argue that, in revealing the political character of the security agenda and in allowing a contextual reading of security, critical security studies and the opening movement of security show the existence of diverse readings of security; thus, revealing the inability of mainstream approaches to make sense of cases that differ from their realities.

Secondly, taking into consideration the inability of both mainstream theories and ESS to analyze these specificities, the chapter aimed to present ontological security theory as a fruitful approach to mediate the connections between climate change and security in contexts such as Marshall Islands. The environmental security approach, as presented in the first section of this chapter, would offer an analysis of the Marshalls Islands that sees climate change as a threat to national and/ or human security. State-centered studies would probably point to how climate change and its multifaceted effects would undermine the sovereignty of this state, while liberal human approaches would possibly focus on how the environmental

crisis would decrease the ability of the government to manage essential resources and protect its citizens, therefore constituting a threat to human survival and well-being.

However, climate change does not appear solely as a threat to the physical survival of states and its inhabitants. Its effects also endanger the ontological security of affected populations since, as this phenomenon worsens, it is likely that these individuals will be forced to permanently abandon their ancestral lands. By imposing the need for compulsory displacement and resettlement of these individuals in another territory, climate change makes the preservation of specific practices, routines, ideas and relationships impossible, putting the Marshallese self-identity and biographical continuity at risk. Thus, throughout the analysis of the social, economic, political and emotional challenges brought by climate change to Marshall Islands, I hope to show how the concept of security can articulate distinct meanings when applied to different historical, social and linguistic contexts which diverge from those articulated by traditional approaches. As a result, this rethinking would also allow for critical reflection on how the security field can operate from other rationalities, challenging the dynamics and fixed meanings that end up precluding theoretical and political efforts with former and contemporary challenges, such as climate change. Such a move would enable, as suggested by Jef Huysmans (1998), a more ambitious research agenda for ISS and deeper reflections on the different ways by which security operates in view of changing contexts, referent objects and threats.

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3.
Culture, Aesthetics and Emotions: a Framework for the Analysis of Ontological Security

> *All cultural sites are powerful arenas in which political struggles take place.* Culture is not opposed to politics. *Culture is political, and politics is cultural* (Weber, 2005, p. 188, emphasis in original)

While the second chapter offered an analysis of the theoretical trajectory of ISS in order to contextualize how traditional threats, referent objects and rationalities have been challenged, thus opening space for innovative ways of conceptualizing security, this third chapter turns to the analytical strategies employed by this work.

As previously discussed, using ideas drawn from ontological security theory, this thesis offers an analysis of the concept of security, and how it may manifest itself differently from a traditional ISS' conceptualization. However, this objective inevitably raises the question of how ontological (in)security can be approached. Pursuing this line of questioning, this chapter turns to the presentation of potential analytical avenues that allow an investigation into how security can be experienced in a more ontological way.

Hence, this chapter begins with the presentation of three different, but interrelated concepts that could offer meaningful insights on alternative security narratives. Culture, aesthetics and emotions were, for a long time, marginalized subjects in IR. I am aware that all these concepts are deeply embedded in a Western rationality; nevertheless, I will argue in favor of the study of these three elements as invaluable framework if employed with some caution with regards to the specificities of the historical, political, social and cultural contexts of the subject analyzed.

Having these considerations in mind, the first few sections of this chapter will present the context in which culture, aesthetics and emotions were introduced to IR. These sections will also highlight the way they interrelate, showing how the

late usage of the word 'culture' became attached to aesthetics. Culture, aesthetics and emotions also provide crucial insights into how security can be experienced and articulated differently.

By understanding culture as a site of meaning construction and political struggle, as well as by employing an aesthetic curiosity, this thesis attempts to grasp how security meanings and discourses are being represented, reproduced and challenged. As part of her study into the role of women in international politics, Cynthia Enloe (2004, p. 3) developed the term "feminist curiosity" in order to describe denaturalized power structures "within institutions, in societies, in international affairs", whose solidity depends on our lack of curiosity about them. In this thesis, an aesthetic curiosity is equally relevant to exposing critical questions about the stability of hegemonic discourses that have been naturalized and normalized within the theoretical and political fields of security. In this sense, I argue that an aesthetic curiosity is capable of disrupting the state-centered, militarized and exclusionary understanding and practices of security. At the same time, it can legitimize other subjects to talk and act in the name of security.

This critical effort seems to converge on the idea defended by Burke at al. (2016, p. 500) in *Planet Politics: a Manifesto from the End of IR*. For those authors "new practices, new ideas, stories and myths" are needed to bind environmental and social justice together. In this sense, I claim that an aesthetic curiosity provides us with a different layer of analysis to understand security both in ontological and environmental terms.

As anticipated by Shapiro (2013), the arts allow a diverse kind of political understanding of security, enabling a different ontological framework and a wider political spatial imagination. In the particular case of the Marshall Islands, the analysis of aesthetic artifacts – such as storytelling, poems, pictures and drawings – reveals how nature is so deeply embedded in the islanders' cosmologies that it makes it impossible to conceptualize security without considering the role of the natural world in providing a stable environment of action and sense of self-identity for its inhabitants.

The analysis of these representations – and the emotions depicted by them – allows us to make sense of how climate change is destroying homes, practices

and relations – both interpersonal relations and those between humans and nature - in a way that undermines security, not only in physical but, most of all, ontological terms.

3.1.
Culture and International Relations

Talking about culture is undoubtedly a hard task. Aware of culture's inherent incongruities, I do not intend to present an arbitrary and closed definition of culture. Neither do I intend to present a fixed definition Marshallese culture (*manit*). Rather, in this section, I seek to expose how culture has been conceptualized and how it will be employed in this thesis, taking into account the specificities of Marshall Islands.

In his 1983 book, *Keywords*, Raymond Williams, a pioneer in cultural studies, maintains that culture is one of the most complicated words in the English language. This complexity is partly explained by the fact that culture has been used in distinct intellectual arenas and incompatible systems of thought. (Williams, 1983: 87) In earlier times, culture was employed as a noun of a process, especially regarding the natural growth of crops and animals. Later, from the XVIII and XIX centuries, the term was used to designate a process of human development, as a kind of metaphor of its first connotation. (Williams, 1983: 87)

In Europe, it was not unusual to use the word as a synonym for civilization:

> first in the abstract sense of a general abstract process of becoming 'civilized' or 'cultivated'; second in the sense which had already been established for *civilization* by the historians of the Enlightenment (…) in the popular form of the universal histories, as a description for a secular process of human development. (Williams, 1983, p. 89, emphasis in the original)

However, this second usage did not occur without resistance, even from some Europeans writers. In *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of the Mankind*, Johan Gottfried Herder attacked the widespread belief in the existence of a unilineal process of development that would lead to a higher European culture. Under the

veil of racist and Eurocentric ideas, and inspired by narratives of the white man's burden, this understanding of culture helped to legitimize the colonizing practices of great powers worldwide. Hence, grounded on critiques such as Herder's, 'culture' started to be employed in the plural – "cultures" – as a way to comprehend "the specific and variable cultures of different nations and periods, but also the specific and variable cultures of social and economic groups within a nation". (Williams, 1983, p. 89) Thus, employing the word in the plural suggests that 'culture' is not something stable and homogeneous that we can easily identify. (Weber, 2005: 03)

Despite the recognition of the complexities inherent to this concept, through his rich historical and linguistic analysis, Williams (1983: 90) identifies three different modern "categories of usage" of culture. For him, culture can be employed as: 1) a noun that describes a general process of intellectual development; 2) a noun that illustrates a particular way of life, and finally 3) the independent and abstract noun which relates to the artistic activities and the works of intellectuals. In terms of this third connotation, the author claims: "This seems often now the most widespread use: *culture* is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film". (Williams, 1983, p. 90, emphasis in the original) Nevertheless, Williams (1983, p. 91) recognizes the complexity of relations among these three different usages and their intertwined meanings that comprehend "the relations between general human development and a particular way of life, and between both the works and practices of art and intelligence."

As a discipline which emerged with the main concern of analyzing the causes of inter-state armed conflicts, IR's agenda should confer a special place to the study of different cultures. However, especially after the behavioral revolution, when mainstream theories sought to find universal patterns of behavior and neutral knowledge, cultural analysis were pushed to the margins of the discipline. (Della Porta; Keating, 2008: 9) From the point of view of structuralist approaches, in being very specific and context dependent, variables such as culture and identity were not useful to explain these pretense universal patterns of behavior whose logic resides in the so-called anarchical structure of the international system.

Despite this ontological resistance, recently, the place of culture has been rescued since it has been discovered to be a concept capable of addressing some big questions in international politics. (Lapid; Kratochwill, 1996) In *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, Yosef Lapid (1996: 03) highlighted how culture and identity started to figure in a more prominent way in IR in the Post-Cold War period. Even though these topics have been extensively studied by so-called reflectivist approaches – such as some trends in Constructivism, Feminism, Poststructuralism and Postmodernism – two "sets of dramatic transitions" explain this "move back" to culture in the discipline. The first one is related to historical events such as the strengthening of separatist movements and the deep transformations brought by the end of the Cold War. The two contradictive and ambivalent processes, illustrated both by the reemergence of ethnic clashes and of the debates about the beginning of a new globalized era, highlighted how, in Lapid's (1996, p. 10) words, "IR's fascination with sovereignty statehood has greatly decreased its ability to confront complex issues of ethnic nationhood and political otherhood". On the other hand, the second trend identified by Lapid (1996: 04) relates to the intellectual openness at work during this same period. This theoretical openness allowed a greater flexibility and heterogeneity within IR; thus, challenging the structuralist mainstream and making space for sociological readings of world politics.

Therefore, it is from the plurality of ideas and meanings brought by this interdisciplinarity that new dimensions of culture started to be explored. For the cultural theorist Clifford Geertz (1975, p. 448), culture could be defined as "an ensemble of stories we tell about ourselves", while for Stuart Hall (1997: 02), it should not be simply seen as a set of things or practices, but as a process of production and exchange of meanings between members of a society. Within IR, Cynthia Weber (2005, p. 03, 04) conceptualizes culture as "sense-making", "signifying practices" and "an ensemble of stories, beliefs and habits" that help us to make sense of the world and to "produce, reproduce and circulate that sense." For authors such as Della Porta and Keating (2008, p. 9): "Culture is located neither at the level of the individual nor at that of a reified society, but at the inter-subjective level, where it provides a means for identifying group boundaries, interpreting events and according value".

As advocated by Lapid (1996: 08), it was necessary that the move toward culture in IR be followed by a rethinking effort, in a way to challenge essentialist, categorical and unitary considerations. Hence, it is possible to identify multiples understandings on culture by juxtaposing its *social constructed* nature against its *given nature*; its *diversifying* versus its *homogenizing* implications and its *multidimensional* versus its *static* features. (Lapid, 1996: 07)

Following Lapid (1998) and Weber (2005) and in opposition to what is claimed by some structuralist IR approaches – which suggest that culture is not important in the analysis of world politics since it can be seen merely as an attribute of individuals – in the course of this thesis, I show how culture is much more than a given and essentialized way of life. Thus, for the purpose of this work, culture is understood not only as socially constructed and multidimensional but, most of all, as a place of meaning construction and political struggles.

The openness to other disciplines and the increased emphasis on culture in IR have both lead to a bigger role for these alternative forms of meaning construction. Thus, based on the understanding that meaning is created not only through discourses and practices, but also through cultural and artistic representations, this thesis also explores aesthetics. However, before doing this, it seems necessary to approach the role and contributions of the so-called aesthetic and emotional turns in IR, since the methodological framework of this thesis owes much to the contributions made by the insertion of aesthetics and emotions as subjects of the discipline.

3.2.
Employing an Aesthetic Curiosity to make sense of others' (in)securities

The word *aesthetica* was used for the first time in the middle of the XVIII century as a title of a book by German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten. He borrowed it from the Greek *aisthesis,* which means a sense of perception. (Williams, 1983: 31) While its derivative and better known word *anaesthesia* has been used from the beginning of the XVIII century to designate a defect of physical sensation, its correlated word *anaesthetic* has its roots in the advances of medicine and denotes the substance that causes the deprivation of sensations. (Williams, 1983: 31)

Even though, in Greek, *aisthesis* was clearly associated with physical sensation, Baumgarten employed *aesthetica* to mean sensuous cognition and the apprehension of beauty, making possible its later connection to the arts (Williams, p. 1983: 32). Aesthetics was also discussed by authors such as Hegel, Tolstoy, Gramsci, Adorno and Rancière, although works on the philosophy of art predate this period, going as far back as Aristotle and Plato. (Moore; Shepherd, 2010: 300) Some authors, however, argue in favor of a wider understanding of aesthetics that goes beyond the arts. For Kavita Punjabi (2016), aesthetics can be conceived as a wider process of cognition and as a way to access knowledge and make sense of affective responses, while for Bleiker (2017, p. 258) aesthetics is about exploring "new ways of writing, seeing, hearing and sensing the political" through new insights and understandings that arts facilitate. (Bleiker, 2017: 261)

The history of the concept of aesthetics seems to be intertwined with the various meanings attached to culture, in terms of production of meaning, sense making and communication of emotions. (Weber, 2005) Within IR, aesthetics became known as "an entirely different approach to the studies of world politics" (Bleiker, 2001, p. 510), which basis lies in the analysis of representations.

In his seminal paper published by *Millennium*, Roland Bleiker (2001, p. 510) coined the term "aesthetic turn" as a product of two different shifts in the production of knowledge in world politics. The first shift would be carried out by postmodern theorists, who challenged the epistemology and ontology of orthodox thought in the discipline. The second shift is a more recent phenomenon, derived from the tendency of different authors to explore images, narratives, music, cinema and literature as valuable sources in international politics. Hence, it was not by coincidence that the emergence of aesthetics in IR occurred simultaneously with the reinsertion of culture within the discipline.

The body of literature on aesthetics is broad and diverse and encompasses wide-ranging debates on different topics such as emotions and meaning, visual and aural perception, taste and beauty. (Moore, Shepherd, 2010: 300) Academic works on aesthetics have contributed greatly to IR, by opening space for different forms of knowledge, challenging mainstream epistemologies and re-thinking the assumptions that drive world politics. (Bleiker, 2017: 258) The analytical emphasis

conferred "to affect rather than reason, judgement rather than fact, sensation rather than intellectualism" (Moore and Shepherd, 2010, p. 229), thus, enables aesthetic approaches to "stretch the boundaries of language so that we can think anew, but do so in ways that still allow us to communicate and change the way we think about the world." (Bleiker, 2017, p. 263)

The special place conferred to artistic representation is justified by the understanding that the political reality does not exist a priori, since the process of representation is its condition of possibility. Therefore, in contrast to the mainstream approaches of IR and ISS, which rely mainly on mimetic considerations, aesthetic thinking assumes the existence of an inevitable gap between the forms of representation and the object represented. (Bleiker, 2001: 510) Thus, rather than providing an inefficient attempt to mimetically reproduce the observed event itself, the study of aesthetics departs from the premise that this gap – between the object they seek to represent and the different forms of representation – is insurmountable, due to our inescapable inability to capture the essence of the objects analyzed.

Thereby, in contrast to positivists and traditional epistemologies of IR and ISS – which usually rely on the mimetic premise that produce objective and neutral explanations of world politics and security – authors engaged in aesthetics do not see the gap as a threat to scientific knowledge; instead, they recognize that all forms of knowledge depend on representation. In this sense, aesthetic approaches are more about the impossibility of understanding the world as it is, since observation, analysis and representation are all dependent on forms of interpretation and abstraction, thus, making clear the intersections between the object and the analyst. As a result, there would not be anything "given" or "out there" in world politics; rather, it is the product of the reproduction of perceptions and ideas by means of different kinds of representation, some more powerful than others as a means of creating an effect of truth.

For Bleiker (2017, p. 261), politics is located precisely in this gap. It shelters "collective conventions that determine which one of numerous plausible explanations are considered legitimate and which ones are deemed unreasonable or illegitimate". Hence, an aesthetic effort triggers both ontological and

epistemological questions about "the nature of politics and its actors and about our knowledge of them", but also about "who does what and what counts for knowledge and why?" (Bleiker, 2017, p. 262)

In clarifying his argument on the politics of aesthetics, Bleiker (2017: 262) quotes Jacques Rancière's framework, called the "distribution of the sensible", to show how aesthetical practices such as speaking, hearing, visualizing and feeling arbitrarily determine what is "thinkable, reasonable and doable". Nevertheless, like Rancière, Bleiker (2017, p. 262) highlights the fact that these practices are not fixed, but can be defied throughout different aesthetic engagements, that would be capable of "challenging the boundaries of what is visible and invisible, thinkable and unthinkable and thus of what can and cannot be debated in politics".

In-line with Bleiker's argument, this thesis relies on aesthetics to analyze how security can be understood and experienced in a more ontological way. The choice of aesthetics is justified by two reasons: the first one concerns its potential to offer new ways of thinking, sensing and communicating, bringing to light different concepts and rationalities on security which are usually marginalized by mainstream narratives in ISS. Due to its capacity to push the boundaries of language, aesthetics is a creative way to access diverse visions of the world, as well as the contexts and conditions that make these visions possible. In this sense, an aesthetic curiosity is a powerful way to centralize marginalized voices and local claims.

The second reason relates to the idea, shared by authors such as Bleiker and Hutchison (2008: 130), that aesthetics is particularly suited to capturing abstract elements as emotions. Emotions play a crucial role, not only in ontological security studies, but also in IR and ISS. Thus, analyzing representations such as poetry, television transmissions, movies, literature, photography, painting and so on "is as close as we can get to understanding emotions". (Bleiker; Hutchinson, 2008: 129)

But should not we analyze the object itself instead of its representation? The authors believe in the opposite for two reasons: first, emotions are by definition internal, what makes it very difficult to access them directly:

> Consider how surveys, no matter how meticulously designed and executed, only assess what people say about their emotions. The data that such studies produce still only reflect certain representations about emotions, rather than the emotions themselves. Ignoring this difference does not make scholarship any more objective or convincing. Quite to the contrary, doing so leads to major misperceptions about the significance of emotions and our ability to understand them properly. (Bleiker; Hutchinson, 2008, p. 129)

It was exactly the awareness of the limitations of language to engage and to communicate emotions that made me reject more traditional methods – such as semi-structured interviews – for revealing alternative narratives on security. Often, language does not fully express or access emotions. This applies to interviews, in particular, especially when they are not conducted in the interviewee's mother tongue, or when the support of a translator is necessary.

Second, representations are embedded, not only in highly emotional, but also political contexts. Through representation, individuals organize and communicate their different ideas of reality – and the respective emotions attached to them. (Bleiker, 2001: 512) Far from being limited to the private level, these individual viewpoints are socialized, so as to make them acquire a collective dimension that, in turn, help to shape political and social processes. (Bleiker; Hutchison, 2008: 130)

In this sense, an aesthetic curiosity challenges not only the pretense of mimetic representations of reality but also the level of analysis and binaries often evoked in IR – such as national versus international, state versus individual, high politics versus low politics, inside versus outside (Caso; Hamilton, 2015: 2; Walker, 1993). These boundaries, as reified by traditional IR theories, are deeply artificial and unrealistic, especially regarding the reality of local communities that are severely affected by global problems, such as climate change, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

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3.2.1.
Analyzing Narratives: Poetry and Storytelling

Since an aesthetic approach relies on different forms of representation, it seems important to highlight the differences between the analysis of textual and visual representations. Authors such as Bleiker (2009: 4) argue that, among all the forms of representation, poetry has the most explicit engagement with language, which is our ultimate tool to make sense of ourselves and the world surrounding us. Language is omnipresent and one of the most fundamental aspects of human life. (Bleiker, 2009: 86) Even if we try, we cannot escape from it. We need language not to only to communicate, but also to think and make sense of what is external and internal to us.

The inescapability of language means that something necessarily gets lost in the middle of the process of sense making, which has to do with perceptions, emotions and interpretation. However, Bleiker (2009, p. 86) advocates for poetry as a powerful way of stretching the boundaries of language, so as to "reveal what has been eclipsed by linguistic representations couched in social science language". In this way, poetry offers us an engagement with elements that cannot be so easily communicated by words.

That is why Bleiker argues that poetry, at its most fundamental level, is a political endeavor.– Not only because poems allude to political events, but because poetry makes it possible to represent events in a way that captures the different ways by which things become internalized in our minds and how they shape our political consciousness. (Bleiker, 2009: 8)

The power of poetry resides in its ability to challenge linguistic conventions and to speak about things in new ways, through metaphors for example. Metaphors are considered an innovative way of communicating, since they consist of "practices of bestowing a word with a temporary meaning that differs from its usual significance". (Bleiker, 2009, p. 89) Metaphors challenge existing linguistic conventions and disturb meaning to reveal language's limitations and exclusions.

Thus, the employment of a poetic imagination is crucial to show how words cannot mimetically represent objects and events, revealing language as a metaphor per se: "If successful, then, a poem helps us review the metaphors that are so worn

out that we no longer even recognise them as metaphors". (Bleiker, 2009, p. 87) In this sense, poetry shows as a powerful tool to provide us with different "ways of perceiving what we already know (…) opening up thinking space and creating possibilities to act in more inclusive ways". (Bleiker, 2009, p. 93)

However, there is something that makes the analysis of poems incredibly difficult: there is not only its contents, but also its form to consider. Style lies at the heart of what makes poetry different from other texts, in a way that makes it impossible to translate a poem into prose while keeping its meaning, as noted by Bleiker. (2009: 94) The same is true of storytelling, since is not only the texts that matter, but the way the stories are told, considering, as well, the silences, the interpretation and the reactions of a given audience.

So, how to analyze a poem or a story? How to translate it into the language of world politics or even the language of security studies? Bleiker (2009, p. 96) argues that poems can only become politically relevant through their engagement with readers and the same happens when it comes to storytelling. Both the reader and the audience are the ones who allow poems or stories to play with her or his imagination, opening her or his eyes to what was once taken for granted. The reader/ audience are the ones who will validate the metaphors, the silences and the set of performances, thus, producing meaning by her or himself. I would add that, for this, readers/ audience need to make sense of emotions in poems and stories, otherwise, the tasks advocated by Bleiker would not be possible.

In this sense, Renato Rosaldo's concept of antropoesía is extremely valuable. For Rosaldo (2016: 183), both poetry and ethnographic inquiry can be conceived as similar processes of discovery. Like the ethnographer, the poet does not attempt to illustrate a specific formulated-idea or to re-state the already known. In both cases, insights are derived more from "concrete particulars than from elegant generalizations". (Rosaldo, 2016, p. 183)

Hence, the concept of antropoesía calls attention to poetry's aim to bring to life vivid emotions, and make a particular world accessible to readers:

> The work of poetry is to bring into focus its central subject, whether it is sorrow, affliction, joy, or humor. Its task is to bring social life closer and make it tangible. It shows the contours of

feeling and explores their shape. It is a space to inhabit and comprehend. It allows the writer and reader to apprehend powerful experiences and make them intelligible and vivid. It allows for the exploration of human subjectivities. The world it investigates is intersubjective rather than merely subjective one where whimsical understandings abound. (Rosaldo, 2016, p. 183)

Thus, engaging aesthetically with poems and storytelling, by analyzing both their form and content, allows us to make sense of different contexts, emotions and types of knowledge represented by them. Therefore, on account of the opportunity offered by poems and stories to make sense of other worlds, poetry reveals the historical contingency of hegemonic discourses which for so long have been taken for granted as a mimetic reflection of reality.

3.2.2.
Analyzing Images: Photos, Painting and Sculptures

Linguistic and visual representation are both powerful sites of meaning production. (Ahäll, 2009) However, at first glance, images can appear as more attractive because of their non-verbal nature, capturing what seems unspeakable and unimaginable to a given audience. (Bleiker, 2018: 9, 11) In this sense, images, both moving and still, work differently from words because of their capacity to evoke, appeal to and generate emotions through visual experience.

Still, words are needed to assess images' political significance. The challenge, therefore, resides in the "exercise of exploring visual representation in a way that does as much justice as possible to its unique emotional and non-verbal status." (Bleiker, 2018, p. 11) As claimed by the visual scholar W. J. T. Mitchell (2005, p. 140): "images are not words. It is not clear that they actually 'say' anything. They may show something, but the verbal message or the speech act has to be brought to them by the spectator, who projects a voice into the image, reads a story into it, or deciphers a verbal message".

Yet, the sense of immediacy and authenticity raised by images are undeniable. As maintained by Hansen (2011, p. 56) images are endowed with a "privileged epistemic status": "Take the genres of photography and video for

instance: the images allow the spectator to 'see what is really happening' while a spoken or written account always involves the mediation of the narrative and hence a temporal delay." Shepherd (2017: 217) has also highlighted the truth status usually conferred to images, when saying that they are often endowed with unique properties that make them appear more authentic than other forms of representations.

However, unlike how it may seem, images do not constitute a neutral reflection of reality. Like other forms of representation, they are products of an aesthetic choice, viewing the world from a particular angle, while excluding alternative perspectives. (Bleiker, 2018: 14) That is why Linda Ahäll (2009) argues that in order to explore the meaning of images, it is necessary to recognize that they were produced within a dynamic of social power and ideology.

The example of cartography given by Bleiker (2018) is illustrative of the capacity of images and visual artifacts to create realities. The cartographic technique allows for much more than the representation of a given space, since maps help to legitimize the rise of the territorial state as a political organization and the division of the world in sovereign units. (Bleiker, 2018: 03)

Images have also been crucial to shape our perceptions of events such as wars, terrorism (Der Derian, 2005; Bleiker, 2009) and migratory flows at the same time as they've been mobilized by securitization narratives (Williams, 2003), in order to set a security agenda. These visual artifacts become powerful tools to create truth-effects and authorize security policies, proving that power of images to create meaning, communicate and generate emotions should not be underestimated.

Concerning climate change, it is possible to identify iconic images. The polar bear grounded on a melting ice floe is one of the most symbolic photographs we have of the climate crisis. (Manzo, 2018, p. 59) Variations of this image are currently found on cartoons, posters and sculptures, often on the eve of the climate change summits, as an attempt to alert for the disastrous effects of global warming and to pressure state negotiators into adopting measures against the rise of the global temperature.

The picture below shows a copper sculpture made by the Danish artist Jens Galschiots. It is part of a Galschiot's project *Unbearable,* which was developed in

collaboration with the non-governmental organization World Wildlife Foundation (WWF). The sculpture represents a polar bear punctured by an oil pipeline. The pipeline was made in a shape of a graph, where one of its extremities stays close to the ground and continues for 17 meters, in a way to illustrate the period when the global carbon emissions were close to zero and started to rise drastically after the industrial revolution, reaching its peak today, when it impales the bear[11]. Taking into consideration the context in which the sculpture was revealed; that is, during a climate summit of the UNFCCC where state leaders discuss the climate change effects, as well as the institution which is part of the project (WWF, an NGO committed to the preservation of biodiversity), the sculpture is an explicit statement, calling on world leaders to act against the use of carbon fuels and global warming to save animal life.

Figure 1: Unbearable. One of Jens Galschiots'sculptures installed around the city of Bonn during the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP23) of the UNFCCC. Courtesy of www.galschiot.dk (accessed on: 02/08/2019)

The collection of photos, drawings and movies selected for the data of this research will not necessarily rely on iconic images. At least, these representations

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[11] Galschiot Website. Available at: http://www.galschiot.com/unbearable/ (accessed on: 15/08/2019)

are not iconic for me, a Brazilian researcher who has never been to the Marshall Islands. Thereby, I am more interested in the ideas that these kinds of representations express, which may help me to understand how the Marshallese have been making sense of climate change and security.

Furthermore, taking into consideration that any of these visual artifacts – no matter if it is a photo, a documentary movie or a drawing – can mimetically reproduce an objective world or event, there is no basis to draw a line between "truth" and "fictional" representation to confer greater weight or authority to any of them. The angles, colors, frames and other aesthetic choices that made possible a certain form of representation and the local claims inherent to it are thus more important than the distinction between "real" or "fictional" visual representations.

3.3.
The (underestimated) Role of Emotions in IR

While aesthetics rely upon a deeply emotional charge, the connection between emotions and IR is also unequivocal. As argued by Hutchison and Bleiker, (2014: 494) IR is deeply infused by emotions: they play a crucial role both in war and terrorism, as well as in peace negotiations (Crawford, 2000) and cooperation initiatives.

Since Thucydides (1974), fear has been identified as a motivation for war and it has also been recognized as an important feature of the realist security dilemma. (Bleiker; Hutchison, 2008: 117) Classic realists such as Hans Morgenthau (1948) have also approached emotions, albeit indirectly, while pointing out a psychological dimension to power, which diverges from the mere exercise of physical violence:

> when we speak of power, we mean man's control over the mind and actions of other men. (…) Political power, however, must be distinguished from force in the sense of the actual exercise of physical violence (…) political power is a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised. (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 14)

Authors from the Copenhagen School such as Buzan, Waever and Wilde (1998) likewise point to emotional dimensions when arguing that security is not something that can be easily and objectively measured. Rather, it relates to a perception of a threat that triggers fear in a speech author - who is responsible for creating a securitization discourse – and to an audience – which holds the power to legitimize a securitization attempt, while accepting a given problem as a "concrete" threat, that needs to be neutralized through exceptional measures.

Feminist authors have long argued that the personal is political, in order to uphold the lived experiences of woman. (Enloe, 1983) These feminist thinkers – probably the first to call attention to the importance of emotions in world politics – highlight how both the social and political worlds are deeply embedded in emotional relations. (Bleiker; Hutchison, 2008: 27) There are many examples: nationalist rhetoric, crucial in times of war, is deeply emotional. Emotions also play a key role in foreign policy decision, ethnic conflicts and migration policies.

The importance of emotions, however, is not always recognized in IR and ISS theories. As noted by Sara Ahmed (2014, p. 4) "what is relegated to the margin is often, as we know for deconstruction, right of the center of thought itself". This resistance to acknowledging emotions as a crucial aspect of human activities can be partially explained by a binary understanding that defines emotions and reason as extreme and irreconcilable opposites. By assuming that emotions are incompatible with reason and rationality, modern thinking has reduced them to purely private and unreasonable experiences (Hutchison, Bleiker, 2014: 494), something that should be removed from political decision-making and serious academic inquiry.

In this sense, theoretical approaches working with the rational-actor paradigm – such as the rational deterrence theories within ISS – usually understand emotions as deviations of rationality (Jervis, 1976) that undermines responsible political decisions. (Hutchison; Bleiker, 2014: 495) Moreover, emotions cannot be measured or quantified, which makes them much less able to fit into social scientific methods and hypothesis testing. (Bleiker; Hutchison, 2008: 125)

Still, scholars of different fields, such as anthropology, psychology, sociology and even IR, tend to agree that emotions are not a purely private and irrational phenomena. Jonathan Mercer (2013: 247) argues that the analysis of

rational actors' decisions requires a turn to emotions, since they are relevant to the construction of group identities and collective political processes. Neuroscientific discoveries (i.e.: Damasio, 2005) have also been used to strengthen the argument of authors who challenge the dichotomy between emotion and reason. (Jeffery, 2014) By arguing that emotions are a product of both conscious and unconscious process as well as cognitive and bodily perceptions, those findings show that human decisions are inevitably imbued with emotions. (Hutchison; Bleiker, 2014: 496) In this sense, emotions play an undeniable role in how events are perceived and in how politics are conducted. (Hutchison; Bleiker, 2014: 496)

Regarding the difference between cognitive and bodily perceptions, the work of authors such as Crawford (2000, 2006) offers a definition to distinguish feelings (or affect) from emotions, something that is usually advanced by critical security studies engaged in a corporeal approach. (i.e.: Frowd; Leite, 2013; Mutlu, 2013; Wiebe, 2013) Crawford (2000, p. 125) defines emotions as "inner states that individuals describe to others as feelings" which "may be associated with biological, cognitive, and behavioral states and changes." Even though feelings are internally experienced, she argues that "the meaning attached to those feelings, the behaviors associated with them, and the recognition of emotions in others are cognitively and culturally construed and constructed." (Crawford, 2000, p. 125)

Thus, while feelings and affects exist in the body, being thus prior to sociolinguistic entrepreneurs, emotions appear as a "mediated form of affect embedded within the constraints of the sociolinguistic domain." (Mutlu, 2013, p. 139) Considering this distinction, this thesis proposes an analysis of how emotions – in other words, the socio-linguistic manifestations of bodily reactions or expressed feelings – matter in the process of making sense of (in) securities.

For Hutchison and Bleiker (2014: 491), one of the main challenges faced by authors who propose working with emotions is the theorization of the process through they travel from the individual to the collective level. This point raises a level of analysis problem which is specific to the theoretical debates developed within IR, especially after the behavioral revolution, when theories fascinated by the third image, or the systemic level of analysis of international politics, began to permeate the field. (i.e.: Waltz, 1979; Keohane, 1984) The proposed division of

three main level of analysis – individual, state and system – (i.e.: Waltz, 1959; Singer, 1961) within the discipline is, however, extremely artificial, as discussed in the last section.

Yet, Hutchison and Bleiker (2014) claim that the analysis of this movement from the individual to the collective level is critical in legitimizing emotions as a subject of study within IR. Emotions allow us to make sense of ourselves, to frame forms of personal and social understandings and to locate our identity within a wider collective, binding individual to objects and also to others. (Bleiker; Hutchison, 2008: 123) However, how can we make sense of the process by which individual emotions are shared by a political group? Perhaps the process can also follow an opposite logic, which leads us to a different question: How can emotions derived from a social structure permeate individual experience?

Hutchison and Bleiker (2014: 497) point to micro and macro approaches aiming to make sense of how emotions are relevant to world politics. While macro approaches develop general theories, micro studies tend to consider emotions as a product of cultural and political contexts. By analyzing these very specific cultural contexts in which emotions emerge, micro approaches face the theoretical challenge of incorporating its rich and context-based findings into world politics, whilst macro studies risk simplifying and homogenizing emotions through shallow generalizations. (Hutchison and Bleiker, 2014: 497, 498, 499) Considering the contributions and difficulties of macro and micro analysis, Hutchison and Bleiker (2014: 491, 492) suggest that both apparently contradictory approaches should be considered. While recognizing that the boundaries between the individual and collective are necessarily blurred, the authors make the case for a micro/ macro framework for the theorization of the process through which individual emotions turn social, collective and political. (Hutchison; Bleiker, 2014: 499)

Similarly, Ahmed's (2014: 09) sociological work challenges both purely individual and structural theories. Through her model of sociality of emotions, Ahmed denies that emotions emerge purely from outside or inside the individuals; instead, she argues that there is no way to objectively delimit the inside and outside, the individual and the social, the "me" and "we" (Ahmed, 2014: 09). For that reason, Ahmed's (2014: 11) model implies that emotions are neither in the

individuals nor the structure, but are always circulating through objects which, in turn, generate different kinds of emotions. As such, Ahmed (2014: 13) turns to the analysis of different texts, such as propaganda and social media, to show how texts can generate effects by way of performing emotions.

However, in contrast to Ahmed, this thesis does not aim to analyze texts seeking to show how they generate effects but moves a step back in trying to understand how aesthetic representations perform emotions in a way that manifest ontological (in)security. This does not mean that the aesthetic manifestations to be analyzed later do not generate emotional responses or political effects. They certainly do. However, the main focus of this thesis will not be on these emotional responses, but on how these aesthetics sources express emotions that point to a different understanding of security.

As such, the aesthetic sources, analyzed in the fifth chapter, are not seen here as a generator of emotions in Ahmed's terms. Rather, they are understood as a vehicle of sense making, political struggles and representations of deeply emotional narratives that could hardly be expressed solely through spoken or written words.

3.3.1.
Ontological Security and Emotions: the Role of the *Here-Feeling* in the Security of the Self

Considering the examples quoted above, it cannot be said that ontological security literature is the first to deal with the role of emotions within IR or even ISS. However, the extra emotional charge conferred to works on ontological security is undeniable. By conferring emphasis on the security of the self, these approaches reveal how emotional structures, which vary in terms of time and space, allow "individuals, societies and states [to] make sense of themselves and the world around them". (Kinnvall, 2017, p. 94)

As the ontological security's polar opposite, ontological insecurity is also deeply attached to emotions. According to Giddens (1991, p. 37), ontological insecurity relates to "… the fear of being overwhelmed by anxieties that reach to the very roots of our coherent sense of 'being in the world'". Gidden's (1991: 53) concept of self-identity - described as the preservation of identity across time and

space and interpreted reflexively by the agent – also reveals how the emotional states of certainty and confidence are crucial for the preservation of ontological security.

However, as recognized by Mitzen (2006: 346), emotions are internal and subjective and do not depend on the objective levels of certainty. (Mitzen, 2006: 346) In this sense, the ontological insecure subject is not dealing with the fear of an identified/constructed threat, but with an anxiety or a dread of losing his or her sense of presence in the world. This loss is caused by the sudden interruption of established routines and trust structures, leading the subject to question his or her agency and sense of self-identity. (Croft, 2012: 222)

As noted by Croft (2012: 223), because of the awareness of its polar opposite, ontological security is innately related to precariousness and instability. This precariousness is more evident when the ontological security of "a substantial number of individuals" (Giddens, 1984, p. 50) is put to the test in the face of a radical disjuncture. Considering the case of some low-lying island communities, which are threatened by climate change, I argue that the ontological security of these individuals is challenged not only during critical situations, but also at the edge of critical events, such as an imminent evacuation.

With regards to these cases, Daniel Deudney's concept of *here-feeling* is very enlightening. Deudney (1996: 130) claims that national identities and communities are characterized both by a *here-feeling* and a *we-feeling*. While the *here-feeling* is "derived from the shared habitation of a place", the *we-feeling* relates to attributes shared by individuals, such as language, religion and institutions. (Deudney, 1996: 130)

In terms of the *here-feeling*, the author argues that before the proliferation of polytheistic religions, nature and land were commonly considered holy, associated with Gods and divine forces, resulting in a deep connection between landscape and men (Deudney, 1996: 131). Nature and places are often evoked in anthems, monuments and literary works, which shows that, even in modern societies, the feeling of connectedness to a place remains as an important element of national identity. (Deudney, 1996: 132) This connectedness, however, is not only physical, but is grounded on the identification with particular places, which are

interpreted by individuals in particular ways. Rather, Deudney (1996, p. 130) argues that the *here-feeling* relies "on claims about the character of the relationship between the human and the biological natural, both of race and blood and of soil and land"[12].

At this point, it is worth noting how Deudney's *here-feeling* could relate to the different ways by which security can be framed. As Huysmans argues, (1998, p. 228) how we understand security is always mediated by the ways we relate to the world, nature, other human beings, the self and the transcendent[13]. The author also claims that the meaning of security is contingent on "a wider framework of meanings" - that varies in time and space – "within which we organize particular forms of life". (Huysmans,1998, p. 228) It would be exactly due to this contingency that the author argues in favor of the interpretation of security as a thick signifier – enabling, therefore, the analysis of a wider cultural framework within which security receives a specific meaning – and not as a mere definition or concept. (Huysmans; 1998, p. 228)

Thus, I argue that the perception of security can be mediated by individuals' *here-feeling*, which is directly connected to how they relate to nature, how they understand themselves and, thus, how they frame their self-identities. As a "shared habitation of a place", the *here-feeling* concept evokes both the individual emotional connection to a known physical environment and the web of social relations which embrace other individuals who also inhabit it. In this sense, the concept of *here-feeling*, as I understand it, can be related to "the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action", described by Giddens (1990, p. 92) as prerequisite to ontological security.

Understood as a physical space which carries emotional, social and political meanings (Croft, 2012: 226), home can be identified as the strongest promotor of

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[12] It is worth noting that there is also a body of literature on the role of nature in the construction of collective identities within psychological and landscape studies. Examples of those are the works of authors such as Susan Clayton and Susan Opotow (2003), Denis Cosgrove (1998), Sverker Sörlin (1999) and others.

[13] It is important to highlight that in this same paper Huysmans (1998) also employed the concept of ontological security. However, the author's understanding differs from how ontological security is employed in the theoretical framework of this thesis. For Huysmans (1998), ontological security "is a strategy of managing the limits of reflexivity (…) by fixing social relations under symbolic and institutional order".

the *here-feeling*. It is much more than a material space, since it is permeated by emotions and meanings that provide a sense of continuity and security. (Kinnvall, 2006: 31) Therefore, buildings, public spaces, landscapes and ecosystems may constitute home, by providing a space in which individuals can truly be themselves and nurture their being. (Porteous; Smith, 2001: 3) Authors such as Croft (2012) and Kinnvall (2006) have already pointed to the close relation in which home and ontological security are imbricated: "ontological security is maintained when home is able to provide a site of constancy in the social and material environment. Home, in this sense, constitutes a spatial context in which daily routines of human existence are performed" (Kinnvall, 2006, p. 31).

Thus, because of its highly emotional profile, ontological security is attached to a sense of biographical continuity and self-identity preservation that cannot be reduced to material aspects. As illustrated by the concept of *here-feeling* and by Giddens' emphasis on a material place of action and a stable sense of self-identity, ontological security is the result of the stabilization of both material and emotional structures. These direct links between material and emotional elements make my argument possible, and open to further development, with regards to the effects of the climate crisis in the destabilization of the ontological security.

3.4.
Final Considerations

This chapter aimed to present culture, aesthetics and emotions as a possible analytical approach via ontological security studies. A close look at culture and emotions is crucial for understanding the basis of ontological security, which is defined as a condition of confidence in the continuity of self-identities and in the constancy of social and material environments of actions. (Giddens, 1990: 92) Aesthetics is also an insightful method of research that enables both the analysis of culture and emotions.

The chapter opened with a discussion about the different meanings attached to culture and how this concept was introduced to IR – or at least, reintroduced according to Lapid and Kratochwill (1996) – in a moment when it was possible to identify a greater interdisciplinarity in the field. By arguing that culture is not a self-

evident and non-problematic concept (Lapid, 1996: 07), this thesis departs from the idea that culture is always contingent and multidimensional. Thus, it is not possible to argue that a community of individuals share the same and homogeneous culture, but it usually shares a core of histories, signifying practices and meanings, that play an important role in the individuals' ontological security.

Ontological security theory calls attention to how security is not only related to material elements such as the survival of physical bodies, but also to the assurance of the biographical continuity and preservation of self-identities. Thus, it assumes that security is not something that can be objectively measured but is the result of intersubjective features as perceptions and emotions. Since aesthetic representations are endowed with the potential to express emotions (Bleiker; Hutchison, 2008), I claim that an aesthetic curiosity is a powerful method of analyzing ontological security. As such, the analysis of aesthetic representations is especially valuable in making sense of alternative narratives on security; thus, helping to identify fissures and blind spots within the hegemonic discourses of ISS.

4.
Argument and Methodology

> The master's tools will never
> dismantle the master's house.
> (Lorde, 1979 *apud* Smith, 2007, p. 19)

This brief chapter's objective is twofold: firstly to present the argument and, secondly, the methodology of this thesis. Thus, the first section of the chapter is reserved for further elucidating the argument drawn from the rehabilitation of ontological security theory's assumptions, as well as helpful approaches and concepts such as the thick signifier and the here-feeling, as explored in the first two chapters.

The second section is entirely dedicated to the methodological framework of this thesis, providing clarifications about its procedures and methods. Considering culture, aesthetics and emotions as an analytical avenue for the study of ontological security as highlighted in chapter three, along with the insights provided by Huysmans' thick signifier, I propose a slightly different framework of analysis: a *thicker signifier approach*. It keeps Huysmans' astute method of inquiry through the analysis of the wider framework of meanings from which the concept of security acquires its content. However, it is also equipped with an aesthetic curiosity, allowing for deeper exploration of the cultural and emotional contexts that make specific interpretations of (in)security possible. In this sense, the *thicker signifier approach* relies on the analysis of these specific cultural and emotional contexts and how, for instance, they are being aesthetically represented through music, films, poems, photography or drawings.

However, as far as security analysis is concerned, an aesthetic curiosity alone is not helpful in making sense of the contexts within which security acquires its meaning. Aesthetic representations can also shelter different discourses about (in)security. Thus, considering the ability of these aesthetic representations to create, replicate or challenge security discourses, besides the *thicker signifier*

approach, this thesis equally relies on the method of discourse analysis. It will be applied to the selected movies, poems, legends and drawings in the searching for statements about (in)security. Thus, considerations about the Foucauldian concept of statement and the method of discourse analysis will be also be approached in this methodological section.

Finally, the last section of this chapter offers some reflections about the effects of my methodological choices and the expected political effect of this work.

4.1.
Clarifying the Argument

The argument of this thesis was not drawn solely from the theoretical insights brought by the ISS debates and the body of literature on ontological security. It arose from the identification of a gap within security and environmental security studies - considering the scarcity of theories capable of making sense of environmental challenges as a security problem without reifying preexisting militaristic and exceptional readings – but, even more importantly, from the identification of marginalized narratives of security made by communities directly affected by these environmental problems.

By being attentive to the cultural and emotional framework of meaning from which security acquires its content, and by employing an ontological security lens, it is possible to elucidate how environmental problems such as climate change can pose threats that go far beyond the physical survival of sovereign states and/or human beings. In the case of low-lying islands, where those effects are more pronounced, raising doubts and anxiety about the future of entire communities, climate change can be approached through a different rationality. Its severe effects have the potential to threaten individuals "as a certain sort of (social) being" (Innes; Steele, 2014, p. 17), while preventing them of enjoying a stable "social and material environment of action" (Giddens, 1990, p. 92) and a continuous self-identity. (Giddens, 1990: 53) As outlined in the first chapter, the ontological secure condition presumes the stability of both internal (self-identity) and external (social and material environment of action) co-constitutive elements. In the case of the low-

lying islands' communities, both are under increasing pressure because of the climate crisis.

With the passing of time, and not in a distant future, it is highly probable that these individuals will have to be relocated to a different space, so as to engender a deep change in their "social and material environment of action", thus disrupting their here-feeling. (Deudney, 1996) The uncertainty regarding their new home may alter the ordinary circumstances of everyday life, in that that the pressure from this radical disjuncture poses a continuous threat to these communities in the present.

Thus, I argue that climate change effects undermine ontological security throughout three different, but interconnected processes:

1) Through the action of *disembedding mechanisms* (Giddens, 2002), social and economic relations are decoupled from their geographical locations, being recombined at vaster temporal and spatial terms; thus, promoting an interplay between global and local. In this way, the environmental consequences of more than two centuries of greenhouse gases emitted by the industrialized countries would affect individuals who live far from the metropolitan centers, by critical events such as rising sea levels, land and potable water salinization, extreme natural events and so on.

2) By threatening territories, ecosystems, customs and cosmologies, climate change does not only put at risk the physical survival of sovereign states, such as low lying islands, and the human security of its citizens. It also poses a risk to the ontological security of some individuals; their ancestral atolls are much more than small portions of land. Rather than representing solely a material space where these individuals live and sustain themselves, the atolls make up part of *who* they are. They provide them a sense of *here-feeling* and operate as a stabilizing anchor that helps them to sustain a linear narrative about their self-identities.

3) Moreover, uncertainty about the chances of preserving the here-feeling and the sense of community elsewhere – in the case of a permanent evacuation caused by the climate effects – also contributes to a condition of ontological insecurity. That happens because society, although not homogenous, helps to stabilize the individual sense of self throughout the predictability of routines, the consistency of social

relations and the provision of emotional needs. (Mitzen, 2006: 348; Harries, 2017: 2)

Therefore, the argument of this thesis can be summarized as follow: *Climate change can be framed as a risk not only to the physical survival of states, human beings and ecosystems, but also to the ontological security of individuals who comprehend nature as an inherent part of their self-identities.*

As such, at the center of this thesis' analysis lies the specific case of the Marshall Islands' inhabitants. By exploring this case, it is possible to questions what new meanings and rationalities of security can emerge, or become more prominent, in the face of the challenges brought on by this environmental phenomenon.

With this critical move, I hope I can expose the fissures identified within the body of literature of security and environmental security studies, while challenging the state-centered, militarized and exceptional discourses that permeate the theoretical and political fields of security.

4.2.
The Methodological Framework

As highlighted by Ľubomír Lupták and Václav Walach,: "not only 'theory is always for someone and for some purpose' (Cox 1981: 128), but the ways through which we study (in)security empirically inevitably contain certain political decisions and dilemmas" (2015, p. 52).

Because security does different things at different times and places, (Lupták; Walach, 2015:52) reflexivity becomes a fundamental concern for researchers who propose to study this topic critically. Hence, the conducting of context specific analysis combined to the employment of interpretative methods (Krause, 1996) and previous reflections about the political consequences of the research prove imperative. Thus, this methodological section aims to present the *thicker signifier approach* and discourse analysis as the methods of inquiry to be applied in this thesis, before providing some reflections on the loops that my research might have within both the theoretical and political fields of security.

4.2.1.
A *Thicker Signifier Approach*? Aesthetic Curiosity as a Way to Explore the Cultural and Emotional Dimensions of Security

As outlined by Huysmans (1998, p. 231), a thick signifier approach to security implies an analysis of a "specific metaphysics of life", exploring our "relation to nature, to others human beings and to the self". I argue, however, that in order to analyze these broader relations, this approach requires more than the acknowledgement of the wider framework from which security acquires its meaning. (Huysmans, 1998: 228) In this sense, I make the case for a *thicker signifier approach,* which also includes the analysis of the cultural and emotional dimensions that make specific conceptualizations of security possible.

Emotions help us to determine what we prioritize the most as a referent object to be protected from threats, as well as "guiding" us towards the identification/ construction of threats. In this sense, emotions are a condition of possibility for our understanding about what it means to feel secure. As argued in the third chapter, the analysis of emotions should be considered, not only in the studies that rely on ontological security – considering their role in the identification of the precarious boundaries between an ontological secure and insecure subject – but in security analysis in general.

Emotions, however, are not easy to grasp, what can make the operationalization of the *thicker signifier approach* a little tricky. Authors such as Bleiker and Hutchison (2007: 17) argue that one of the most promising locations for the analysis of emotions is to look at how they are represented and communicated through the arts: "To be of artistic value, a work of art (…) must be able to engage and capture not only exterior realities, but also, and above all, our human and emotional relationship with them." (Bleiker, Hutchison, 2007, p. 23) Following this argument, I maintain that drawing attention to the way objects are represented is a valuable way to make sense of the emotional meanings attached to them.

Thus, considering the preeminent role of emotions within security studies and the ability of aesthetic representations to make them visible, I propose an

aesthetic curiosity as a way to make sense of the emotional dimensions that inform our diverse understandings about (in)security. In this sense, a *thicker signifier approach* of security would rely on the analysis of the specific cultural and emotional contexts from which security acquires meaning, by means of an aesthetic curiosity that turns attention to the way the everyday lives of individuals are represented.

Authors who believe that it would be possible to provide a neutral and objective analysis about the world (i.e.: Singer, 1969; Morgenthau, 1973; Walt, 1991) could easily disqualify an aesthetic curiosity for not corresponding to the "real world", but to an imperfect representation of it, thus, lacking the analytical tools to make sense of tangible problems. (Bleiker, 2006)

Though, as pointed out by IR authors engaged in aesthetics (Shapiro, 2008, 2013; Bleiker, 2006; Bleiker, Hutchison, 2014, Steele, 2017), the world "as it is" is no more than a powerful and dominant representation of someone's particular reading. Every analysis, no matter how realistic it is supposed to be, is inevitably dependent on individual points of view, perceptions and interpretations. This necessarily creates a gap between the object and the way we analyze it (Bleiker, 2006), between the word and the world. (Epstein, 2008)

As stated by Bleiker (2001, p. 513): "Even the most thorough empirical analysis cannot depict its object of inquiry in an authentic way", as a painter, the social scientist works to "reflects colour choices, brushstroke, angles, framings", making any kind of representation – mimetic or aesthetic – a political endeavor. This is the reason why Steele (2017, p. 209) argues that IR's traditional theoretical approaches are also endowed with their own aesthetic, which is based on the belief about a "world 'out there' (…) and that certain values like 'rigor' and 'parsimony' can help provide the orderly discipline necessary to ensure that proximity to the real."

Challenging this objectivist understanding about an unequivocal reality, which is distinctive of the mainstream IR's and ISS' theories, an aesthetic curiosity allows us, as readers, listeners or spectators to experience different worlds. It is thus a vehicle of resistance to these dominant and supposed authentic representations of a given world. (Shapiro, 2008: 5)

That is the reason why authors as Rancière argue that some sort of aesthetics as cinema disrupts our tendency of putting ourselves as the center of the universe of representations. (*apud* Shapiro, 2008: 5) It makes it possible to feel, see and hear from a different perspectival position (Shapiro, 2008), so as to reveal the limits of our own perceptions and our inability to grasp the world in its essence.

According to this reasoning, Shapiro (2008:6, italics in the original) claims that perceptions are inevitably partial: "To perceive is a subtract in order to come up with *a* sense of the world, selected from all possible senses." Hence, an aesthetical curiosity, as proposed by this thesis, unveils the limitations of one single locus of perception, revealing thus a multiplicity of world views, beliefs and knowledge systems, in a way to challenge the truths taken for granted about world politics and the security field.

By questioning what kinds of (in)securities are enacted by the climate phenomenon in the Marshall Islands, I will mainly drawn on the lively testimonies of local people, communicated through aesthetic artifacts such as story-telling, poetic performances, movies and drawings. The juxtaposition of these aesthetic resources could provide me insightful devices for making sense of the emotional and cultural elements that make possible distinct understandings about what means to feel (in)secure, about what counts as a privileged referent object to be protected from threats and about what might constitute a threat and why.

However, the employment of a *thicker signifier approach* of security, based on an aesthetic curiosity, necessarily raises some puzzling questions: How to apprehend a security narrative from the diverse and distinct aesthetic resources collected? How to make sense of their emotional aspects? In addition to these methodological challenges, other difficulties regarding the nature of the topic of this research arises: As a Brazilian academic whose native language is Portuguese, how can I overcome the barriers of translation, considering that some of the artworks selected were written and performed in Marshallese, frequently translated into English? And, maybe even more determinant, how to analyze the security narratives in the absence of the word security?

In taking these difficulties into account, instead of searching for discourses in which the word "security" is unequivocally present, I choose to focus on less

explicit articulations of (in)security. These articulations are not necessarily reproduced by means of spoken or written words, but through diverse signs which may be embodied in the form of distinct aesthetic resources, such as melodies, angles of shooting, voice tones, facial expressions and silences. The next subsection will discuss the techniques that would be employed to make sense of these sparse signs that can lead us to the identification of (in)security narratives.

4.2.2.
Looking for Statements of (In)Security in the Middle of Aesthetic Representations

In a working paper published in 2007, Bleiker and Hutchison highlighted the challenges surrounding the methods of studying aesthetics and emotions, calling for innovative modes of inquiry from the humanities. I have found great inspiration in academic works which have applied discourse analysis to the study of artistic representations, such as films and paintings. (i.e.: Gaspar, 2007; Mazzola, Gregolin, 2013)

As recognized by Can Mutlu and Mark Salter (2013: 113), the method of discourse analysis is not limited to written and spoken texts, also approaching other sign-based and semiotics markers capable of providing meaning to the social and physical world. The process of meaning construction is, therefore, a fundamental focus of discourse analysis. As advocated by Epstein (2008, p. 8): "The focus on discourse offers ways of apprehending the fundamental unfixity underlying the making of meaning, instead of evacuating it in favor of a nostalgic return to that long-lost link of the word to the world." Through this logic, any type of sign "written, or oral, visual or auditive" may qualify for a discourse analysis. (Epstein, 2008, p. 7)

Thus, inspired by prior academic efforts, I have decided to conduct a discourse analysis of aesthetics throughout the analytical strategy drawn by the Brazilian linguistic Nádea Regina Gaspar. Throughout her works, Gaspar (2004, 2007) shows how essential Foucauldian concepts – the statement, the discursive formation and the archive – can be applied to a discourse analysis of audiovisual representations.

Gaspar (2007: 61) claims that in order to analyze how an object is constituted through diverse discursive formations, it is necessary to identify relations amongst the material surfaces – words written on paper or intoned by a voice, signs presented in filmic scenes or drawn on a canvas – through which the object is presented and construed at different times. Thus, both verbal and non-verbal texts, no matter if they are expressed in oral or written form, are capable of holding discourses through sounds or images.

The analysis of the ways an object is represented amid a tangle of objects allows the identification of a particular discursive practice, originating in the system of archive. (Gaspar, 2007: 61) The Archeology of Knowledge, as proposed by Foucault (2008: 72), resides in the discursive analysis of this system of archive.

Although this thesis can be framed as archeological, since to some extent it proposes an analysis of an archive composed by different security discourses, it is crucial to highlight that it is not my intention here to follow all the steps proposed by Foucault (2008) for the conduction of an archeological analysis[14]. I believe that these efforts are beyond the scope of this work. Yet, I understand that the Foucauldian concept of statement, as operationalized by Gaspar (2007), is valuable in conferring sense on the set of signs that can be identified in the middle of the aesthetic representations.

Discursive enunciates - no matter whether spoken, written or visual - dislocate from text to text; however, Foucault (2008) maintains that something is preserved in the middle of these dislocations. This something would be the statement[15], conceived as the central unity of a discursive analysis. (Gaspar, 2007: 61) The statement is not a structure, but "a function of existence" which belongs to the signs. (Foucault, 2008, p. 98) Statements are, therefore, understood by Foucault as the function of discourses, which can be analyzed throughout the identification of series, enunciative subjects, associated domain, and the material elements through which it emerges (Foucault, 2008 *apud* Gaspar, 2007: 64) These four elements constitute the fundamental principles of statement analysis.

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[14] I do not aim to analyze the systems of discourse formations, which for Foucault (2008) would demand the analysis of some regularities, such as the formation of objects, the formation of enunciative modalities, the formation of concepts, and the formation of strategies.
[15] For Foucault (2008), statements differ from logic propositions, sentences and speech acts.

With regards to the series, Foucault (2008) claims that a statement can never be isolated from others, rather it is always part of a set of statements. Thus, Gaspar argues (2004: 275) that while observing a film, the analyst must turn her or his attention to the serial repetition of statements, to the places from which the statements are uttered, the relation between the statement and the characters of the movie, the clothes, the lights, the scenario, and its relations to other objects represented throughout the scenes.

The subject of the statement, in its turn, does not refer to the author of a formulation. Rather, it relates to the place and conditions that can be occupied by different individuals. For Gaspar (2004: 276), to describe a formulation as a statement is about determining the power position that must be occupied by individuals so as to make them subjects of the statements. Amongst different aesthetic representations, it is possible to identify diverse subjects of statements: characters, musicians, photographs, poets, costume designers… Gaspar (2004: 276) claims that they all occupy diverse positions from which their statements ascend. In the particular case of movies, which is the focus of Gaspar's body of work, the director would be the one responsible for grouping and making sense of all of these sparse statements, reproduced by different individuals, in different positions and through different material elements.

The associated domain is what makes the statements more than a collection of signs. (Foucault, 1972: 96). A statement is formed when it can be related and differentiated from others. Thus, the statements require margins that differentiate them from other statements. At the same time, they derive support from these margins to exist: "There is no statement that does not presuppose others; there is no statement that is not surrounded by a field of coexistences" (Foucault, 1972, p. 99)

In sum, it is possible to speak about an object through diverse enunciations, produced by the positions occupied by the enunciative subject, by the institutions in which he or she is located (Gaspar, 2004: 273) and by identification of an associated domain, which provides the margins that differentiate a statement from others. However, there is still a fourth and fundamental element that is the condition of possibility of statements, which is the material surface chosen to give them life. As put by Foucault (1972, p. 100):

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> Could one speak of a statement if a voice had not articulated it,
> if a surface did not bear its signs, if it had not become embodied
> in a sense-perceptible element, and if it had not left some trace –
> if only for an instant - in someone's memory or in some space?

In this sense, the fourth and last requirement of a statement is what confers its material existence, and relates both to the surfaces through which the statement emerges – like moving images, pictures, drawings, poems, music – and to the material institutions to which the statements are attached. (Gaspar, 2004: 277) Hence, discourses – whether they be scientific or non-scientific - require not only an ideational but also a material element to be produced and repeated.

Thus, Gaspar claims (2004) that the same statement could be identified even in the middle of different materialities, being reproduced at different times and places, by distinct individuals. I aim, therefore, to adopt the method of discourse analysis to look for statements about security, statements that were conferred of materiality through different aesthetic representations and uttered by different subjects in diverse or similar contexts.

In this sense, it will be possible to juxtapose the scientific statements of ISS and ESS, as presented in the chapter two of this thesis, to other non-scientific statements about security – presented in the following chapters in the form of testimonies, films, poems and drawings – so as to identify their correlations but, most of all, their fundamental contradictions, in order to compose a sort of archive about security discourses.

4.2.3.
The Theoretical Commitments of Discourse Analysis

In an influential paper published in 1999 in *The European Journal of International Relations,* Jennifer Milliken highlighted three theoretical commitments of IR authors engaged with a discourse analysis: the interpretation of

discourses as systems of signification; the recognition of the productive role of discourses; and the acknowledgement of the power of hegemonic discourses to legitimate practices. (Milliken, 1999)

By the first commitment, Milliken (1999: 229) refers to the process through which people confer meanings to objects by using sign systems. In this sense, a discourse analysis study necessarily draws attention to the role of discourses – as different systems of signification – in constructing objects and conferring knowledge about a social reality. Hence, it implies the acknowledgement that discourses do not exist "out there" but are constituted by malleable structures which are frequently updated through language practices and other forms of signification. (Milliken, 1999: 231)

The second commitment on the acknowledgement of the productive roles of the discourses refers to the process through which discourses produce the world at the same time that they put some individuals as "privileged storytellers … to whom narrative authority… is granted" (Campbell, 1993, p. 7 *apud* Milliken, 1999, p. 236) In this sense, discourses are capable of creating regimes of truth (Foucault, 1998), determining subjects capable of speaking and acting (Milliken, 1999: 229) in particular fields of knowledge. Thus, discourses not only frame the object in a particular way, they also delimit the possibilities for action with regards to this same object. (Epstein, 2008: 2)

This productive effect of discourse is clearly visible when it comes to the theoretical and political field of security. Efforts to silence and exclude different meanings of security are evidently conducted by traditionalist authors as Walt (1991: 212), who asserts that the security agenda should be limited to the phenomenon of war. Through this exercise of disciplinary authority (Krause; Williams, 1997), other ways of talking and analyzing security have been evacuated (Epstein, 2008: 9), so that topics such as environmental problems, epidemics and hunger were deliberately pushed to the margins of security studies. With this same move, Walt selectively conferred legitimacy to realist authors and strategists to speak and act in the name of a particular conceptualization of security, which turned hegemonic by the exclusion of other possible conceptualizations.

In this sense, the third commitment highlighted by Milliken (1999) about the play of practice in discourse analysis comes out. Attention to the productivity of discourses enables an analysis on how hegemonic narratives and their structuring of meanings legitimate certain practices and exclude others to create a regime of truth, power and knowledge. Within ISS, the regime of truth engendered by mainstream theoreticians turn unthinkable security practices that do not fit into exceptional and militarized logics. The next two chapters of this thesis will discuss different security narratives that disrupt this regime of truth, setting up a resistance to the dominant knowledge/ power relation verified in ISS. The chapters will also show how this limited and exclusionary understanding helps to authorize violent practices against non-Western others, at the same time as it delegitimizes their local security claims about non-traditional threats, such as climate change.

The method of discourse analysis proves invaluable to the study of subjugated knowledge and alternative narratives, usually eclipsed by hegemonic discourses – such as the ones promoted by realist currents within ISS – and authorized subjects – such as strategists, traditionalist theoreticians and policy makers. (Milliken, 1999) Hence, by applying a discourse analysis to the study of aesthetic representations, I hope I can destabilize the dominant understanding of security - which either does not consider environmental problems a matter of security, or simply frames them under a logic of national or human security, exposing them to the critical questioning that the exceptional, militarized and homogenizing practices these discourses authorize.

4.3.
The Political and Ethical Consequences of the Research

This thesis proposes a close look at aesthetic representations, in order to analyze security through what I have called a *thicker signifier approach*. As highlighted by authors as Rancière (2004) and Bleiker (2017), aesthetics opens doors to an alternative political imagination, bringing to the center what seems unspeakable, unwritable and unthinkable; thus, broadening the boundaries of our world views.

This is not to say that aesthetic representations are necessarily progressive. (Bleiker, 2017: 60) Representations can easily reproduce practices of domination, facilitate securitization discourses and support the legitimatization of exceptional measures, as showed by authors like Der Derian (2005), Dodds (2007), Möller (2007), Robinson (2002). In this sense, invoking aesthetics reinforces the need to be conscious about our political choices and motivations as academics.

Aware that methods are not neutral and influence research results deeply, the methodological framework of this thesis is designed with the main concern of conducting this research in a respectful way with regards to the people studied. In trying to identify articulations of (in)security in the middle of aesthetic artifacts, I do not intend to talk in the name of the islanders, but to acknowledge local awareness, values and perceptions, (Smith,2008) in order to evidence the cultural and emotional contexts from which these articulations emerge.

It is also important to highlight that, in bringing subjugated narratives on security to the core of my analysis, I do not aim to elevate them to an unrefutable position, establishing them as the right story on security. (Campbell, 1992) Instead, a *thicker signifier* approach undertakes the opposite task of unveiling the cultural and emotional contingencies that inform diverse conceptualizations of (in)security.

In addition, in choosing to focus solely on Marshallese aesthetic representations, this thesis helps to address one of the limitations of the aesthetic turn in IR: to expand analysis beyond the Western lens. (Steele, 2017: 207) As argued by Prya Dixit (2014, p. 338), in visual studies, "peoples of color and the spaces they occupy (…) are either invisible (…) or they are made visible within and through dominant representations." Thus, in focusing only on poems, legends, films and drawings from the Marshall Islands, I hope to contribute to reverse this lack of attention from works on aesthetics to non-Western representations.

This movement is crucial because the way we choose to represent political events has an effect, not only on our understanding of facts, but also on the way we choose to deal with them empirically. (Bleiker, 2009: 3) In the case of this research project, the amplification of the voices of those most affected by climate change is critical to the pursuit of environmental justice and to avoiding inefficient solutions to environmental problems, such as the mere creation of new categories of refugees

– like climate refugees – or the simple designation of lost and damage´s funds to affected communities – leaving intact modern practices and models of development that lead to the exacerbation of the environmental crisis.

On the other hand, the employment of a discourse analysis on the subject of this thesis allows both a critical examination of the productivity of hegemonic discourses within the field of ISS, and of how security has been enacted in different ways by individuals usually not authorized to speak in the name of security.

4.4.
Final Considerations

This brief chapter aimed to present in a more consistent and systematic way the argument of this thesis, developed from the theoretical debates presented in the last two chapters. Thus, I argued that far from presenting a threat to the physical security of states and individuals alone, climate change can endanger the social and material environment of action and the self-identities of some individuals, thus representing a threat to their ontological security as well.

With regards to the methodological framework of this thesis, I have proposed an analysis of security that I have called a *thicker signifier approach.* It departs from an aesthetic curiosity to make sense of the cultural and emotional contexts that are the conditions of possibility of the diverse conceptualizations of (in)security.

The chapter likewise recognized the difficulties inherent in the methods of analyzing emotions and aesthetics representations, and, based on prior academic works, proposed the employment of discourse analysis to search for enunciations of (in)security amid the aesthetic representations collected. Thus, the analysis of each poem, legend, movie or drawing will be conducted mainly by an attentive analysis of the sparse signs that can point to specific statements of (in)security. In this way, I aim to expose the contingency of state-centered, militarized and exceptional discourses that, rather than being the most "authentic" way to analyze security, consist in an act of power that legitimizes certain approaches and practices, while unauthorizing others so as to create a regime of truth within ISS.

Authors such as Lupták and Walach (2015, p. 61) claim that the basic methodological questions of any academic research "are how and what worlds we produce by means of research and, furthermore, what consequences result from this activity". Leander (2008) had raised a similar point by affirming that academics must be aware of how science produces loops in society in a way that helps to reshape its reality. Therefore, the final section of this chapter focused on the questions and methods that I chose to raise and some reflections about the loops that I expect to produce as consequence of those choices. In this sense, in reaffirming the local voices and in allowing individuals to act as witnesses of the climate crisis, I hope that this thesis allows the reader to imagine different realities and to think about security in innovative and critical ways.

5.

The Marshall Islands: an Archipelago Between Nuclear Tests and Rising Sea Levels

> We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places, and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again and take away our freedom.
>
> (Hau'ofa, 2008, p. 39)

This fifth chapter has one main objective: to present the Marshall Islands and its people as the subject of this research. The chapter begins with an overview of its past – with its long history of colonialism, atomic tests and dispossession – and its present, depicting the current political, social and environmental challenges faced by its inhabitants.

Like the rest of Micronesia[16], the Marshall Islands has a painful history of more than a century of colonization under four different flags. (Hezel, 1995) Throughout this long period, under the colonial rules of Spain, Germany, Japan and the US, their inhabitants faced multiple encroachments on their way of life (Hezel, 1995: 14), which included encroachments on their tribal religious beliefs, their educational system and their societal and political organization. In the case of the Japanese and US occupations – endorsed by the League of Nations and the UN, respectively – the Marshall Islands were used as "stepping stones" to the achievement of these powers' security goals (Dvorak, 2008, p. 55). At that time,

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[16] Beyond the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Micronesia is also composed of the Federate States of Micronesia; Guam; Kiribati; Nauru, Northern Marianas and Palau. These islands vary in type: some of them are volcanic, and others are formed of low-lying coral atolls, which is the case in the Marshalls. (Barnett, 2005)

several atolls were fortified, Marshallese sea and land territories were turned into a war theater and the stage for dozens of nuclear tests.

In the following sections I will set out how these militarized security practices – heavily informed by mainstream ISS approaches, as rational deterrence theory – were conducted at the expense of the Marshallese's physical and ontological security. From 1946 to 1958, during the Cold War, 67 thermonuclear bombs were detonated in the Marshallese atolls of Bikini and Enewetak. If the combined amount of these explosives were shared equally over this same twelve year-period, it would result in more than one Hiroshima-size blast per day. (Zak, 2015) The detonations caused the vaporization of some islets, the evacuation of local communities and severe health, psychological and social problems that have lasted until the present day. In addition, the radiation legacy destabilized islanders' connections to their ancestral lands, created new taboos within Marshallese society and resulted in the definitive exile of some communities.

The devastating effect of the nuclear weapons – a traditional and militarized threat – on the physical and mental health of islanders, their land-based matrilineal organization, and their local cosmovision – that binds together the human and natural world - help us to make sense of how the understandings on security can go far beyond material considerations. Once again, these elements – crucial for islanders' ontological security - are at risk. This time, however, their ontological security is not endangered by the military goals of great powers, but by an unintended environmental phenomenon; namely, climate change.

In this chapter, I hope to highlight the conditions that favor the application of my respective theoretical framework to this case. But, at the same time that the case of the Marshallese community seems to favor the application of the theory of ontological security, I argue that this case can also bring fruitful insights to ISS in revealing the different ways through which security can be framed, thus, unveiling the contingency of hegemonic discourses about security, seen as fixed and undisputed. Learning about Marshallese contingencies also enables an analysis of the subject through a *thicker signifier*. Inspired by Huysmans' thick signifier which argues that the concept of security is not attached to a single rationality but is dependent on the circumstances in which it is articulated – a *thicker signifier* also

comprises the analysis of emotions which are capable of enabling and constraining meanings attached to security.

5.1.
A "Sea of Islands" Amidst the World Superpowers

The territory that nowadays constitutes the Republic of the Marshall Islands has a history of three thousand years of human habitation. (RMI, 2016: 103) Although Spain was the first European State to contact the islands, as early as the sixteenth century, it was a British Captain who was responsible for naming the archipelago. Captain Thomas Gilbert payed a tribute to his colleague William Marshall, giving the islands the name that would mark it cartographically and colonially up to the present day. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014: 218, 219)

Like the whole of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands was under Spanish rule following the Tordesillas Treaty. The Spanish influence on the archipelago was, however, very limited since the European country was more interested in the economic potential of other islands in the region, the Marshalls being used mostly as a pit stop to more lucrative destinations. (Rudiak-Gould, 2013: 17) In 1885, the Marshalls passed into the hands of Germany, when it was "officially" bought through papal mediation. In the following year, it turned into a German protectorate, administered as one unit for the first time in its history. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014: 220)

The islanders, though, have been the target of previous homogenization efforts. From the middle of the eighteenth century, the population was gradually Christianized by missionaries, sponsored by the New England-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. (Rudiak-Gould , 2013: 18; Rudiak-Gould, Schwartz, 2014: 219) Arriving on the archipelago in 1857, missionaries encountered no resistance from the land chiefs, and were able to establish a school and a church, devised a written form of the local language and translated parts of the Bible into the local language. With the spread of Christianity, the Marshallese gradually abandoned traditional religious rituals and ancient practices such as tattooing, since they were condemned by the Christian church because of their spiritual associations. (Rudiak-Gould, 2013: 18; Hezel, 1983)

However, it was in the twentieth century, in the context of two world wars, that colonizing practices in the archipelago increased. In 1914, still at the beginning of World War I (WWI), Japan seized the Marshalls. As one of the victorious states, it had its control legitimized at the end of the conflict by the newly created League of Nations, which institutionalized a formal Japanese Administration under its mandate. At that time, not only the Marshall Islands but also the Northern Mariana, Caroline Islands and Palau turned into a part of the Japanese Empire. (Dvorak, 2011: 70) In the case of the Marshalls, the interwar period was marked by the arrival of civilians and the implementation of a Japanese model of education. The burdensome rules of the Japanese weakened the power of land chiefs and tried, although unsuccessfully, to substitute the Marshallese matrilineal social organization with a Japanese patrilineal model. (Rudiak-Gould, 2013: 19) At the climax of World War II (WWII), Japanese interventions became even more strict with the banning of inter-atoll sailing, the imposition of forced reallocations for labor purposes, and the building of military fortifications in several atolls including Kwajalein, Jaluit, Enewetak, Mille, Maloelap and Wotje. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014: 220; The Marshallese People, 1954)

The militarization of the Marshall Islands began in 1940, when the atoll of Kwajalein – one of the archipelagos' biggest atoll – received thousands of Japanese soldiers. It was from Kwajalein – which today shelters a US military base used for strategic surveillance and missile-defense tests – that the Japanese coordinated its South Seas naval forces during WWII. (Dvorak, 2008: 75) The atoll also played a critical role during the preparations for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii, forcing the US to abandon its isolationism and take part in the conflict.

The Pacific battles represented a turning point of the Japanese defeat, when more than 8000 Japanese soldiers and civilians, Marshallese and Korean laborers were killed by the US army in 1944. (Dvorak, p. 2008: 55) If WWI opened doors to the Japanese presence in the Marshalls, the end of WWII marked its definitive withdrawal after 30 years.

As happened after WWI, the control of the Marshalls and the destiny of its people were once again put in the hands of the military victors. In the years following the end of WWII, the archipelago, along with other Micronesian

territories, turned into a United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, formally administered by the US.

In the years to come, the US administration would prove to be even more traumatic to the local population than the Japanese. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014) At the beginning of the Cold War, the Marshall Islands was chosen as the US Pacific Proving Ground, where some of its islets and atolls became the stage for 67 thermonuclear tests. Conducted during the first phase of the bipolar conflict and coordinated from Kwajalein, the tests were not only a procedure to measure the power of nuclear weapons, they were a warning to the Soviet Union about the enormous military apparatus of its Western rival.

Marshallese atolls and its inhabitants played a major role in the US deterrence strategies, their lives marked forever by this extremely violent experience. As highlighted by Rudiak-Gould and Schwartz (2014, p. 220), at that time, the archipelago was described by news outlets and politicians as being located at a "safe" distance from the US territory: "US news reports and government briefs presented the location of the Marshall Islands by spinning a globe 180 degrees. The tactic affirmed the atomic ground zero as quite literally on the other side of the world." Hence if the nuclear tests were presented to American society as a symbol of the US military supremacy and capacity to provide security to its citizens, "on the other side of the world", for Marshallese living close to ground zero, it brought nothing but suffering and insecurity. The explosions caused the exile of people from their ancestors' atolls and left an inheritance of severe health, psychological and environmental problems that endure today, even for Marshallese not born at that time. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014)

The extensive lists in US top secret documents, medical reports and UN commission reports of the islanders' physical and psychological scars illustrate the disturbing effects of the US' exceptional and militarized security practices. The following section will discuss the devastating social, environmental and political consequences of these nuclear experiments in more detail.

5.1.1.
Testimonies of an Atomic Past

The Marshallese atomic odyssey started in 1945 when US President Harry Truman issued an order to the army and navy officials to test its nuclear weapons in order to gain knowledge about their effects on warships. (Niedenthal, 2002) A few months later, the governor of the Marshall Islands, the navy Commodore Ben H. Wyatt, visited the atoll of Bikini. Wyatt's mission was to make an offer to the 167 residents of the atoll. At the time, he asked if they would agree to leave Bikini temporarily to make way for the US to conduct its tests. As a small coral atoll in the middle of the Pacific, Bikini is located far from air and sea routes. For the US administrators, its remoteness and smallness, both in geographical and demographical terms, made Bikini the ideal place for their military entrepreneurs. (McArthur, 1991:87)

The Commodore justified the US demand by saying that it would be "for the good of mankind and to end all world wars." (Niedenthal, 2013) After deliberations amongst the islanders, the leader of the community informed the Commodore that the Bikinians agreed to leave: "We will go on believing that everything is in the hands of God". (Niedenthal, 2002)

Wyatt's speech is a striking example of the discourses promoted by some ISS theoreticians of how nuclear weapons could bring peace and stability to the world. As outlined by Bernard Brodie, a US strategist and one of the fathers of the nuclear deterrence theory: "thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on, its chief purpose should be to avert wars". (Freedman, 1983, p. 44) What Wyatt did not say at that time was that the avoidance of wars among great powers would mean heavy losses for the Marshallese.

Figure 2: Commodore Wyatt addressing Bikinians moments before their exodus to Rongerik. Photographer: Carl Mydans. Originally published by *Life*, March 25th 1946. Available at: < https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_1303438> (accessed on: 20/10/2019)

Only one month after the "negotiation", March 1946, Bikinians were evacuated by the US navy to an uninhabited atoll, Rongerik. However, what was supposed to be a temporarily transfer turned into a definitive exile. Following the evacuation, Bikini was bombed 23 times by atomic weapons and hydrogen bomb blasts, including Bravo – the most powerful bomb ever tested – which left a mile-long crater on the reef and caused a massive fallout in the northern Marshall Islands. (Niedenthal, 2013; RMI, 2016) The series of nuclear tests turned part of Bikini inhospitable to human and animal life, vaporizing three of its islands and turning its lands radioactive. (RMI, 2016: 132)

In contrast to Bikini, food was not abundant in Rongerik. Although Bikinians had received some supplies from the US government, they started to starve within a couple of months, begging to be allowed to return to their home islands. (Niedenthal, 2013) As told by Tomaki Juda, the son of the irooj of Bikini: "Rongerik was like a desert: there were no coconut drinks; the fish around its waters

were contaminated; etc…And the people on Rongerik were starving to death. One time, one of our grandmothers died of hunger[17]."

After two years living under harsh conditions, Bikinians were finally removed and sent to Kwajalein, where they came to live in crowded tents in the vicinity of the US military installations. Life was not easy there either and after six months Tomaki Juda and his community were once again relocated to the inhabited island of Kili, which is referred to by Bikinians as "prison island" due to its geographical characteristics (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014: 221):

> It was an isolated island… it has no lagoon and no islets -- it is an island that sits alone…Not only this but 6 to 8 months in a year, Kili's ocean becomes so rough that no one can get in or out; no one can go fishing out on the barrier reef because the water is murky and the current has grown stronger.[18]

After the Castle Bravo test, in 1954, the Marshallese presented a formal complaint to the UN. The document, entailed with the subject "Complaint regarding the explosion of lethal weapons within our home islands", denounced the incompatibility between the US security practices and the UN's responsibility to safeguard the archipelago:

> (…) we, the Marshallese people feel that we must follow the dictates of our consciences to bring forth this urgent plea to the UN, which has pledged itself to safeguard the life, liberty and the general well-being of the people of the trust territory, of which the Marshallese people are a part. (The Marshallese People, 1954, p. 1)

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[17] Marshall Islands Story Project. Interview of Tomaki Juda by Mary Silk, translated by Newton Lajuan, March 2008. Available at: < http://mistories.org/nuclear-Juda-text.php> (accessed on: 18/05/2019)

[18] Marshall Islands Story Project. Interview of Tomaki Juda by Mary Silk, translated by Newton Lajuan, March 2008. Available at: < http://mistories.org/nuclear-Juda-text.php> (accessed on: 18/05/2019)

The petition highlighted Marshallese worries on the lethal effects of these weapons and raised concerns about islanders who had to be removed from their lands as a result of the detonations:

> Land means a great deal to the Marshallese. It means more than just a place you can plant your food crops and build your houses; or a place where you can bury your dead. *It is the very life of the people. Take away their land and their spirits go also*. (The Marshallese People, 1954, p. 2, emphasis by the author)

Over twenty years after the detonations in Bikini, the US Committee responsible for radioactive monitoring, declared the atoll safe for human habitation. In 1968, the US president Lyndon Johnson ordered the island to be rehabilitated (RMI, 2016: 134) and, two years later, some Bikinians left Kili to finally return home. However, two subsequent studies, carried out in 1975 and 1978, showed that Bikini's wells and land-based food chain were still highly contaminated, which made the atoll unsuitable for permanent resettlement. (RMI, 2016: 134) Bikinians were thus forced to evacuate once again and, since then, they have been scattered among various Marshallese atolls, most of them in Kili, which is nowadays severely vulnerable to climate change.

Figure 3: Operation Crossroads in Bikini Lagoon. (RMI, 2016, p. 131)

Bikinians are just one example among many Marshallese who suffered the consequences of nuclear tests. Two years following the first detonations in Bikini, the islets of Enewetak Atoll were also used as a proving ground. Like the Bikinians, the Enewetakese were forced to move to a different atoll, Ujelang. According to the Marshallese beliefs, this atoll is cursed by spirits and its inhabitation is forbidden. However, the people from Enewetak had no choice and, for thirty years, struggled to survive serious malnutrition and hardships. (RMI, 2016, p. 135)

The testimony of an Enewetakese that was forced to leave the atoll at that time reveals his desolation while witnessing the nuclear explosion from a boat:

> Perhaps they had prearranged the time, for in just a little while we saw it. First like a cloud, white, but enlarging, up, away; then, as if they set ablaze the entire earth—colors; red, blue, purple, all colors of the rainbow, but stronger. Up higher and wider, until the entire sky to the north was filled with colors.
>
> And then they told us it was Enewetak, one of the bombs, and we began to be sad, for we knew it was gone. After some minutes, then we heard the sound, like thunder, but louder and it stayed. And we again saddened, for the sound revealed the truth: perhaps Enewetak was gone. And we did not hear talk of the atoll for many years, until now, and it only revealed to us our own thoughts, that island, the island of ours, was gone. (McArthur, 2000, p. 88 apud Carucci, 1989)

The suffering caused by the US security experiments did not affect only the islanders from Bikini and Enewetak. People who used to live on atolls located in the direction of winds coming from the detonation sites, such as Rongelap and Utirik, also suffered severe losses. These two communities were evacuated to isolated atolls too, but only after the testing programs had begun, which directly exposed them to radioactive fallout, food and water contamination.

Born in Rongelap, Lijon Eknilang dedicated her entire life to showing the world what nuclear tests did to her community and their lands. In 1954, on the day of her eighth birthday, Eknilang witnessed the Bravo shot from outside her house. Bravo was a thousand times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. (Niedenthal, 2002b) Despite being detonated in Bikini, the Bravo shot produced a big thick cloud that covered all of Rongelap. Eknilang

(2003) recalls her and other kids playing in the middle of what they thought was snow:

> We had known about snow from missionaries and other westerners who had come to our islands, but this was the first time we saw white particles fall from the sky and cover our islands. (…) of course, we did not know that the snow was radioactive. (Eknilang, 2003, p. 315)

Figure 4: Castle Bravo picture taken from a RB-26 few minutes after its detonation. Source: Nuclear Weapon Archives. Available at: <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Usa/Tests/Castle.html>

After Bravo, the US commissioned Project 4.1, a top-secret study to document the effects of radioactive fallout on humans. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014: 221; Schwartz, 2016: 8) Radiation was already in the air, in the water, and in the food when, a few days following the detonation, Eknilang and other Rongelapese were taken to the US military facility on Kwajalein. At that time, they were not informed that they would not be able to return home for almost three years. (Eknilang, 2003: 316)

After being in Kwajalein for some months, they were transferred to the capital, Majuro, where they lived until 1957 until doctors from the US Atomic Energy Commission informed them that it was safe for them to return home.

However, when Eknilang's community arrived in Rongelap, the atoll had drastically changed. The food crops had disappeared, the trees stopped bearing fruit, and the fish was different. From 1960, people from Rongelap started to contract illnesses like thyroid tumors, eye problems, and several types of cancer. Although islanders from atolls close to the testing sites were called "control groups" by the US doctors, they insisted that the diseases that they presented were common to all Marshallese and had nothing to do with the detonations. (Eknilang, 2003: 317)
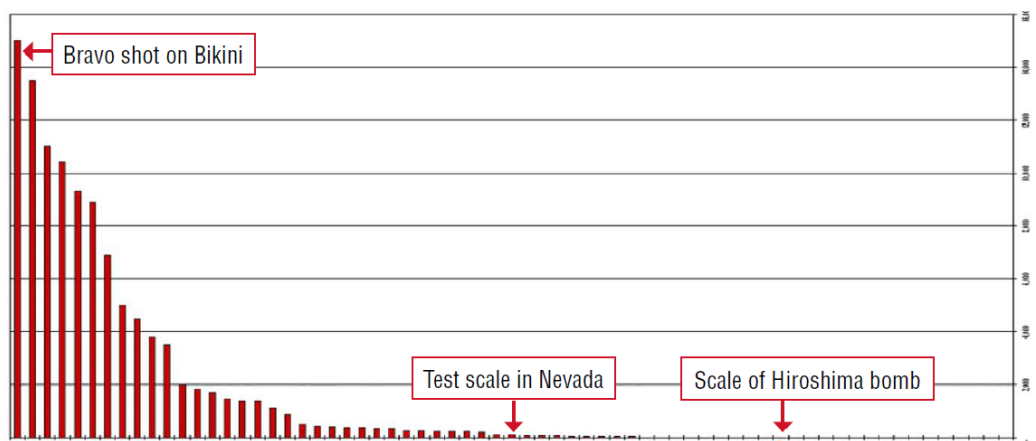

Figure 5: Scale of nuclear explosives carried out by the US atomic weapons detonated in Bikini, Nevada and Hiroshima (In Kilo-Tons). Source: RMI, 2016, p. 133

Eknilang explains how her entire family suffered the effects of atomic tests. Many of them died from these diseases, while she, along with others suffered from psychological and health problems during their entire lives. Eknilang passed away in 2012. Like many women from the atolls affected by radiation, Eknilang could not have children and suffered several miscarriages. According to their culture and religion, reproductive problems is a sign that women have been unfaithful to their husbands. The reproductive problems and abnormal births made Marshallese women suffer the consequences of atomic tests differently than men: (Eknilang, 2003, p. 317)

> For this reason, many of my friends kept quiet about the strange births they had. They gave birth in privacy, not to children as we like to think of them, but to things we could only describe as "octopuses", "apples," "turtles," and other things in our experience. *We do not have Marshallese words for these kinds of babies, because they were never born before the radiation came.*

> *The most common birth defects on Rongelap and other atolls in the Marshall Islands have been "jellyfish babies."* These babies are born without bones in their bodies and with transparent skin. We can see their brains and their hearts beating. They have no legs, no arms, no head, no nothing. (…) Many women die from abnormal pregnancies, and those who survive give birth to what looks like strands of purple grapes, which we quickly hide away and bury. (Eknilang, 2003, p. 318, emphasis from the author)

These reproductive problems were completely new to the Marshallese. As Eknilang argues, they did not even have words to describe these abnormal births, since they had never seen anything similar before. The choice of words that already existed in the Marshallese language reveals an attempt to make sense of these terrible experiences by using the names of animals or fruits from their day-to-day life.

Despite not creating a new vocabulary, nuclear testing definitely did create new taboos on the Marshall Islands, directly affecting their way of life and the bases of their social structures:

> certain lands and foods were off-limits; marriage to certain people involved new social stigmas; birthing presented new fears and health risks; family life often involved the psychological, social, and economic burden of caring for the chronically ill and disabled. (Johnston; Barker, 2008, p. 46)

As highlighted in an expert report prepared by Johnston and Barker (2008), the fear of an intergenerational nuclear contamination led to the social stigmatization of people from Rongelap, Ailinginae, and Rongerik, who were directed affected by the radiation.

In 1978 – fourteen years after Bravo and eleven years after people had returned to Rongelap –doctors from the US Department of Energy informed the islanders that northern Rongelap was severely affected by radiation and they would never be able to cultivate crops there again. Nevertheless, they insisted that it was safe to live in the southern areas. The limitation of people's movements on a small atoll sounded completely impractical (RMI, 2016: 136) and fearing the health risks,

the Rongelapese signed a petition demanding the US government help them to relocate. Their claim was denied not only by the US, but also by the Marshallese government that had close ties to its former colonizer. The Rongelapese community only left the atolls in 1985 when a Greenpeace ship was sent to help evacuate them once again to Kwajalein, where many islanders live in exile until the present date. (Eknilang, 2003: 319, 320) Eknilang (2003, p. 320) recalled some elders who preferred to stay: "It was not easy for them to leave their home. Three of them just went inside their huts and never came out until the day they died".

The compulsory transferring of Rongelapese, Utirikese, Enewetakese and Bikinians to different atolls was legitimized by an unrealistic US narrative that presumed an interchangeability and homogeneity amongst all Marshallese community. It ignored that, for them, land tenure is considered the foundation of their "national, culture, and personal identity and spirit." (MRI, 2009, p. 4) Transferred from generation to generation through the maternal line, lands are not viewed as interchangeable, which led to the forced migrants rejecting the US' imposed spatial imaginary. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014)

Despite the islanders' acknowledgement of a Marshallese traditional culture (*mantin majel*), many of them identified more with their ancestral atolls then with the archipelago as a whole. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014: 219) A sense of particularity is notable even today, since Marshallese call themselves a 'person of' the atoll to which they have land claims. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014: 225) This reveals how their self-identity is anchored in their physical and spiritual relation to their lands.

Since the evacuations, islanders struggled to maintain a sense of community in different Marshallese locations. The precarious accommodation of hundreds of people in small areas resulted in sanitary, environmental, food and economic problems. (Johnston; Barker, 2008). A report commissioned by the Public Advocate for the Marshall Islands Nuclear Claims Tribunal lists as the main consequences of the nuclear tests: "contamination, short- and long- term exposure to radioactive substances, and alienation from land and other critical resources". (Johnston; Barker, 2008, p. 47) The report also highlights how the detonations "(…) radically altered health, subsistence strategies, sociopolitical organization, and community

integrity." (Johnston; Barker, 2008, p. 47) In addition, it reveals that Marshallese were subject to non-authorized biomedical experiments. (Johnston; Barker, 2008)

These findings support Marshallese claims for financial compensation under the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, created after the signature of the first Compact of Free Association between the Marshall Islands and the US. The main changes promoted by the Compact and the current political and economic contexts of the archipelago will be approached in the following subsection.

5.2.
Independence and the Compacts of Free Association

In 1978, following a referendum, Marshallese citizens chose to break away from the rest of Micronesia to establish an independent government.One year later, its first Constitution was ratified, providing the Republic of the Marshall Islands with a unicameral parliamentary system and a consultative upper house for communities' traditional leaders, the Council of Irooj Advises on Customary Issues[19].

In 1983, the Marshallese voters approved the first Compact of Free Association with the US. Seen as a strategic association, through which both countries would preserve "mutually beneficial relationships" (US, 1986, p. 1), the treaty gives the US responsibility regarding the defense and the assistance of the archipelago[20]. Aiming to promote economic assistance to the Marshall Islands, the US committed to financial payments around $2 billion in the period between 1983 to 2003. (GAO, 2016: 5) In exchange, it owned the right to establish and use military areas and facilities in the Marshallese territory and to conduct activities and operations within its lands, waters and airspace. (US, 1986: 27) In essence, the Compact left no choice to the Marshall Islanders but to rely on economic and military paternalistic dependence on its former colonizer. (Dvorak, 2008: 63) The UN only recognized Marshallese sovereignty in 1990, turning it into a member state

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[19] RMI Parliament Official Website. Available at: <https://rmiparliament.org/cms/about/history-of-the-nitijela.html> (accessed on: 22/04/2019)

[20]Official Website of the Embassy of the Marshall Islands in the United States of America. Available at:< http://www.rmiembassyus.org/History.htm>. (accessed on: 02/03/2019).

in 1991. (McArthur, 2000: 97) In 2003, the Compact of Free Association was amended to the extend the dependence and hierarchical relations to 2023.

As noted by McArthur (2000), the Compacts represent a challenge both to traditional and modern Marshall Islands. On the one hand, Marshallese economy is still extremely dependent on US aid, in a way that hampers its status as a self-sufficient state. Since independence, the annual GDP rate of increase of the Marshallese economy is less than 1 percent. (RMI, 2016: 18) Compact funds represent around 60% of the annual national budget, with the amount of more than 30 million dollars transferred every year. (RMI, 2016: 19)

On the other hand, US interventionism has put at risk the social and cultural basis of the Marshallese society. In order to keep the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site in Kwajalein and to continue to use its lagoons and islands for military purposes, the US pays millions of dollars to the atoll's landowners. (McArthur, 1999) Under the Compact, the US not only undermines access to land, but becomes responsible for managing food, health and environmental programs too, weakening the figure of land chiefs[21] and creating unbalances and conflicts amongst the inhabitants. In 2005, the death of a distinguished Kwajalein's *aḷap* raised controversies among senior female heirs and male traditional leaders about who has the right for US payments. (Dvorak, 2008: 70) Despite the disagreements surrounding the foreign presence on the atoll, the amended Compact of Free Association grants the US the rights to use Kwajalein's facilities until 2086; therefore, the expectation is that the disputes between landowners will continue.

Moreover, under the 177 Agreement of the Compact of Free Association, the US recognizes the damages caused by its testing program and the need for financial compensation. Thus, it gave the Marshall Islands $150 million as a financial settlement, which was used to create a trust fund for people from the atolls of Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Utirik[22]. The Agreement also launched the basis for the Marshall Islands Nuclear Claims Tribunal with jurisdiction to judge the claims of the government and the Marshallese who suffered personal injuries as a

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[21] Since immemorial times, the land chiefs distribute fruits and fishes to islanders, in a way to avoid waste and safeguard peace within the community. (Zak, 2015)

[22] Nuclear Claim Tribunal Official Website. Available at: < https://web.archive.org/web/20140517172030/http://nuclearclaimstribunal.com/> (accessed on: 24/04/2019).

consequence of the US nuclear program[23]. Established in 1988, the Tribunal created compensation programs and granted property damage awards in class actions for people of those atolls. Resources, however, has shown insufficient for the payment of all the claims and, in 2011, the Tribunal practically ceased its functions, leaving behind some requests of withdrawal from the fund. (Johnson, 2012)

Nevertheless, since the signature of the first Compact of Free Association in 1983, Marshallese citizens have earned the right to work, live and study in the US, as a form of compensation for the compulsory evacuations. More than a quarter of the Marshall Islands' population had already migrated to the US. (United States Census Bureau, 2010) The decision to continue life on the American continent has environmental motivations, but also economic ones. With an extremely low minimum wage and an unemployment rate of around 36%, many young people choose to migrate with the aim of sending money to their families. (Milman, Ryan, 2016) However, the migration alternative is undesired by many, given the impossibility of preserving the lifestyle and the Marshallese identity in the US territory.

5.3.
Environment and Climate Change

Nature is an integral part of the Marshallese cosmology and self-identity. Over centuries, it has shaped and influenced islanders' way of life, spiritual beliefs and social organization. (RMI, 2016: III)

As an archipelago with limited territorial extension, lands are valued as the most precious possession by the Marshallese. Nowadays, they are mainly privately owned and controlled by three titles: the *Iroij*, a clan chief who has the highest authority and manages everything related to land rights; the *Alap* who is usually a landowner or a clan elder and the *Ri-jerbal*, who is a land steward. (RMI, 2016: 103)

[23]Nuclear Claim Tribunal Official Website. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20140517172030/http://nuclearclaimstribunal.com/ (accessed on: 24/04/2019).

Figure 6: Marshall Islands Territorial Map and its Exclusive Economic Zone. Source: RMI, 2016, p. 29.

According to the last IPCC Report (2018), low-lying islands such as the Marshalls face disproportional challenges as a result of climate change. The rise in sea level and the consequent loss of territory are a crucial concern for those communities. The phenomenon is a result of the melting of glaciers in areas such as Antarctica and Greenland and the increasing temperatures of both the atmosphere and the oceans, which generates the thermal expansion of the seas. For the inhabitants of coastal zones, rising sea levels is one of the most challenging consequences of climate change, since it causes coastal erosion, flooding, and soil and freshwater reserves' salinization. (PICEP, 2014)

In some Marshallese communities, the population groups rebuild debris barriers during the low tide almost daily. These barriers act as a breakwater for the protection of their homes and plantations, which are usually destroyed by the tide

only few hours later. The advancing of the sea floods streets, homes, establishments and even cemeteries, damaging the infrastructure and transportation systems. In 2013, it brought great destruction to the country's capital, Majuro, resulting in the closure of schools, in order to house displaced families, and the airport due to the flooding of its runway. In the following year, Majuro was flooded on three different occasions by waves higher than five meters, a phenomenon that used to occur only once in decades. However, the predictions are that swells of this magnitude will occur more and more frequently. (Milman, Ryan, 2016) The first structures to be affected will probably be the official buildings, such as the Parliament and the Governor Ministry, located only four feet above sea level in one of the most vulnerable areas of Majuro. (RMI, 2016: 41)

Rise in sea levels becomes even more challenging due its synergistic effects with other environmental unbalances. The acidification and increased temperatures of the sea has resulted in the death of coral barriers, thus, decreasing the availability of fish – the major source of protein in the Marshallese diet – and making the islands more exposed to drastic events such as storms, typhoons and king tides. (Rudiak-Gould, 2011: 47) Combined with the structural and sanitary problems of these communities, it also results in the proliferation of diseases – such as dengue fever, yellow fever and dysentery – due to the contamination of sea water by untreated sewage. (Davenport, 2015)

Figure 7: Coral barrier in Majuro. Photo: Jake Marotte. Huffington Post, 2015. Available at: < http://bit.do/faZwr> (accessed on: 28/09/ 2019)

As with most low-lying islands, fresh water is an extremely scarce resource in the Marshall Islands. There are few sources of ground water in the archipelago, which makes it highly dependent on consistent rainfall for ensuring its water supplies. However, the recorded decrease in precipitation has been causing a decline in the availability of water for drinking, agriculture and industry. (RMI, 2016: 47) In April 2016, a long drought led the state to declare a state of emergency. (RMI, 2016: 22) This led the government to consider water security – together with food security, human health, land use and flood risks – as one of its climate adaptation priorities. (RMI, 2016)

Figure 8: Ebon Airstrip. Photo: Photo: Benedict Yamamura. Available at: RMI, 2016, p. 53.

Marshall Islands' Vulnerabilities to Climate Change	
Water Resources	Changes in precipitation patterns will probably exacerbate existing pressures on limited water resources. The sea level rise presents risks to freshwater resources, since it boosts the chances of freshwater sources being contaminated by sea water.
Agriculture	The sea level rise causes the salinization of agricultural land, which is already very limited on the Marshalls. Land losses caused by erosion is also likely, causing the reduction of arable lands to grow crops and increasing

	challenges when it comes to the food security of the population.
Human Health	The warmer climate and potentially higher rainfall conditions can enhance the risks of diseases such as dengue fever. Higher temperatures can also lead to the increased transmission of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea and gastroenteritis. The contaminated water derived from floods can also enhance the risks of diseases like cholera and typhoid.
Infrastructure	Sea level rise and its associated impact on coastal erosion and flooding threatens private houses and the public infrastructure of the islands.
Coastal Ecosystems and Biodiversity	Warmer ocean temperatures and acidification may have severe impact on coral reefs and costal ecosystems leading to a decrease in the stocks of fish such as tuna, which make up the main source of protein in the Marshallese diet and are an important economic resource for the country.

Table 1: Marshall Islands' Vulnerabilities to Climate Effects by Sector. Source of data: SUBBARAO, Srikanth; MUCADAM, Riyad. 2015, p. 81

In addition, climate change effects interact with the Marshallese nuclear legacy in powerful and frightening ways. The detonations vaporized islets, deposited radioactive debris over lands and natural lagoons, and destroyed terrestrial and sea ecosystems. (RMI, 2016: 32) In a society where land is scarce and highly prized, the radioactive legacy not only disrupted traditional ties between clans and their ancestral atolls, but also brought difficulties in terms of food security. (RMI, 2016: 87) Traditional food gathering sites have been contaminated or even wiped out by the detonations, thus, reducing the already limited extent of arable lands for cultivating food crops and medicines supplies. (RMI, 2016: 139)

Climate change effects, in their turn, have increased these challenges by resulting in the salinization and flooding of the remaining soils. It has affected the atolls where some of these displaced communities are living now. In this sense, the risks of radioactive contamination, together with the worsening climate effects, have reduced traditional agricultural activities, which have guaranteed food security for the Marshallese for thousands of years.

As a result, the dependency on imported food has drastically increased, leading to health problems within communities. Considered nutritionally inferior when compared to the traditional one, the new Marshallese diet has been linked, both by the government and the UN, to an increase of diabetes cases – which is already the main cause of death on the archipelago, the second being cancer (UN, 2012) -; heart diseases and obesity within the Marshallese population. (RMI, 2016: 107, 108)

Finally, the Runit Dome is, perhaps, the more significant illustration of the interconnectedness between the nuclear legacy and climate change in the Marshall Islands. Located in Enewetake, it was built in the 70s in the place of a 350-wide foot crater created by the Cactus nuclear tests. Presented as a temporary solution to house radioactive waste, the dome raised concerns about its structural integrity in the face of the rise in sea level and other natural disasters associated with climate change. In the case of cracks, one hundred and eleven thousand cubic yards of radioactive debris – including Plutonium-239, with a half-life of 24 thousand years – could leak into the Pacific Ocean, causing an unprecedented environmental and human tragedy. (RMI, 2016, p. 132; 137)

Figure 9: The Runit Dome, Enewetak atoll. Photo Credit: Steve Holloway. Available at: https://okeanos-foundation.org/in-the-marshall-islands-a-traditional-voyaging-canoe-gives-nuclear-legacy-victims-chance-to-reclaim-their-identity/ (accessed on 03/10/2019)

All these environmental challenges engender a constant fear of a new evacuation, such as the ones that occurred during the nuclear testing period. However, this time it seems unlikely that neighboring atolls will remain their ultimate destination.

The statement by Mark Stege, a young Marshallese who grew up in Majuro, exemplifies the connection between the Marshallese's painful atomic past and doubtful future:

> Climate change is my nuclear experience (…) I can see a lot of connections at the emotional level, and the community level, at the individual family level. The same questions are relevant in both situations. There's this really deep sense of loss." (Zak, 2015)

Like the testimonies of islanders who had to be transferred from their native atolls because of the atomic tests, Stege's statement reveals the importance of the here-feeling to the construction of security. The here-feeling is also implicit in the Marshallese petition sent to the UN after the first detonations: "It is the very life of the people. Take away their land and their spirits go also" (The Marshallese People, 1954, p. 2)

In this sense, it seems clear that the islanders' relationships to particular places, understood in specific ways, is an integral part of their self-identity. These features not only shape the way through which Marshallese make sense of their security, but also elucidate how climate change and its multifaceted effects can constitute a threat to their ontological security. This argument will be further developed in the following sections of this chapter.

5.4.
Marshallese Attachments: Territorial Imagination, Cosmology and Language

In order to enhance our comprehension of the Marshallese marginalized narratives on (in)security – the conditions of possibility of which diverge so fundamentally from western contexts – some additional considerations about the territorial imagination, cosmology and vocabulary of these communities are necessary.

With regards to the diverse Pacific territorial imagination, the thought of Epeli Hau'ofa (1994) is extremely enlightening. For the Tongan anthropologist, the determinist narratives that recurrently describe Pacific States as tiny and vulnerable do not reflect these communities' perceptions of their islands. Hau'ofa points to those narratives not as a description of a given reality, but as the result of a long colonial project that imposed artificial boundaries on people who used to think about the ocean, not as a frontier, but as an inherent part of their territories and identities:

> But if we look at the myths, legends, and oral traditions, and the cosmologies of the peoples of Oceania, it becomes evident that they did not conceive of their world in such microscopic proportions. Their universe comprised not only land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny. (…) Smallness is a state of mind. (Hau'ofa, 1994, p. 152)

Hau'ofa (1994) offers a shift in viewpoint where Pacific States are not remote "islands in a far sea", as frequently described by Western explorers who have the European continent as their main reference. Following the example of their ancestors, Hau´'ofa argues that the Pacific States should be understood as a "sea of islands", so as to emphasize their sense of interconnectedness and interrelatedness.

In the Marshalls, this sort of territorial spatiality is also present, and is clearly reflected in the local language. In contrast to the name given by Thomas Gilbert in 1788, the islanders used to call the archipelago *Aelōñ kein* (these islands) or *aelōñ kein ad* (these islands of ours). (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014: 231) The etymology of these Marshallese names reveals relevant interconnections. *Aelōñ kein* is composed of *ae* meaning ocean currents, *lōñ* meaning sky and *kein* referring to land. (Rudiak-Gould; Schwartz, 2014: 231) Thus, it links three elements of nature in a way that embraces the sea, the land and the sky (or even the heavens!), seeing the archipelago as much more than scattered portions of land, as often described by outsiders. The islands, thus, are portrayed as the result of a delicate balance among these three elements, in a way that makes the survival of the *aelōñ kein* in the absence of one of these elements impossible.

The work of the Marshallese Benetick Kabua Maddison (2015) has also highlighted this interconnectedness. As noted by him, an atoll (*aelōñ)* is necessarily made of symbiotic encounters, since it was the movement of the ocean currents that enabled the first contact between the atoll and its first inhabitants. (Maddison, 2015 *apud* Schwartz, 2016: 6)

Hau'ofa's ideas and *Aelōñ kein* challenge the western view on island states as small, fragile, dependent and undeveloped, a view which is frequently reproduced through terms – broadly employed in UN reports, multilateral forums and academic publications – such as "Small Islands Developing States" (UNCTAD, 2004: UNEP, 2014a; UNEP, 2014b; UN-OHRLLS, 2015; UNFCCC, 2005). Once again, these terms were chosen, since they were in keeping with Western references in terms of a specific territorial imagination and, most of all, a particular model of development.

In recording the time when narratives on development arrived in the Pacific States, Hau'ofa brilliantly argues: "suddenly our world changed; we were poor". (Hau'ofa; White, 2006, p. xiii) However, Pacific islanders never felt like that since, for times immemorial, they had been self-sufficient in their local needs. In this sense, their ultimate source of wealth resided, not in money, but in their lands, which provided not only their sustenance, but also the bases of their social organization. (Roudiak-Gould, 2013: 26) Yet, the idea of their poverty was established when comparing the islands to the economically rich and industrialized West along with Western linear narratives on economic growth.

This is a stark example of two distinct ways of thinking, thus, illustrating how Western and Pacific visions can fundamentally diverge. In this thesis, I argue that the same happens when it comes to the meaning attached to security. The Marshallese recognize their atolls, oceans and ecosystems not only as a material environment where they live and obtain sustenance, as could be easily understood by any uninformed observer, but as an inherent part of who they are and where they come from. This sense of interconnectedness comes from their ancestors and finds expression in their belief systems, social and economic organizations, as well as their language.

As revealed by insightful linguistic research conducted by Rudiak-Gould (2012: 49), there is no expression in Marshallese language to describe what Western scientists call climate change. The most frequent translation found amongst the islanders is *oktak in mejatoto*. (Rudiak-Gould, 2012: 48) While *oktak* means change or difference, *mejatoto* refers both to environmental and social processes. Curiously, *mejatoto* evokes a conceptual conflation between "nature" and "culture" that enables the islanders to make sense of climate change not only as an environmental phenomenon, but as a deeper transformation of their social and cultural structures. (Rudiak-Gould, 2012: 48)

Thus, *mejatoto* is employed by the islanders in a broader way than it is presented in the Marshallese- English dictionaries. They use *majatoto* not only to describe natural events such as rain, direction and speed of winds or changing temperature, but to denote broader occurrences such as a solar eclipse or a change in culture and lifestyles. (Rudiak-Gould, 2012: 49)

This conflation, as argued by Rudiak-Gould (2012: 50), is not merely linguistic, but is evidence of a particular cosmology in which human and natural environments are indistinguishable. Climate change is not, therefore, viewed as a purely environmental transformation. Because their natural environment is an inherent part of Marshallese self-identity, climate change is understood as a much broader – and more challenging – phenomena.

Like the atomic tests, climate change threatens not only the inhabitants' physical survival and the integrity of their material and social environment, but also certainties about their biographical continuity. This is the reason why its effects - and the anticipation of them – provoke deep uncertainties in terms of time, space, identity and cognition (Kinnvall, 2004: 72; Harries, 2017: 2) amongst the islanders, undermining any sense of security.

To make things worse, this condition of ontological insecurity is reinforced by painful memories of previous dislocations. The Marshallese who, during the Cold War, used to live close to sites designated by the US as experimental grounds for atomic tests know very well how it feels to be displaced from their home atolls. The case narrated by Eknilang about the elders who preferred to stay and die in Rongelop shows how the search for security – especially when it is understood in ontological terms - is not necessarily consistent with the preservation of physical survival, as usually conceptualized by ISS theories. It also reveals the role of the here-feeling –evoking an individual connection to a material space, permeated by emotions and meanings - to the continuation of their sense of presence in the world:

> Many people do not think that our tiny island of Rongelap is very important. But it is our home. We are meant to be there. Our land is everything, our medicine, our food, our houses, and our everyday supplies. Our land is our memory of those people we have lost. Their spirit is in the land. (Eknilang, 2003, p. 320)

While the nuclear tests resulted in a painful past of dislocation and severe psychological and health problems that endure until today - thus connecting the past to the present - climate change effects cause them uncertainty and anxiety about

their future. Although these events are triggered by different actors and dynamics, both resulted from unequal conditions and relations. On the one hand, the conditions of possibility of the first chain of events – atomic tests/ dispossession and evacuation – point to the hierarchical relation between colonizers and colonized that saw the harm done to the Marshallese as mere collateral, originating from the pursuit of the US national security goals. On the other, the disproportionate effects of climate change in States such as the Marshall Islands are the result of unsustainable economic growth and "well-being" of the developed and modern West, the same narrative that situates States such as the Marshalls within the group of small, vulnerable and underdeveloped nations.

Despite their obvious differences and proportions – atomic tests were conducted on purpose by US authorities animated by "rational" recommendations of security analysts – both events indicate the privileging of someone's security and way of life at the expense of others. In restricting their material and social environment of action (Giddens, 1990), the human-induced climate effects can be understood as the exportation of ancient colonial practices. (Smith, 2007:1) It represents, once again, the subjectification of their selves, lands and cultures, to colonialist dynamics, thus, denying their self-determination and security.

Therefore, throughout this thesis, I make the case for a Marshallese sense of security that has been systematically marginalized from both political debates and ISS theories. In reifying a militarized and exceptional discourse about security, ISS mainstream approaches not only help to delegitimize different understandings and perspectives but also, because of its close relation to the construction of reality, contribute to exacerbating the security challenges faced by these individuals.

The unbalancing among the elements that constitute the *aelōñ kein* makes the Marshallese fearful, not only for their physical existence, but also of the possibility of preserving their condition as Marshallese after being evacuated to an unknown territory in case their islands turn inhospitable. In these circumstances, climate change would make the islands not only inhospitable to human life, but also incapable of providing a sense of self-identity and security to its people, in a way that makes them lose their territorial, spiritual and cultural references.

Thus, the history of the archipelago evokes the interconnectivity between traditional (military) and non-traditional threats (environmental), showing how both can be destructive when it comes to physical and ontological security.

In addition, the Marshallese community's case provides important insights into the co-constitutive relations between theory/reality, discourses/objects. Firstly,the current context of dislocations, health and social problems in the archipelago is a product of traditional, militarized and colonial practices dictated by the hegemonic scientific discourses about security, which were presumed to be an authentic description of an external reality. Secondly, the recovery of local narratives about security could expose the fissures within these hegemonic discourses in bringing to the surface the several insecurities derived from these traditional understandings.

5.5.
Final Considerations

As I tried to show throughout the historical overview that opens this chapter, the Marshallese's prevailing context was shaped by colonial interferences and extremely militarized and ethnocentric security practices, informed by a traditionalist and narrow hegemonic discourses about security. During the Cold War, the search for the "good of mankind" was pursued by the US at the cost of other Marshallese dimensions of security, not covered by ISS' traditional approaches. The burned and poisoned bodies of Marshallese, their vaporized atolls and their fractured way of life, routines and self-identities disrupt the ISS narrative of the achievement of security through nuclear weapons and rational deterrence theories.

Once again, the fundamental basis of Marshallese security are being challenged, this time not by traditional military threats as nuclear weapons, but by climate change. Because of the radically distinct nature (nuclear and environmental) of these threats, the Marshallese's lived experiences clearly illustrates the contrast between two distinct discourses about security: a militarized one that reifies security as an exceptional field, dedicated exclusively to the physical preservation of the

state and the maintenance of its national interests, and a broader understanding that sees the meaning of security not as a given, but as contingent to cultural, emotional, and linguistic specificities.

In addition, the analysis of the current political, social and environmental context of the islands reveals how the present has been shaped by their previous colonial experiences, while their future has been conditioned by the international community's ability to deal with climate change. Regarding how the past shapes their present, the two Compacts of Free Association, the maintenance of the Kwajalein atoll as the headquarters of the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site, the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, and the right conceded to Marshallese citizens to migrate to the US, areall striking illustrations of the persisting and intricate relationship between the archipelago and its former colonizer. Concerning the intersections between their present and a not too distant future, the climate effects – which is set to worsen in the next few years – are already widely felt in the Marshalls, ranging from rising sea levels and the reduction of arable lands to growing vulnerability to extreme environmental events. Together with the US radioactive legacy, these effects are making life in the Marshalls increasingly challenging, constraining traditional practices and disrupting the delicate balance between sea/land, natural/ human worlds, which since have long characterized life in the archipelago.

As discussed in chapter two, the ISS' approaches seem unfit to analyze the multiple implications of environmental related issues on security, especially because of their lack of emphasis on the importance of culture, identity and emotions. These elements are crucial for the construction of security within Marshall Islands; however, most of the security approaches are unable to analyze them. Ontological security studies, in turn, provide us a broader view of the different dimensions of security endangered by climate change, so as to escape from exceptional and militarized narratives that usually characterize ISS. Through an ontological lens, it is possible to understand that, by threatening their territories, climate change not only endangers the physical security of Marshall Islands' inhabitants but also their stable environment of action, sense of biographical continuity and agency. Their ontological security is at risk because their islands are not simply where they live, but are a crucial part of who they are. Therefore,

throughout ontological security assumptions and knowledge about the interconnected means by which islanders perceive the world, it is not hard to conclude that climate change effects are hampering security in all senses in the Marshall Islands.

6.
Recognizing the Marshall Islands through an Aesthetic Curiosity

> Because we deserve
>
> To do more
>
> than just
>
> survive
>
> we deserve
>
> to thrive

> (Jetñil- Kijiner, 2017, p. 82)

This final chapter focuses on distinct Marshallese narratives of (in)security, analyzing how they relate to the multiple challenges brought on by climate change. Firstly, by presenting both scientific and non-scientific reports, the chapter provides clarification about how climate change is affecting the archipelago and its inhabitants.

Secondly, by employing a *thicker signifier approach*, it attempts to make sense of the particular cultural and emotional contexts that help individuals to conceptualize security and climate change in certain ways. Equipped with an aesthetic curiosity, I turn to the analysis of artistic representations that allow us to acknowledge how the islanders make sense of their relationships with their social and natural environments. I also explore how nature provides the inhabitants with a sense of here-feeling (Deudney, 1996) that is crucial to the construction of their self-identities (Giddens, 1991) and, finally, how these specific cultural and emotional contexts mediate their comprehension of security.

As highlighted in the second chapter, considering emotional elements as an inherent part of the construction of security helps us to understand how this condition can relate, not only to the preservation of physical referent objects – such as the sovereign state, the individuals' physical bodies, the natural ecosystems or even the planet Earth – but to the capacity to sustain a continuous narrative about

who we are and where we come from, so as to enable a sense of biographical continuity, as highlighted by authors engaged in ontological security studies. (i.e.: Giddens, 1991; Kinnvall, 2006; Mitzen, 2006; Kinnvall, Mitzen, 2016)

By means of an aesthetic curiosity, which I argue is part of a *thicker signifier* approach, I aim to focus not only on the social, political, historical and linguistic contexts from which security derives its meaning but, equally important, on the emotional elements that limit certain understandings of (in)security.

Thus, I argue that aesthetic representations can offer us a better idea of the contexts from which security acquires its meanings. It can also incorporate narratives of (in)security, narratives shaped by the juxtaposition of diverse signs that can be identified from camera angles, body language, tone of voice, colors and silences. In order to make sense of these signs, and to analyze how they can give life to a particular discursive formation about security, I aim to work with the Foucauldian concept of statement, as operationalized by Gaspar (2007), and to employ a discourse analysis.

The aesthetics sources collected and presented in this final chapter are of Marshallese authorship and reflect different, although intertwined, moments of their histories, such as the colonization period, the nuclear tests and, more recently, the escalating effects of climate change in their archipelago. Thus, from each of these contexts emerge particular security narratives, which converge into one main ontology: the deep connection between the Marshallese self-identities and their natural surroundings, which is reflected in their territorial imagination, their traditional beliefs, and in the way they make sense of climate change as both an environmental and social transformation.

Even though not all of these aesthetic sources relate to climate change, they were selected because of their ability to aid us, by way of diverse aesthetic resources, to make sense of how this environmental phenomenon can constitute an obvious threat to this particular community, given the cultivated sense of interconnectedness between the individual self-identities and their home atolls. Frequently, these narratives do not emanate solely from spoken or written words, but from aesthetical juxtapositions of sparse signs that can give life to a specific statement about security.

It seems important to note at this point that this thesis is not interested in the analysis of aesthetics per se; rather, it aims to grasp how security can be approached – in a completely different way from those advocated by traditionalists in ISS – through the analysis of these artistic representations, thus, highlighting alternative meanings and rationalities attached to security. By these means, it will be possible to highlight the multiplicity of narratives about security, while challenging the regime of truth, power and knowledge built by hegemonic discourses, thereby uncovering the consequences of accepting these discourses as the right story of the legitimate way to obtain security.

6.1.
Climate Change in the Marshall Islands: Equalizing Scientific Discourses with Local Perceptions

Given the many risks it poses to the natural ecosystems and the people who depend on them, (Barnett, 2005: 204) climate change has been identified as the most serious threat to the survival of low-lying islands. (Twenty-Third South Pacific Forum, 1992; Falcam, 2001; RMI, 2011; AOSIS, 2019)

According to one of the latest IPCC special reports, entitled *Global Warming of 1.5º C*, there is a high confidence that those islands are already experiencing severe consequences associated with the climate phenomena. (IPCC, 2018: 234) Sea level rise (and its effect on the salinization, flooding and erosion of soils), cyclones and mass coral bleaching are regarded as the most common manifestations of climate change in the Pacific atolls, leading to significant socio-environmental implications. (IPCC, 2018: 232)

The report foresees that, even in the best scenario in which countries radically reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, "compounding impacts from interactions between climate drivers may contribute to the loss of, or change in, critical natural and human systems" on low-lying islands. (IPCC, 2018, P. 234) Challenges such as salinization, permanent inundation, flooding, erosion of soils and pressures on natural ecosystems "will therefore persist well beyond the 21st century even under 1.5°C of warming. (Section 3.4.5.3; Nicholls et al., 2018)" (IPCC, 2018, p. 234)

Due to these consequences, the report indicates that several atolls might turn inhospitable (IPCC, 2018: 235) and that migration and/or relocation may become the main adaptive measure for some of the ten thousand islanders. (Rasmussen et al *apud* IPCC, 2018: 232)

Concerning the future of the Marshalls, predictions can be even more frightening. According to a recent study conducted by researchers at the University of Hawaii (USGS, 2018), with a rise in sea level of three feet (91 centimeters) – something that can happen before 2100, as acknowledged by IPCC scientists (2018) – the capital Majuro will be almost fully submerged, as well as many other Marshallese atolls. (Tilley, 2018)

Even among the Marshallese who live on the outer-lying islands and have never heard about these scientific findings, there is a widespread knowledge about climate change. (Rudiak-Gould, 2013) in contrast to what happens in Western countries, this knowledge is not publicly broadcasted via newspapers and television. Often, the locals' awareness of environmental problems derives from their own observation, since their daily lives enable them to witness those transformations at the first hand. (Rudiak-Gould, 2013: 69)

Salinization and erosion of the soil are easily perceived by the locals given their increasing difficulties in growing food and the atolls increasing vulnerability to natural events, such as storms and typhoons. The effects of coral bleaching, which is a consequence of the rising temperatures and acidification of the ocean, are also clear when it comes to the diminishing fishing resources. This occurs because corals are a crucial part of a greater marine ecosystem, within which several species find the conditions to live and reproduce. (Subbarao; Mucadam, 2015; Rudiak-Gould, 2013)

However, one of the most frequently noted events on the archipelago is the sea level rise, which is impossible to ignore by the locals when higher and powerful waves flood their backyards. It usually causes serious damage to private houses, cultivate sites, and the public infrastructure of the islands. (Subbarao; Mucadam, 2015; Rudiak-Gould, 2013)

Figure 10: Waves crashing over the sea wall in Majuro. Photo: Karen Earnshaw. Available at: < https://marshallislandsjournal.com/storm-driven-tides-cause-flooding/ > (accessed on 02/10/2019)

The sea level rise also endangers the integrity of the graveyards, which carry great spiritual and emotional significance for the community. (Rudiak-Gould, 2013: 72; RMI, 2016) Scenes like this have become increasingly common over the last few years, leading the locals to doubt the lasting peace of their beloved deceased, who should be buried on the same atoll where they were born, according to local beliefs.

Figure 11: The old cemetery of Jenrok Village affected by the rising sea level. Marshall Islands Journal. Source: RMI, 2016.

Together with local observations, the educational programs and training offered by schools and civil society organizations have been crucial in enhancing the awareness of the population of climate challenges (Rudiak-Gould, 2013). More and more, the topic is a part of daily conversations, radio programs, and the local newspaper *The Marshall Islands Journal* (2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

In the last few years, climate change has become a significant public preoccupation and one of the main elements of the Marshallese domestic and foreign agenda. The Republic of the Marshall Islands' National Climate Change Policy Framework (RMI, 2011, p. 5, emphasis by the author) highlights that: "climate change is real and *it is the greatest threat to our low lying islands and people*".

During the COPs, the climate negotiations of the UNFCCC, Marshallese delegation has been an active participant, exercising an important role within an alliance of 40 low-lying islands, formally designated by the Convention as the Small Island Developing States (SIDS)[24]. The main goal of this coalition is to guarantee more ambitious efforts to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases, and to limit the temperature rise to mitigate climate effects.

Thus, previous studies on climate change in the low-lying atolls (ie: Barnett, 2005, Barnett; Campbell, 2010; IPCC, 2018, Rudiak-Gould, 2013; USGS, 2018) together with official and civil society organization's actions suggest that climate change is a tangible and pressing concern, both for the authorities and the inhabitants of the Marshalls.

6.2.
Aesthetic Representations as a way of...

The Marshallese do not have a written history of themselves and their islands. Often, written words are unable reproduce the nuanced meanings and sounds characteristic of the Marshallese language, which can only be transmitted

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[24] UNFCCC Official Website. Available at: < https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/parties-non-party-stakeholders/parties/party-groupings > (accessed on: 10 Aug 2019).

orally. (Schwartz, 2016: 5) Thus, in contrast to most Western societies, the Marshallese culture is deeply embedded in oral tradition. The islanders usually rely on their voices to share their histories through songs, poem recitations and storytelling. (Schwartz, 2016: 1)

The Marshallese cultivate a perception of the body that conceives the throat (*bōro*) as the seat of emotions and the soul. The voice, the throat's physical manifestation, allows them the opportunity to tell their histories, communicate and pass down their social values (Schwartz, 2016: 1, 2, 8), usually through expressive oral performances.

Beside the chants (*roros*) and songs, the practice of storytelling is widespread across the archipelago. The storytellers (*ri-bwebenato*) are well known and respected individuals responsible for the transmission of Marshallese histories. They help to pass down the beliefs and community culture to the further generations. (Smith, 2008) Authors like Schwartz (2016: 6) describe the storytelling, chants and poetic performances as a spatial-temporal journey. These oral activities approach issues of lineage and natural surroundings – topics that are deeply embedded in the Marshallese language – helping to connect the past, the present and the future using the land as a guiding thread. (Schwartz, 2016)

Interestingly, the word *bwebwenato* in the Marshallese language has a double meaning: it denotes both "talk" (either as a verb and a noun) as well as "story", which shows how talking is closely associated with the act of telling stories in the Marshalls. (Tobin, 2002, p. VIII) One example of the strength of the Marshallese oral tradition are Kathy Jetñil – Kijiner's poems. Kathy is a young poet, teacher and climate activist who recites her poems around the world to draw attention to the Marshallese and Pacific States' cause regarding the challenges posed by the rise in global temperature. She became famous after being selected to represent the voice of the civil society before State delegations at the opening ceremony of the United Nations Climate Leaders' Summit in New York in 2014. On that occasion, she recited a poem dedicated to her daughter. 'Dear Matafele Peinem*'* is about the effects of climate change in the Marshalls, and expresses important emotions related to ontological (in)security with regards to the future of new generations on the archipelago. The recitation was met with a standing ovation

and thrilled the audience, clearly showing how this kind of representation is capable of both reflecting and generating different kinds of emotions.

In this sense, this thesis relies on the analysis of poems such as this one, as in the traditional histories and tales told by the *ri-bwebenato* together with other forms of artistic manifestations, like movies and paintings. Some of these representations are exhibited in local or regional art festivals, or even at the People's Summit of the COPs, while others are available on websites and in book collections.

Before moving on to the analysis of the aesthetic representations - which comprises the core of this chapter – some clarification about its structure is necessary to orientate the reader. The aesthetic sources collected throughout this research are organized according to their main message, or the political claim they make.

The choice to organize the sections in this particular way was not my first one. In the early stages of writing this chapter, I thought that I should divide it according to the type of aesthetic representation: one section reserved for movies, another for poems and another for drawings. But, as soon as I started to write and analyze these art works, this type of structure ceased to make sense. Of course, poems, movies and photography demand specific analyzing strategies; nevertheless, apart from their aesthetics particularities, I started to think that these representations could be better categorized according to their main subject matter. These edits, however, soon proved to be difficult to define, since topics like colonization, nuclear testing and climate change are co-constitutive and mutually informed in the context of the Marshalls. They are not easily separated from another.

Hence, inspired by Smith's (2007) methodologies and approaches[25], I opted to structure this chapter in terms of roles that these aesthetics representations play in terms of Marshallese claims and needs. That is the reason why the aesthetic

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[25] In *Decolonizing Methodologies,* Smith offers a discussion on 25 approaches and methodologies that "can be more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful" to people studied. In this sense, I argue that the aesthetics representation chosen here, follow some of the pre-requisites settled by Smith in playing an important role in raising local voices, remembering individuals painful experiences and helping in the healing process in offering a way to re-shape identities and re-signifying events.

sources collected and analyzed are organized according to their *remembering*, *re-signifying* and *intervening* roles.

Representations that play a mnemonic role usually celebrate ancestral roots at the same time as they recall painful and violent experiences, so that they will not be forgotten. Representations can also be a means of re-signifying traumatic events, assisting in the individual or community's healing process. (Smith, 2007) There are also representations that raise an intervening claim. This sort of representation usually seeks to depict aspects of day-to-day life, drawing attention to concrete and urgent dilemmas. (Smith, 2007: 151)

These diverse political claims, in turn, have as their condition of possibility a particular security rationality, which I argue is the product of the way Marshallese understand their atolls as an integral part of who they are. As such, they play an important role in making sense of their identities and biographic narratives. (Giddens, 1991)

6.2.1.
…Remembering

The sense of ontological insecurity is clearly at work in the *The Sound of Crickets at Night* (2012), a Marshallese cinematographic production, directed by Jack Niedenthal and Suzanne Chutaro. It deals with the Bikinian history of exile and the deep sense of loss that permeates their lives ever since they were displaced from their home atoll to make way for the US atomic tests.

The title of the movie was taken from a conversation between Niedenthal and a Bikinian elder, who said that the sounds of crickets was what he missed most from his home atoll. The same sound is ever present in the memories of Jebuki, a Bikinian nuclear survivor who is one of the movie's protagonists: "The sound of crickets, the sound of crickets at night that soothed me so when I was a little boy on Bikini". (The Sound of Crickets at Night, 2012)

Banjo Joel, the Bikinian elder who plays Jebuki, does not perform according to a prewritten text. Often, his script is more about the revival of some of his vivid memories, which are smoothly intertwined with the movie plot: "The Americans

moved us before they started testing their bombs on Bikini. The places they moved us to were Rongerik, Kwajallein, then Kili Island…After that, my family moved to Rongelap. (…) Since that time, nothing has been the same for us". (The Sound of Crickets at Night, 2012)

The movie focuses on Marshallese legends and the role of local identities amid the economic, social and emotional challenges in the lives of its characters. Living on Ejit Island, Jebuki is left alone in the care of his 10-year-old granddaughter, Kali, after his daughter decides to move to the Marshallese community in Arkansas, US, to earn some money. His life is a microcosm of the challenges faced by the families of the Marshallese elders, those who survived the displacements from their home atolls and the radiation burden. It depicts the pain of witnessing the premature deaths of both relatives and friends as a result of radiation, like Jebuki's wife "who had thyroid cancer from the bomb". (The Sound of Crickets at Night, 2012) The film also dramatizes the financial difficulties and bureaucracies involved in attempting to withdraw money from the funds created for the victims of the nuclear tests, and the melancholy of elders who know they will not be able to be buried in their homeland, as their tradition and religious belief dictate.

In the case of Jebuki's community, the sense of "loss of presence in the world" and the condition of ontological insecurity are the result of a history of land dispossession, exile, starvation and health problems, a past which is clearly in the present of those elders who live scattered in various parts of the Marshalls. The movie recalls the painful memories and voices of those islanders who were both victims and witnesses of a nuclear crime, in order to make sure that their suffering will not be forgotten by the next generation. Its main message echoes loud and clear: the US nuclear legacy is still alive and very much unresolved.[26]

However, in contrast to what one may imagine, the movie is not about creating an antagonistic relationship between the Marshallese and their former colonizers, depicting them as evil enemies. Marshallese- US relations are far more

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[26]Guam Film Festival Website. Filmmaker Spotlight: "AINIKIEN JIDJID ILO BOÑ (THE SOUND OF CRICKETS AT NIGHT) w/ Jack Niedenthal & Suzanne Chutaro. Available at: < https://www.guamfilmfestival.org/filmmaker-spotlight-ainikien-jidjid-ilo-bon-the-sound-of-crickets-at--+night-w-jack-niedenthal-suzanne-chutaro/ > (Accessed on: 28 July 2019)

complex than that. There is no sign of anger or revolt in the characters' speeches, their distant eyes only show a deep void and sorrow for all they have lost and can never regain.

Despite being a movie about these intricate relationships, American characters are practically absent from the production. In this sense, the film deals brilliantly with multiple absences: the absence of an atoll that has become radioactive and is kept alive only in the memories of the elderly; the absence of those who died early due to the enduring effects of the bombs; the absence of material support from the Americans, and so on. These absences are also about fragmented families whose members migrate to the US in the search for financial opportunities. Most of all, it is a movie about disrupted self-identities and the inability of the elders to maintain a continuous biographic narrative about themselves after the trauma caused by the destruction of their atolls and the consequent displacement. It is a movie about the lack of ontological security, which was damaged from the exact moment Bikini ceased to be Bikini and the Bikinians stopped being who they were.

One of the most significant exceptions in terms of the American absence in the movie is Niedenthal's character. Niedenthal, who is also the director and producer of *The Sound of Crickets at Night*, plays a shipwrecked American who appears as the reincarnation of a Bikinian entity to help Jebuki and his family. Despite all the financial and emotional difficulties and, most of all, despite the remembrance of what the Americans did to his community, Jebuki offers his house and his scarce resources to shelter the American stranger. Hence, rather than building and reinforcing antagonistic identities, the movie re-signifies and re-invents troubled relationships.

By depicting an American as a reincarnation of a powerful Marshallese entity, who is believed to be the guardian of the Bikini Atoll – the same one which were partially vaporized and turned uninhabitable due to the US security experiments – the movie, informed by Marshallese transcendental beliefs, offers a different layer of interpretation on human relations. In this sense, it challenges the dichotomous and conflictual rationality that usually characterizes security's political and theoretical discourses by offering a possibility of redemption and

forgiveness. At the same time, it celebrates the survival of the rich Marshallese traditions and legends, showing resilience even when facing a threat so powerful as a nuclear weapon experiment.

Figure 12: Jebuki. *The Sound of Crickets at Night,* a Microwave Films production.

Some of the most touching scenes of *The Sound of Crickets at Night* are the result of a juxtaposition of ancient images of Bikinians with the musical background of the Bikinian Anthem. Composed by Lore Kessibuki, in 1946, after the islanders had already left their atoll, the lyrics clearly show the deep feeling of loss that prevent these survivors from enjoying either physical or ontological security.

The scenes depict the islanders submitting to US medical evaluations after being exposed to the nuclear fallout. Unlike an ordinary relationship between doctor and patient, these scenes reveal a cold and distant contact between the medics and the islanders, as if they were dehumanized experimental subjects. These research procedures are clearly a part of a colonial science in which the Marshallese – subject to unauthorized examinations and tests – were seen not as human beings but as objects of scientific curiosity. (Zubek, 2016)

However, in contrast to what some ISS theoreticians claim, the scientists depicted in the photos were not analyzing the world "as it is", they were analyzing a reality – a reality of homeless people with distant and hopeless eyes, burned skin and falling hair - produced by their own rational and immoral security practices.

Thus, the movie offers multiple signs that together form a statement about ontological security: the ancient images of the Bikinians represent their dehumanization, while being treated by the US doctors and politicians merely as a source of scientific evidence about the effects of nuclear fallout. The emotional and material adversities faced by them until the present points to the long-lasting effects of the detonations. Finally, the empty and distant looks of the movie characters express an irreversible feeling of loss and lack of recognition of their self-identities.

My sadness is so great
I can no longer feel my heart beat

Figure 13: A young Bikinian being examined by a US officer after the nuclear detonations. Scene of *The Sound of Crickets at Night,* a Microwave Films' production.

The scenes and the Bikinian Anthem appear in the last minutes of Jibuki's life, when it seems that he is finally returning home. Only death allows him to recover his self-identity and here-feeling: "Since that time, nothing has been the same for us". (The Sound of Crickets at Night, 2012) Similarly, composed during a period of starvation experienced by Bikinians on the Rongerik Atoll, the Anthem claims that, after suffering from the terrible violence of their displacement, Bikinians' peace and sense of security can only be restored through their physical death. While being away from their beloved atoll, they will not be able to recognize themselves, they will not be able to find "harmony in the world". (Kessibuki, 1946)

Taking into account Huysmans' (1998) claim that security mediates the relation between life and death, I argue that these last scenes offer a meaningful and distinct narrative of security. While ISS theories are usually constructed with the aim of postponing death by countering threats and enemies (Huysmans, 1998, p. 235, 236), ontological security studies offer a different reading of this life/ death relation. In highlighting the role of the security of the self, it enhances our understanding in cases like Jibuki's or the starving Bikinians, who seem to find their "peace" in the moment of their physical annihilation. That is precisely the situation that traditional security theories seek to avoid at all costs, but the movie shows that it is in this very moment that the anxiety and confusion caused by the dismantling of their continuous and stable self-identity cease to exist.

The Sound of Crickets at Night, thus, is an aesthetic representation for remembering the ones who have physically died – because of the immediate and prolonged effects of the nuclear tests – and the ones who, like Jibuki, despite still living, have their feeling of "presence in the world" vaporized by the nuclear bombs, together with their home atoll. This feeling of tremendous sadness and the inability to feel alive - derived from the abrupt destruction of the elements that made up the islanders`' ontological security- is evidently present in the lyrics of the Bikinian Anthem, as composed during their continued exile:

The Bikinian Anthem

No longer can I stay; it's true.
No longer can I live in Peace and Harmony to the world.
No longer can I rest on my sleeping mat and pillow
Because of my island and the life I once knew there.

The thought is overwhelming

My sadness is so great

I can no longer feel my heartbeat

My spirit leaves, drifting around and far away
Where it becomes caught in a current of immense power –
And only then do I find peace

The thought is overwhelming

My sadness is so great

I can no longer feel my heartbeat

(Kessibuki, 1946)

Another example of aesthetic representation that plays a memorial role is the video poem *Anointed*[27]. The poem was written and performed by the Marshallese activist, poet and educator Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, and the video was directed by Dan Lin and produced by the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL).

It depicts Jetñil-Kijiner on board a traditional canoe heading toward Enewetak, the farthest atoll of the Marshalls and the one that shelters the infamous Runit Dome. Built inside a giant crater from the detonation of 9 nuclear bombs by the US, it is a huge concrete container stuck in what is left of the Runit islet. Besides the highly radioactive plutonium 239, the dome also stocks around a hundred and thousand cubic yards of contaminated soil. (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2018) All of this radioactive material runs the risk of leaking into the sea because of the lack of maintenance of the dome and the environmental effects on its structure.

The "temporary solution" found by the US government in the 1970s is nowadays a radioactive monster, an inheritance of security studies' rational theories and authorized practices. The Runit Dome is a ticking time bomb which, once again, threatens the Marshallese maritime and terrestrial ecosystems and the islanders' physical and ontological security. However, this time, in contrast to what was believed during the Cold War, the "isolated" location of the Marshalls is clearly not a guarantee of protection from what may become the greatest nuclear tragedy in history in the case of a nuclear leakage.

While in the canoe, as Jetñil-Kijiner approaches her final destiny, she gradually changes her clothes. The grey t-shirt is replaced by traditional

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[27] Pacific Story Tellers Cooperative´s Official Website. Available at: < http://storytellers.prel.org/index.php?/article/new/anointed-short-film > (accessed on: 7 Jul 2019)

Marshallese vestments: a necklace made of shells and a traditional woven mat, while her long and loose hair is tied in two braids. As she physically approaches the atoll, she reconnects to her roots.

However, the anxiety surrounding this moment of arrival is latent within Jetñil-Kijiner's words and body language, in view of the uncertainty surrounding what she will find in Enewetak: "I am coming to see you/ will I find an island/ or a tomb?" Silence. And she goes on: "to get to this tomb…" the answer is already known, even before her arrival.

Figure 14: Jetñil-Kijiner on top of the Runit Dome during the filming of the video poem "Anointed", directed by Dan Lin and produced by the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL). Available at: < https://dashophnl.com/events/2018/4/14/pacific-island-film-series > (accessed on: 29/07/ 2019)

Anointed

I'm coming to meet you

I'm coming to see you

What stories will I find?

Will I find an island

or a tomb?

To get to this tomb take a canoe. Take a canoe through
miles of scattered sun. Swallow endless swirling sea. Gulp
down radioactive lagoon. Do not bring flowers, or
speeches. There will be no white stones to scatter around
this grave. There will be no songs to sing.

How shall we remember you?

You were a whole island, once. You were breadfruit trees
heavy with green globes of fruit whispering promises of
massive canoes. Crabs dusted with white sand scuttled
through pandanus roots. Beneath looming coconut trees
beds of ripe watermelon slept still, swollen with juice.
And you were protected by powerful irooj, chiefs birthed
from women who could swim pregnant for miles beneath a
full moon.

Then you became testing ground. Nine nuclear weapons
consumed you, one by one by one, engulfed in an inferno
of blazing heat. You became crater, an empty belly.
Plutonium ground into a concrete slurry filled your hollow
cavern. You became tomb. You became concrete shell.
You became solidified history, immoveable, unforgettable.

You were a whole island, once.

Who remembers you beyond your death? Who would have
us forget that you were once green globes of fruit,
pandanus roots, and whispers of canoes? Who knows the
stories of the life you led before?

There's a story of a turtle goddess. She gifted one of her sons, Letao, a piece of her shell, anointed with power. A leathery green fragment, hollow as a piece of bark. It gave Letao the power to transform into anything, into trees and houses, the shapes of other men, even kindling for the first fire he almost

burned us

alive.

I am looking for more stories. I look and I look.

There must be more to this than incinerated trees, a cracked dome, a rising sea, a leaking nuclear waste with no fence, there must be more than a concrete shell that houses death.

Here is a legend of a shell. Anointed with power. Letao used this shell to turn himself into kindling for the first fire. He gave this fire to a small boy. The boy almost burned his entire village to the ground. Licks of fire leapt from strands of coconut leaves from skin and bone and while the boy cried Letao laughed and laughed.

Here is a story of a people on fire – we pretend it is not burning all of us.

Here is a story of the ways we've been tricked, of the lies we've been told:

It's not radioactive anymore

Your illnesses are normal

You're fine.

You're fine.

My belly is a crater empty of stories and answers only questions, hard as concrete.

Who gave them this power?

Who anointed them with the power to burn?

(Jetñil-Kijiner, 2018, emphasis in the original[28])

As in *The Sounds of Crickets at Night*, the memory of what an atoll used to be – an atoll under the protection of land chiefs and spiritual entities with its splendid fruit trees and impressive marine life – is deeply present in Jetñil-Kijiner´s (2018) poem: "You were a whole island, once. (…) Then you became testing ground".

From that time, the green from Enewetak's trees, the white from its sand and the blue from its shores were turned into a grey and sterile concrete, into a cold and frightening tomb. This is what weapons do: they take away life in the name of a fabricated and exclusionary sense of security. They counter the threat of death by producing the death of others: of other human and non-human bodies, of other environments and homes, other souls… "Who gave them this power? // Who anointed them with the power to burn?" asks Jetñil-Kijiner (2018).

Do the security theorists and the US policy makers believe that a god endowed them with this right? Commodore Wyatt said it was "For the Good of Mankind". It seems so.

As in Letao's traditional Marshallese tale, usually told by the *ri-bwebenato*, Jetñil-Kijiner's poem claims that Marshallese were tricked by the American lies. Son of Limejokeded, considered one of the three primal matriarchs of the Marshalls, Letao is known as the one who introduced fire, sexuality and bargaining

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[28] Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner Official Website. Available at: < https://www.kathyjetnilkijiner.com/dome-poem-iii-anointed-final-poem-and-video/ > (accessed on: 26/07/2019)

power to the islands. (McArthur, 2004 p. 58) Tales about his deceitful and malicious behavior are widely told in the archipelago. (McArthur, 2004 p. 58)

According to the one told by Hersha Laneab for the Marshall Islands Story Project[29], during a negotiation with the chief of Majuro, Letao stole his canoe, known as the fastest on the islands. Furious, the chief ordered his workers to chase and capture him. To avoid being caught, Letao raised the ocean floor, thus forming channels that made it difficult for other canoes to follow him. He also scraped rocks from the bottom of the ocean and threw them at his pursuers. As told by Laneab, together, these rocks formed an island. Thus, according to the tale, some of the landscapes of the Marshall Islands were created by the hands of Letao. After that, he fled to Kiribati, where he was enthusiastically received by the islanders and their chief, who thought he was an extremely intelligent creature. He offered to make some food to feed them and teach his tricks to the chief. However, once again, Letao showed his deceitful behavior, fooling the islanders and killing their chief with fire.

There are many interpretations and tales about Letao in the Marshalls. He is probably one of the main legendary figures of the archipelago. These traditional tales are always adapting to the changing contexts[30] and their contents are usually shaped by the lived experiences of the *ri-bwebenato*. As a middle age Marshallese, Laneab offers a more contemporary version of Letao's tale. After he fled from Kiribati, Letao sailed towards the Americas. Laneab's story implies that it would be with Letao that the Americans learned to negotiate and deceive: "The Americans are smart because of that guy. They got their brains from Letao. [31]" The Americans are presented as clever and manipulative, known as individuals who offer something different to what was promised. (Rudiak-Gould, 2013: 31) In this sense, unlike what may be imagined at a first glance, tales like this one do not simply depict the Americans as evil enemies. By contrast, this recent version of the traditional legend would, thus, create ambivalent and co-constitutive identities

[29]The Marshall Islands Story Project is a pilot project launched by Historic Preservation Office of the Marshall Islands which aims to create an online platform where is possible to access stories and tales told by the ri-bwebenato by video, audio or texts, both in English and Marshallese language. Available at: < http://www.mistories.org/ > (accessed on 02/10/2019)

[30]Marshall Islands Story Project Official Website. Available at: < http://mistories.org/tales.php > (accessed on 02/10/2019)

[31] Tale told by Hersha Laneab to the Marshall Islands Story Project Available at: < http://mistories.org/tales-Laneab-text.php >. (accessed on 02/10/2019)

between the Marshallese and the US, suggesting that a Marshallese entity is the source of both positive and negative in the Americans' character. (McArthur, 2000; McArthur, 2004: 58)

In Jetñil-Kijiner's (2018) poem, however, Letao is presented a little differently. As one of the sons of a goddess turtle, he is endowed with his mother's power the moment she gifts him a piece of her shell. Anointed with this gift, Letao could have chosen to do anything; however, he chose to use his powers for destruction. As one of the world's superpowers, designated by the UN as the nation responsible for "safeguard[ing] the life, liberty and the general well-being of the people of the trust territory" (The Marshallese People, 1954, p. 1), the US were also endowed with power. But, like Letao, the American bureaucrats, heavily informed by a rational, militaristic and zero-sum game notion of security, chose to use the territories and people under its responsibility as a grotesque laboratory to measure and show its power. In the exchange of the fulfillment of their rational security goals, they chose to incinerate, vaporize and bring high doses of radiation to the Marshallese atolls, causing the displacement, poisoning and starvation of people under its "protection".

In Jetñil-Kijiner's poem, by maliciously offering kindling to a child to make fire, Letao leads him to almost burn down his entire village. While he laughs, proud of his achievement, the child cries in despair. (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2018) This is not to compare the Marshallese to innocent children, who saw the Americans as a sort of powerful god. Rather, it implies that, like Letao, by negotiating with the Marshallese to conduct nuclear tests on their lands, the Americans took advantage of the inhabitants' lack of knowledge about the power of their weapons. They couldn't imagine, not even for a second, that these weapons would burn and poison their entire atolls. "Who anointed them with the power to burn?" asks Jetñil-Kijiner (2018). The answer is clear: no one.

6.2.2.
… Re-signifying and Empowering

The activities carried out by *Jo-Jikum* ("Your Place"), a Marshallese non-profit organization, are a good example of how artistic representations can be a compelling tool of intervention and empowerment. The organization was founded with the aim of supporting the next generation of Marshallese to cultivate ties to their islands and to develop solutions to current environmental problems, such as climate change, coral blanching, pollution and the nuclear legacy[32]: "We believe that like the roots of the pandanus tree the next generation of Marshallese must also be rooted in the land."[33]

Thus, Jo-Jikum seeks to educate the younger generations about the challenging environmental problems that threaten their islands, without however portraying them as passive and hopeless victims. On the contrary, Jo-Jikum adopts the mantra of the 350.org Pacific Climate Warriors (another non-profit organization dedicated to protecting low-lying islands against climate effects) which is: "We are not drawing, we are fighting!"[34]

In this sense, Jo-Jikum seeks to offer the tools to enable the Marshallese youth to tell their own stories about their environmental experiences, so as to challenge the frequent and discouraging picture usually painted by scientists, journalists and academics about the future of the archipelago[35].

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[32] Jo-Jikum Official Website. Available at: < https://jojikum.org/> (accessed on: 20/07/2019)

[33] Jo-Jikum Official Website. Available at: < https://jojikum.org/> (accessed on: 20/07/2019)

[34] Jo-Jikum Official Website. Available at: < https://jojikum.org/jo-jikum-digital-storytelling-collective/ > (accessed on> 20/10/2019)

[35] Jo-Jikum Official Website. Available at: < https://jojikum.org/jo-jikum-digital-storytelling-collective/ > (accessed on: 20/10/2019)

Figure 15: We Are Not Drowning We Are Fighting! 350.org activities in the Marshall Islands. Available at: < https://350.org/the-pacific-climate-warriors-challenge-the-world/ > (accessed on: 14/08/2019)

As already highlighted, Marshallese society is deeply embedded in oral activities, like the ones carried out by the *ri-bwebenato*. Jo-Jikum, thus, aims to bring this ancient tradition up-to-date, using it to address the realities for young people, and particularly focusing on digital storytelling training. The organization also encourages other forms of artistic manifestations such as music and painting.

The mural below, made by Marshallese high school students during the Jo-Jikum's Climate Change Arts Camp, is probably one of the best illustrations of what David Laing (1965) called, in his psychological studies on ontological security, the "divided self". The mural is an artistic and emotional description of the ontological insecure subject and performs a powerful and emotional narrative on insecurity.

Figure 16: Mural painted by Arianna Abraham, Teliah Mejena, Solomon Joel and Yoshan Tibon during the Jo-Jikum's art camp. Available at: < https://www.kathyjetnilkijiner.com/glass-marbles-and-mutual-inspiration/> (accessed on: 20/07/2019)

The painting beautifully depicts the face of a Marshallese young woman against a dark background. As explained by its authors[36], the woman´s face represents the natural beauty of the Marshalls, with its two chains of islands (Ralik and Ratak), its rich flora with pandanus trees and flowers. It also represents the Marshallese lived experiences and painful past that left a large, deep scar on her cheek. The part of her face covered by water depicts what is happening to the archipelago due to global warming and climate change effects.

Our face is, perhaps, one of the main illustrations of our identities. Of course, identities are much more than our physical bodies, they are constructed from our relationships to ourselves, to others and to our social and material environments. However, it is usually through our faces that we show ourselves to the world. In our daily lives, our facial features are crucial for other people to recognize us. The painting represents the woman's identity, built not only from her physical characters but also from the Marshallese past experiences and the islands' natural features. So, similar to Deudner's concept of here-feeling, the painting also depicts

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[36] Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner`s Oficial Website. Glass Marbles and mutual inspirations. Available at: < https://www.kathyjetnilkijiner.com/glass-marbles-and-mutual-inspiration/> (accessed on: 20/10/2019)

the role of natural and social environments in the construction of islanders' self-identities, which is related to part of the argument developed in this thesis.

In representing the effects of climate change as something that covers the woman´s face, the artists make a clear statement about how environmental problems are damaging not only their physical environment, but also who they are, how they make sense of their selves and how they relate to others. In the painting, the water represents both the rising sea levels and the woman's tears, making half of her face unrecognizable. It is an aesthetic representation of the girl's sadness about the way the climate crisis not only floods her atolls, but also erases the way she understands and recognizes herself in the world.

The young Marshallese woman feels divided. In contrast to Laing's work, this condition is not the result of a mental illness, but is caused by a sense of precariousness about her self-identity. In this sense, through diverse signs, the mural carries a particular security statement – which in the case of this painting is expressed by angles, colors, and the artists' traces. In my opinion, this statement can be seen as a discursive enunciation on ontological insecurity, since it shows how this condition is associated with the effects of climate change, which threatens the girl's home islands, her social relations and the way she reflexively interprets her identity. (Giddens, 1991) The environmental challenges trigger doubts about who she is and who she will become after the sea levels rise and make her islands unrecognizable and uninhabitable. She is losing, thus, the very roots and points of references of her identity to the point of becoming unrecognizable to herself and others.

However, despite all the adversities, the way the young artists choose to portray the woman reveals an act of courage and resistance against the climate effects. While her right eye is covered with tears, her left eye does not seem lost or hopeless. It is bravely looking forward, showing that the Marshallese are standing up to their problems. As the mural's high school artists assert: "But despite the tear drops, scars, and tattoos, we have to show how strong we are – and we will always continue glowing day by day[37]". In this sense, this work brilliantly achieves the

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[37] Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner`s Official Website. Glass Marbles and mutual inspirations. Available at: < https://www.kathyjetnilkijiner.com/glass-marbles-and-mutual-inspiration/> (accessed on: 21/10/2019)

main purpose of the Jo-Jikum, which is to create artistic works based on their "individual experiences of climate change", transforming the artists from victims to survivors and creators[38]. It also educates the young generation of Marshallese about the causes of the environmental problems that they face, day after day, and to fight for climate justice and their future.

6.2.3.
… Intervening and Seeking Solutions to Climate Change

Molina: These graves, why are they broken up and in the sea?

Grandmother: It's the high tides, they keep getting bigger, they say that's the way it will be for our islands…

Molina: *Bubu*, but why? Why do the tides keep growing? Will we have to leave our islands?

(Jilel, 2014)

This is one of many dialogues presented in *Jilel: The calling of the Shell* (2014). The movie, described as "a global warming fairy tale", is also directed by Niedenthal and Chutaro. Like *The Sound of Crickets at Night*, Jilel was filmed with an amateur Marshallese cast, with some of its interpreter elders living in exile on Majuro Atoll.

Despite being considered a fairy tale, some movie critics such as Jason Sanders (2016) describes *Jilel* as "an authentic expression of life" in the Marshall Islands, working "more as a documentary" than "a work of fiction, with its zero-artifice, home-movie-level aesthetic strangely lending it even more immediacy". As claimed in chapter three of this thesis, the point is not to determine if the movie is a vivid documentary or a work of dreamy fiction.

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[38] Jo-Jikum Official Website. Available at: < https://jojikum.org/ourprograms/ > (accessed on: 20/10/2019)

Representations – whether it's an IR theory, a fairy-tale or a documentary that intends to provide an authentic description of events – are unable to mimetically depict reality, since there is always a gap between them and the object represented (Bleiker, 2001).

It is undeniable, however, that the movie aesthetically depicts several features of the Marshallese day to day life: the unemployment and lack of perspectives of the youth, the hardships involved in sustaining themselves, the Marshallese-American families abandoned by their American fathers, the role of the elders – especially women – in the Marshallese societal structure and, most of all, the anxiety about not knowing about their future because of the climate crisis.

The narrative centers on the life of Molina, a young Marshallese girl who has just discovered that her beloved islands are vanishing as a consequence of the rising sea levels. The conversation between the girl and her grandmother is one of the first scenes of *Jilel*, which depicts them both standing in front of Molina's grandfather's flooded grave. The questions about the future of her islands accompanies the young girl throughout the entire temporal trajectory of the movie but turns more acute after the death of her adored grandmother. Once again, she sees herself in the middle of the same flooded cemetery and, confronted by the waves hitting the graves and the water advancing towards land, she questions her brother:

Molina: Why is this happening?

Ketowate (brother): The earth's climate is changing, as long as those big countries don't believe this is a problem and change their ways…. This is the way it will be, and the sea will overtake us. They don't care, our islands are nothing to them.

(Jilel, 2014)

Haunted by her brother's words and nightmares about the souls of her ancestors, buried in the islands, the young girl decides to act. Her grandmother had left her a small basket with some family relics, among these is *jilel*, a shell which has been with the family for years and is supposed to have magical powers. Despite

being her most treasured possession from her grandmother, Molina decides to send the *jilel* to people who are supposed to have the agency to address effectively the climate problems: state leaders, in this case, the President of the US. Together with her heirloom, the letter reads: "Dear Mr. President, we love our islands. They are all we have. We don't want to lose them". (Jilel, 2014)

Figure 17: Molina. Scene from *Jilel,* a Microwave Films production.

Because of its magical powers, as soon as *jilel* arrives at the White House, the profound interdependence between the remote Marshallese archipelago and the world's great power is made clear. It is as if, just as the consequences of the Western ways of life afflict the low-lying islands, Molina's powerful heirloom is able to disturb these same practices, which represent the very roots of climate change.

Jilel raises local claims about the need to tackle climate change to preserve their "traditional island culture" and "beautiful, ancient and unique way of life", as shown in its final credits. By guiding the spectator through the eyes of Molina, the movie allows us to make sense of her world, so that her drama can be noticed, and action can be taken. This attempt to bring awareness to the islanders' urgent claims is shown clearly in its last scene, with Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner's emotional performance of her poem "Tell Them". The poem, later published in her acclaimed book *Iep Jāltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter*, invites the reader to acknowledge who the Marshallese are, how they portray themselves, and how this reflexive

understanding is informed by their here-feeling, embodied in their material and emotional surroundings. Jetñil-Kijiner's poem depicts a Marshallese woman who, as Molina, chooses to make a gift to Western friends with traditional artifacts from her home islands, in order to call attention to their existence and to their current climate challenges:

Tell Them

I prepared the package
for my friends in the states
the dangling earrings woven
into half moons black pearls glinting
like an eye in a storm of tight spirals
the baskets
sturdy, also woven
brown cowry shells shiny
intricate mandalas
shaped by calloused fingers
Inside the basket
a message:

Wear these earrings
to parties
to your classes and meetings
to the grocery store, the corner store
and while riding the bus
Store jewelry, incense, copper coins
and curling letters like this one
in this basket
and when others ask you
where you got this
you tell them

they're from the Marshall Islands

show them where it is on a map
tell them we are a proud people
toasted dark brown as the carved ribs
of a tree stump
tell them we are descendants
of the finest navigators in the world
tell them our islands were dropped
from a basket
carried by a giant
tell them we are the hollow hulls
of canoes as fast as the wind
slicing through the pacific sea
* we are wood shavings*

and drying pandanus leaves
and sticky bwiros at kemems
tell them we are sweet harmonies
of grandmothers mothers aunties and sisters
songs late into night
tell them we are whispered prayers
the breath of God
a crown of fushia flowers encircling
aunty mary's white sea foam hair
tell them we are styrofoam cups of koolaid red
waiting patiently for the ilomij
tell them we are papaya golden sunsets bleeding
into a glittering open sea
we are skies uncluttered
majestic in their sweeping landscape
we are the ocean
terrifying and regal in its power
tell them we are dusty rubber slippers
swiped
from concrete doorsteps
we are the ripped seams
and the broken door handles of taxis
we are sweaty hands shaking another sweaty hand in heat
tell them
we are days
and nights hotter
than anything you can imagine
tell them we are little girls with braids
cartwheeling beneath the rain
we are shards of broken beer bottles
burrowed beneath fine white sand
we are children flinging
like rubber bands
across a road clogged with chugging cars
tell them
we only have one road

and after all this
tell them about the water
how we have seen it rising
flooding across our cemeteries
gushing over the sea walls
and crashing against our homes
tell them what it's like
to see the entire ocean_level___with the land
tell them
we are afraid
tell them we don't know
of the politics
or the science
but tell them we see
what is in our own backyard
tell them that some of us
are old fishermen who believe that God
made us a promise

some of us
are more skeptical of God
but most importantly tell them
we don't want to leave
we've never wanted to leave
and that we
are nothing without our islands.

(Jetñil-Kijiner, 2017, p. 64 – 67, italics in the original)

The first lines of the poem are recited by Jetñil-Kijiner, in a calm and measured voice, while she is staring at the camera. The shooting angle and voice tone, however, are totally changed when it comes to the later lines. In an emotional and proud voice, Jetñil -Kijiner tells us that the Marshallese are skillful people, about the local origin myths of the archipelago and the natural beauty of her home atolls. Once again, her voice tone changes when it comes to the last verse. It becomes louder, firmer, while expressing a sense of indignation. Through recitation, facial expression and body language, she is aesthetically representing the consequences of climate change, which, day after day, are seen and felt by the islanders. Crude and technical words, as frequently presented in scientific reports and political speeches, are not enough to transmit these unspeakable and emotional elements. Only the words in verse, the changing voice tone and body language, combined with a set of scenes – produced from different camera angles – can communicate the emotional charge implicated in the eventual and definitive loss of their ancestral islands, which are believed to be a gift from God. (Ridiak-Gould, 2013: 41)

The poem is very enlightening in terms of the epistemological position sustained by this thesis. It makes clear that the islanders do not need the conclusion of scientists, politicians or academics to understand what is happening to their atolls. While these figures are frequently endowed with an epistemic authority, low-lying islanders are endowed with a different sort of expertise, for being real and continued witnesses of the deteriorating climate effects: "we see what is in our own backyard" (Jetñil- Kijiner, 2017/ 87, 88).

These witnesses need to be seen and heard, their testimonies must be taken into account and their needs must be placed at the center of political debates. Surely

this will not happen when it comes to the international distribution of power in neorealist terms, since the Marshall Islands, like other low-lying states, will never be a super power, not even during multilateral climate negotiations. Although some authors (i.e: Courneloup; Mol, 2014; Ourbak, Magnan, 2018) claim that these nations enjoy moral leadership in the middle of the UNFCCC multilateral forums, it hasn't been enough to lead to effective political commitments with regards to the global battle against climate change. Therefore, their voices need to be amplified in a different way, in a way that escapes the harshness of scientific and political power structures, informed by limited understandings of what constitutes legitimate knowledge and authority. We need to let them tell the world their stories, their fears and their hopes, in order to enable them to intervene in their own realities and to become agents of their own destiny. (Zubek, 2016)

In this sense, Jetñil-Kijiner's poem rescues islanders' voices and agency in reaffirming their will to stay, in presenting their islands as irreplaceable and the value of its people as immeasurable: "we don't want to leave/we've never wanted to leave". With these verses, Jetñil-Kijiner (2017/ 95, 96) refers simultaneously to the present and to the past. A threatening present where the human-induced climate effects are widely felt by the islanders, in such a way that limits the performance of their daily routines and compromises their self-identities. It also refers to a painful past marked by the compulsory removal of islanders from their radiation poisoned atolls, or even the migration of the Marshallese poet herself, who moved to the US as a child.

The poem also reflects how local identities and beliefs are not homogeneous: "tell them that some of us/are old fishermen who believe that God/ made us a promise/ some of us/are more skeptical of God". (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2017/ 90,91,92,93,94) Although the faith about a divine promise is not shared by all, the verses make clear that there is something that utterly unites the Marshallese: the desire to stay and keep their islands. This desire is not justified in terms of traditional IR concepts such as sovereignty and self-determination. Rather, the islands are not simply seen as a material place, but as an inevitable extension of its people, as an overwhelming part of who they are, as this specific verse summarizes: "and that we/are nothing without our islands." (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2017/ 98)

Finally, the anxiety and especially the anger about the possibility of leaving their islands behind are also powerfully mobilized in Selina Neirok Leem's poetry. As a young Marshallese, Leem is part of the so-called Marshall Islands' "last generation"[39] (The Ground Truth Project, 2018; Brown, Riviera, Yang, 2018), a title that seems to be clearly reflected in her poetry.

The poem below, entitled 'More than Just a Blue Passport', articulates a set of challenges and dramas experienced by the islanders and talks directly about a delicate assumption: the possibility that Marshallese, like other Pacific people, will become climate refugees[40] in the near future if their low-lying islands succumb to the environmental challenges.

More than Just a Blue Passport

Looking out my window
There sits my grandparents' and my mama's grave
White rectangle they are closeted in
It's inside
Gray and still
My backyard is
A four-meter history
of waves crashing and breaking
sea-walls built with uncles', brothers', and grandpa's sweat
that one great wall
two meters high
my family's only protection from the water
made a mockery
as the water has risen
level with the land
and spilled over human debris weaving
a remnant
a reminder
of human being's greediness
To the developed countries
To the advanced nations
You think you know us
But you know NOTHING—NOTHING
at all

[39] Among the 50,000 inhabitants of the Marshall Islands, about half of them are under 18, which means that the country could turn uninhabitable during their lifetime. (The Ground truth Project, 2018)

[40] It is worth noting that people who were forced to leave their countries because of environmental events, as will probably be the fate of the Marshallese, are not yet recognized as refugees by international law. Because they are not regarded as victims of political, ethnic or religious persecution, they are usually simply conceived of as migrants, thus, they do not have the special rights of a refugee.

Should I tell you what is happening in my backyard?
What is that?
You think you already know?
You think you know better?
No, no
You have no say
You have had yours
When the man from the military said
Testing nuclear bombs
67 of them
on tiny strips of land
with many parts
barely a meter above sea level
is "For the good of mankind
and to end all world wars"
How many wars have ended now due to nuclear weapons?
How many?
How many innocent lives killed?
Remember March 1, 1954
When they dropped the Bravo bomb on Bikini?
Bravo! Bravo!
Ever-famous for leaving their mark behind
Like the mark
on my home
The Marshall Islands
is now a weary mother of
A dome filled with radioactive waste,
all from the bombing, "For the good of mankind"
With a sign that said, "Do not return for 25,000 years"
It has been seventy years
We have 24,930 years left
Until we can go back home to Runit
The land, the island this dome burdens
But now the waters have washed it away
Eroding parts of this dome away
Cracking it
Leaking harmful radiation out into the open
So foreign men who have visited the dome to study it say
the outside is even more contaminated than the inside
and they leave again
with numbers and calculations
No solutions
Not a thought for us
Foreign men, do you think
Do you think about the waters rising?
My island ain't got no time for 24,930 years
Scientists have predicted by 2050
We are NO MORE
NO MORE
2016 I am here
My island's got 34 years left
34
But in 24,390 years, we will be able to live on Runit.
How far do you think she will be underwater?
Looking out into horizons of waves angry

hungry for redemption
A bubu sits on her plywood
10-inch-high bed
She looks at me
Confusion and sadness in her eyes
"What is wrong with our islands?
I don't ever remember it being like this."
It hits me
She does not know
She does not know what is happening in our islands
Not knowing these waves pounding her shore
are human-induced
but I swear
I will fight for this grandma
I will fight for my family
I will fight for my country's survival
For bigger countries mock us
after they have violated the earth's virginity
with their carbon-filled aphrodisiac
Digging and pumping out fossil fuel
from our mother's womb
Relentlessly
Constantly
Mocking us
At 1.5 degrees
At us
At the risk of my people becoming climate refugees
Becoming stateless
Becoming landless
Becoming just a blue passport
The only identity of this grandmother and me
Will the first three pages of Marshallese stamps
Be the last stamps I get from home?
Will this blue passport be the last one I will ever have from
home?
My backyard
is not like your backyard
My backyard is trees, crippled
It is broken bones unearthed from graves
It is nuclear-radiation rich
It is tides with white fangs
It is houses broken down, no more occupants within
It is the land getting smaller
and smaller
My backyard is my bubu, jimma, and mama lying in their graves
It is my grandpa telling me while in pain
"Jibu, I cannot wait to go
I will soon be resting
resting from all this world's chaos
I will now sleep
Peacefully."
My backyard is a promise
a promise to let them sleep peacefully
It is we, Marshallese, saying
1.5 is all we got

Mock, be skeptical
1.5—pffft. Impossible. Unattainable.
Again
It is all we got.

(Leem, 2019, p.98-101)

While describing the effects of the rising sea level in her backyard, the place where her grandparents were buried and that nowadays is precariously protected by a seawall built by her family, Leem has no doubt when it comes to the causes of the phenomenon she witnesses by her window: it is 'human being's greediness', she says. All of these environmental events are a reminder of human greed.

During her oral performance[41], Leem's severe words, recited in an angry tone, are clearly directed to a specific audience: scientists, politicians and security experts from the "big countries", the same people who have been constantly mocking the Marshallese on different occasions with their empty promises and cold diagnosis: "for the good of mankind and to end all world wars". (Leem, 2019/ 38,39) This was the justification that Bikinians heard from the "man from the military" before being convinced to leave their islands behind to make way for the US nuclear experiments. Leem (2019/40, 41) asks: "How many wars have ended now due to nuclear weapons?/How many?" Instead, the bombs have left behind a trail of innocent lives and dispossessed people, constantly mislead about their health conditions and the possibility of returning to their islands safely. It also left a quarantine of 25,000 years for the Marshallese - the lifespan of the radioactive waste buried in the Runit Dome. But how can they wait 25,000 years if, according to these same scientific predictions, the Marshallese only have until 2050 to remain on their home atolls? Thus, the radioactive heritage left by the US and its security practices far surpasses both individuals and the atolls' lifetime. After that, says Leem (2019/ 72,73) "We are NO MORE/ NO MORE".

After all the broken promises and suffering, the young Marshallese stand bravely and emphatically addressing the public "But you know NOTHING— NOTHING/at   all   (…)

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[41] After Leem´s successful performances, this poem was recently published in *Indigenous Literatures from Micronesia,* a collection of poems, shorts stories, essays and chants from the region.

You have no say/ You have had yours" (Leem, 2019/ 23,24,30,31)

Figure 18: Selina Neirok Leem's performance of her poem *More than Just a Blue Passport* during the Pacific Storytellers showcase, hosted by the Hawai'i Conservation Alliance Foundation, 2016. Available at: < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1sYv5B_L7A > (accessed on: 11/08/ 2019)

For Leem, politicians, scientists and security experts have always mocked her community and they keep doing it when it comes to their unattainable climate promises. Sadly, the Marshall Islands' "last generation", like others from different low- lying islands, has only these uncertain scientific predictions and the doubtful promises of politicians to rely on: "1.5 is all we got/Mock, be skeptical/1.5—pffft. Impossible. Unattainable./Again/It is all we got." (Leem, 2019/ 137, 138, 139,140,141,142) It is the only and fragile hope that Leem and her community have against statelessness and landlessness, a hope that their Marshallese identity will not be reduced to stamps in a blue passport. Even so, Leem says she will keep fighting for the memory of the deceased, for her community and for the survival of their islands. She will fight to sustain their condition as whole individuals, endowed with all the elements that provide them with, not simply a life, but the fulfilment of the material and emotional elements that make their ontological security possible.

6.3.
Final Considerations

In presenting Marshallese poems, video performances, movies and figures, I tried to employ a *thicker signifier approach.* By means of an aesthetic curiosity, it provides an analysis of not only the historical, political and linguistic contexts in which the meanings of security emerge, but also sheds light on the emotional background that creates the condition of possibility for heterogenic security narratives.

As argued by Gaspar (2007: 61), the identification of the particular way an object is represented among various objects makes the recognition of a particular discursive practice possible, which, together with others, originate a system of archive.

The ISS trajectory, as presented in chapter two, with its diverse theoretical approaches and scientific discourses, can be seen as an archive of security, an archive made from diverse discourses about the meaning of the object "security". With this thesis, I aimed to contribute to this archive by presenting different security narratives, which are often seen as illegitimate, since they lack the authority that is usually granted to institutions – such as the universities and centers of military studies –regarded as the only sources for reliable knowledge about a world "out there".

A vocal pronunciation or a written presentation of this word is not a pre-requisite of a security discourse, since a sense of security cannot be summarized in a brief sentence. Rather, the security narratives outlined in this chapter resulted from the juxtaposition of diverse signs – such as shooting angles, colors, body language, tone of voice and melodies– that combined enable us to identify a particular statement about security.

Notwithstanding the dislocations from movies, poems, poetic performances and paintings, there is a statement that prevails in the middle of these aesthetic dislocations, as anticipated by Foucault (2008) and reinforced by Gaspar (2004, 2007). A statement which derives from a serial repetition – since it is not unique but is reproduced in different moments and in different aesthetic representations – from diverse speaking subjects – such as characters, musicians, storytellers, poets,

photographs, directors and painters. This particular statement has as its margins associated domains that differ from other preexisting statements – such as the ISS traditional conceptualizations of security. Finally, this chapter has approached different material elements – moving images, a canvas, melodies and lyrics - that bring this statement to life.

Thus, I argue that amid the multiple characters, plots, scenes and dialogues that are part of these diverse representations lies a security statement, shaped by the juxtaposition of signs and aesthetic choices. This statement differs from the majority of the scientific discourses presented in the theoretical chapter of this thesis, since it does not equate security with the physical survival of some referent object. Rather it is about the preservation of mutually informed and synergic relationships between certain individuals and their natural surroundings. In this sense, this security statement refers to a condition of harmony and completeness derived from the connection between the human and non-human worlds, between the physical and emotional structures, between the material body and the non-material self, between the islands and the islanders.

The identification of this specific statement was possible because aesthetics gives us an opportunity to put ourselves in a different perspectival position, allowing us make sense of the distant cultural and emotional contexts that shape the meanings of security.

By opening this chapter with representations that recall the tragic results of the US nuclear tests, I aimed to show the importance of the Marshallese local cosmovision. This cosmovision binds together the natural and human worlds, challenging the modern notion of a presumed division between these two worlds. I also aimed to show the importance of their here-feeling in the construction of their own perceptions of security. Both their cosmovision and here-feeling are currently threatened by the climate crisis, another type of human-created interference, which are represented by the aesthetic performances that raise re-signifying and intervening claims. These two claims are incredibly important when it comes, not only to the demand for action to mitigate the climate crisis – actions that will not necessarily solve all the serious problems faced by the islanders -, but also to

empower these individuals, showing their strength and resilience in the face of a situation which would inspire nothing more than despair and pain in most of us.

The petition signed by the islanders and sent to the UN after the first nuclear detonation is a reflection of the close relationship between their atolls and their physical and ontological security: [Land] "… is the very life of the people. *Take away their land and their spirits go also*." (The Marshallese People, 1954, p. 2, emphasis by the author) It is not recognized only by the elders, who are supposed to cultivate deep roots with their atolls, but also by the youth, the ones called the "last generation" of the Marshallese.

As demonstrated by Leem's poetry and performance (2019, capitalization in the original), if the scientific predictions are accurate, in 2050 "WE ARE NO MORE". She doesn't say that their islands are no more, but that the Marshallese themselves are no more, since their islands, their people and their sense of community and self-identity are all deeply intertwined. Leem's poetry thus makes a clear reference to their atolls as the extension of Marshallese themselves, as one of the main elements that define their identities as a specific human community, which runs the risk of "be[ing] no more".

Lacking these material and immaterial references, any sense of security is unattainable. On the face of it, all the traditional ISS vocabulary, including terms like "balance of terror", "rational deterrence", "zero sum game" seem even more irrational. The poisoned and vaporized atolls, the lasting birth problems, the flooded shores and graveyards, all challenge the traditional narratives of ISS, which claim that militarized and exceptional practices are the only way to obtain security. These concepts are irrational exactly because of their obsessional pursuit of rationality at the cost of all other qualitative and abstract elements that make security so valuable. For those traditional authors, it shouldn't be a problem, after all, since they assume the possibility of understanding the word "as it is", free from the fog of interpretations, point of views, emotions and interests. Together with authors engaged in aesthetics and the study of emotions, I argue that these marginalized elements are the condition of possibility for these particular readings of security and that recognizing these elements and their influence on our perceptions is key to making the analysis of realities that differ so much from ours possible.

Thus, based on the theoretical debates[42] on ISS – including the deepening, widening and opening movements of security, such as the environmental and climate security theoretical discussions – and most of all based on the rich contingencies offered by the analysis of the Marshall Islands, I argue that our multiple narratives of security are inescapably dependent on the particular way we believe life should be lived.

Thus, in contrast to Huymans' (1998) assertion that security is what mediates life and death, I argue that our understanding of security is necessarily dependent on what we conceive of as a good life, or as a proper way to strive, as Jetñil-Kijiner puts it (2017). As revealed by the case of Jebuki, the Bikinian elder of *The Sound of Crickets at Night*, physical death is not the main issue here. Like several Marshallese, in being forced to live the most part of his life as a dispossessed and landless individual, for him, the physical death is an opportunity to recover what has been lacking for all those years. Thus, the central tension between life and death, so characteristic of mainstream security studies - do not easily fit with their local security considerations.

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[42] Special thanks to Sebastian Granda Henao, a PhD candidate whose research interests are similar to mine, for our fruitful and insightful conversations on those diverse ontological questions that make the attribution of differing meanings to security possible.

7.
Final Remarks

This thesis aimed to contribute to the theoretical debate of ISS, especially in terms of the analysis of non-traditional security threats such as environmentally related problems like climate change. This effort is a product of my personal concerns about the severity of the climate crisis, but it is also the result of the identification of some communities that should be given the right to frame climate change as a security threat, now more than ever.

As discussed in chapter two of this thesis, there is a great disagreement within ISS about the meaning of security. As Huysmans (1998) has shown through his thick signifier approach, the meanings attached to security are utterly dependent on the wider context within which security is articulated; thus, implying an analysis of individuals' "relation to nature, to others human beings and to the self". (Huysmans, 1998, p. 231) Ontological security theory, with its emphasis in the security of the self, is clearly attached to the precarious stability of these complex relationships.

Through this thesis, I have tried to show how these intricate relations, that inform distinct conceptualizations of security, are necessarily embedded in cultural and emotional structures. Despite not being easily accessed through traditional methods of research, I have argued that the examination of these structures is crucial for a critical analysis of security. That is the reason why I have proposed a *thicker signifier approach* as a slightly different framework. Equipped with an aesthetic curiosity – which means a curiosity not about what objects *are*, but how they are being aesthetically represented – the *thicker signifier approach* aims to explore the cultural and emotional contingencies that make particular narratives of security possible.

In this sense, a *thicker signifier approach* of security relies on the analysis of specific cultural and emotional contexts from which security acquires meaning, by means of an aesthetic curiosity that pays attention to the way everyday lives of individuals are represented.

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Following this reasoning, in order to recognize the specificities and interconnectedness that characterize life in the Marshallese communities, this thesis analyzed the way the everyday lives of individuals are represented through local movies, legends and poems. What these representations have in common is the ability to enlighten the contingencies of the archipelago, as well as the capacity to create, replicate and challenge security discourses through the juxtaposition of different signs of (in)security.

In this sense, I hope that, through the interpretation of the characters presented here, and through the acknowledgement of diverse signs of (in)security, the reader can experience different worlds, in Shapiro's words (2008), and approach realities that fundamentally diverge from our daily lives and from the contexts in which most of the security approaches employed in IR and ISS were developed.

I also hope that through these aesthetic experiences, the reader can make sense of how the Marshallese narratives of security emanate from different cultural and emotional contexts in which their "here-feeling" and self-identities are threatened by diverse events – such as the atomic tests leading to the dislocation of entire communities and the rupture of their ancestral connection to their atolls, or the climate crisis that has resulted in "waves eating land" in the words of the islanders. (Rudiak-Gould; 2013: 53)

By operating an aesthetic curiosity and discourse analysis, I argue that the films, poems, tales and paintings can be seen as signs of a greater security narrative. Together, they offered a surplus of resources to make sense of the urgent existential anxiety that shape the understanding of climate change as a security problem in the context of the Marshall Islands.

One could argue that what we are talking about here is no more than an old and traditional security concern of geopolitics (i.e: Ratzel, 1897) and ISS (ie.: Walt, 1991): the preservation of a sovereign territory. However, I argue that it is much more than that. As revealed by the overview in chapter five and confirmed through the aesthetic sources analyzed in chapter six, in the Marshalls, the survival of the territory does not represent merely the maintenance of one of the most cherished features of a sovereign state. Most of all, it consists in the preservation of the material and social environments of action (Giddens, 1991) that make the continuity

of a biographic narrative possible. Without their atolls, the Marshallese will lose an overwhelming part of their material, spiritual and cultural references, elements that provide them with a "feeling of presence in the world", described by Laing (1965) as the characteristics of an ontological secure subject.

Of course, these understandings are extremely malleable, so as to enable diverse interpretations and meanings. In the end, we run the risk of arriving at the same point criticized by theoreticians such as Walt (1991, p. 213), in which security can be framed as almost everything; thus, "destroying the intellectual coherence" of the field. I argue, however, the opposite: if we are able to understand the material, social and emotional contexts in which these almost infinite narratives on security emerge, we can enhance our analytical abilities, not only in purely scientific terms, but also ethical ones.

From this epistemological position, it is possible to challenge the marginalizing and elitist idea that only politicians, scientists and ISS theoreticians can determine what it means to feel secure. As revealed by Marshallese history, often, these ideas are exactly the opposite of what individuals conceive of under the term 'security', thus betraying a reflex of a Western scientific arrogance when it comes to how human life and interstate relations should develop. Considering the particularities of this human community, and not merely taking them as a case study to be universalized, makes the identification of these dissonant voices possible. Much more than witness the "veracity" of a determinate theoretical approach, these voices can reveal valuable theoretical and ethical insights in ISS, sometimes reinforcing, but mostly empirically challenging their theoretical claims.

In addition, the collection of these dissident voices also contributes to a richer "archive" about security, an archive made up of diverse discourses. In making visible these non-scientific narratives about security, it is possible to highlight the power relations implicated in the processes that confer the effect of truth to some discourses, which regard the sovereign state and the exceptional practices, as the legitimate referent object and ways of obtaining security, respectively.

More than ever, Marshallese need their *ri-bwebenato* to make sure that their stories about security are heard. But this time, the point is not to make a bridge between their past and future – as they usually do when passing on their traditional

legends, customs and believes – but to promote a temporal rupture while ensuring that the ontological insecure condition of the past, caused by the nuclear experiments, does not happen again with climate change.

8.
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