Public Administration and Homeland Security:  
A Search for the Relevant Issues in the Midlands

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The successful attack on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, changed many American perceptions, altered many American lives, and established a new priority on the American policy agenda. This action has had a profound effect on American military roles, the conduct of American foreign affairs, and major impact on the current General Election campaign. We are only beginning to discuss how the government and the media frame this issue of terrorism and influence public opinion. In the field of Public Administration we are only coming to an awareness of how this new public policy priority will influence future practice in the field.

It can be argued that in many ways this issue of homeland security when viewed from the great mid-section of the country which makes up the geographic area of Region IV of the American Society for Public Administration, is muddled at best and not high on anyone’s policy agenda. The purpose of this brief paper is to suggest three major areas of research and learning that might emerge from studying this issue in the Midlands and in collaboration with the rest of the national Public Administration community.

The Homeland Security

Homeland Security is a word that was rarely used in public discourse prior to September 11, 2001. It surfaced in a speech by President Bush shortly after the attack when he indicated his intention of appointing Governor Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania to the post of coordinating homeland security efforts. Congress quickly picked up the suggestion and quickly passed legislation creating a Department of Homeland Security. Since, the term has become well known to all.

Even though there have been many instances in the past twenty years of homegrown terrorists actions, today’s view of the typical terrorism threat is seen as the existence of small group of firebrand fundamentalist religious ideologists throughout the world who are posed at any moment to use the element of surprise to wreak violence on a relatively open society. The “enemy” is assumed to be aided and abetted by “rouge” states. These individuals and groups utilize the full range of technology to coordinate efforts while simultaneously being opposed to the spread of this technology. The rigid ideological lifestyles treasured by these individuals are understood to be threatened by the openness and godlessness of modern society which is ubiquitous in the world. Essentially this is a clash of cultures and faiths—not unlike a number of historical

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1 Prepared for the Region IV ASPA Conference, South Sioux City, NE, October 29, 2004.
3 The Region IV of ASPA consists of chapters in the following states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and New Mexico. While this configuration is designed for administrative purposes, it does represent the broad mid-section of the country.
examples including the American displacement of native cultures or the series of Crusades in struggle for control of the “Holy Lands”. In such cultural clashes, assimilation or annihilation seem to be the only ultimate sources of resolution.

The response to such perceived threats from these foreign terrorists has been to attempt to create a homeland security umbrella designed to identify threats, prevent any infiltration of the country, and to take preemptive actions to remove any havens that harbor these threats. In an open society like the United States the creation and strengthening homeland security has been a daunting task. It has required major investment of public and private dollars and has reduced some of the openness and individual freedom on which this country is based.

While much of the activity of homeland security has been focused at the national level and along border areas, most local units of government, especially those involved with first responders to emergencies, have been affected. Homeland Security has become a major source of intergovernmental funding with $3.8 billion budgeted in 2004 for allocation to first responders at local levels and another $3.7 proposed for allocation in 2005. As noted in a review by U. S. Representative Christopher Cox of California, as much as $5.2 billion of funding is stuck in the funding pipeline such as the bureaucracies of the Department of Homeland Security and state governments. This is alleged to have made it difficult to fully implement necessary innovations at the local level.

The Midlands

The great middle section of the country, while much of it is the “bread basket” of the country, has few of those identifiable icons that make inviting targets for terrorist. In addition, the interior location, away from traditional points of entry into the country reduce the strategic importance of the area for the terrorists intent on entering this country to perpetrate evil action. This is not to say that the area does not provide a potentially safe haven for the waiting terrorist as evident by the 20th hijacker who was found in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Arguably if Timothy McVeigh is also included in the definition of terrorists, then home-grown versions of terrorism have arisen in the region and must also be countered and guarded against.

Perhaps the absence of many identifiable vulnerable targets and the relatively risk-free perception of security in this protected interior location means that the homeland security issue fails to resonant with area residents as a major concern. In a recent article in PA Times, William McLean and Patrick A. Stewart wrote that in one heartland state (Arkansas) the majority of citizens were not aware of the existence of the Homeland Security Advisory System. The authors attribute this inattention to the notion that terrorist’s threats are extremely unlikely to occur in this part of the country and therefore

5 Arguably the issue of Agriculture Bio-terrorism could surface in the future, little open discussion of this issue is presently heard.
6 This discounts the substantial amount of border crossing that occurs by illegal aliens along the Texas-New Mexico border with Mexico.
more pressing personal and community issues dominate the thinking of the average citizen.

The states of the Midlands were allocated almost $500 million in Homeland Security grants during FY 2003. With 23.9% of the national population in the region, this represents only about 13% of total Homeland Security grants, further recognition of the lesser risk of homeland security problems in the region.

Public Administration Issues

Despite these notions of remoteness and non-involvement in this part of the country, there are issues of homeland security that pose rich and inviting targets for research and inquiry in Public Administration. Three such issues are: (1) issues of merging different organizational cultures, (2) issues of accountability, and (3) issues of risk analysis.

**Merging different organizational cultures** – The creation of the Department of Homeland Security has constituted one of the largest reorganization efforts in the Federal Government. Thousands of positions and multiple agencies and budgets were shifted around and continue to be shifted in Washington and various field offices throughout the country. Attention has already been given to the types of conflicts resulting in a failure to share information when agencies with differing organizational culture are placed in situations which require cooperation and collaboration.

In a recent article in the *Public Administration Review*, Norma Riccucci, et. al. identify the existence of difficulty at the operational level of converting thinking and priorities about basic mission and objectives. While they use the policy area of welfare reform, a policy area like emergency preparedness, which has dramatically shifted a degree of emphasis from preparedness for natural disasters to acts of terrorism may encounter similar difficulties. What happens when law enforcement and fire fighting forces team with emergency medicine and public health personnel? How is effective coordination developed among multiple responding units from different jurisdictions at the local level? Clearly a good study at the local of conflicting organizational cultures thrust together for the delivery of vital emergency preparedness issues would contribute to our knowledge and preparedness.

**Accountability Concerns** – Recent attention has been directed to the problems of speed with which spending of Homeland Security grants to state and local governments has occurred. It has been pointed out that $4.5 billion in 2004 funds remain unspent in the grants pipeline. Donald Kettl argues that states should be the cornerstones of homeland security, implying a further decentralization of activity and possibly speeding up the spending. Governor Mitt Romney lays out this problem of delay to “the standard

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8 Chapter 3, *9/11 Commission Report* documents the difficulties leading to a failure of the FBI and CIA to share vital information.


10 Christopher Logan, “Politics and Promises”.

grant process and purchasing procedures that exist in our country don’t work terribly well if your objective is speed.” 12 Much of this administrative “red tape” can be traced to the traditional suspicion by grantors over the motives and appropriateness of grantees in the intergovernmental funding game. In September the Dallas Morning News 13 reported evidence from Texas and California that much of the spending of Homeland Security funds went for purposes unrelated to homeland security. This raises once again, the difficulty task of tracking spending and assessing the impact of intergovernmental funding, ground that was often explored in the days of General Revenue Sharing and LEAA funding.

Accordingly there are two basic research questions for the Public Administration community. The first of these is to more clearly establish the nature of uses to which Homeland Security grants have been applied at the local level. Obviously this analysis includes more than simply accounting for the spending since much of this analysis needs to more clearly identify the final impact of this substantial infusion of new money at a time of great need.

Given that the intergovernmental funding system is characterized by distrust between the grantor and the grantee a second line of inquiry is framed by the need for accountability. In order to minimize this intergovernmental distrust and to also minimize the possibility of fraud, waste, and abuse surrounding the use of these monies, explicit review procedures and processes in the form of accountability and reporting are put into place. What is now needed is a streamlined system of accountability that does not sacrifice accountability and the built-in safe guards of careful review and record keeping. Some of the parts of any new systems might depend on the potential for integrating more clearly results of performance measurements efforts into the analysis.

Risk Analysis – Clearly it is impossible to protect every location in the country and often increased security measures come with a reduction of individual freedom and impose costs. Better methods of analysis that incorporate improved identification of risk and allow this information to be better incorporated into the development of priorities for the allocation of resources is needed. Arguably the next wave of management and policy emphasis in the field of Public Administration is a growing attention to risk analysis.

Such a movement would build on the logic of benefit-cost analysis combined with techniques modified from environmental risk analysis as well as drawing on the logic of national security analysis. In such scenarios, attention will be given to security in location and site decisions and design features of new public facilities as well as programs of risk minimization in retrofitting existing facilities.

Conclusions

We have again reached an unfortunate time when uncertainties and the unknown pose potential threats to our individual security. Whether this is any different from

13 “Funds Not All Going to Fight Terror in Texas”, Dallas Morning News (September 6, 2004). – http://www.dallasnews.com/cgi-bin/gold_print.cgi
previous ages, one need only reflect on the risks and uncertainties that confronted the Corps of Discovery as they began their epic journey through these parts just two hundred years ago. What is clear is that like the Corps, Public Administration must marshal new ideas and perceptions to create new systems that improve the management and policy analysis associated with homeland security.

References


“Funds Not All Going to Fight Terror in Texas”, *Dallas Morning News* (September 6, 2004). – [http://www.dallasnews.com/cgi-bin/gold_print.cgi](http://www.dallasnews.com/cgi-bin/gold_print.cgi)
Homeland Security Grants to States in the Midlands, FY 2003

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<th>State</th>
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