

American Political Discourse and the Securitization of the US/Canada Border

Mark B. Salter and Geneviève Piché
School of Political Studies
University of Ottawa

Abstract:

In this paper, the authors analyze the empirical process of securitization of the US-Canada border and then reflect on the model proposed by the Copenhagen School. We argue that securitization theory oversimplifies the political process of securitizing moves and audience acceptance. Rather than attribute securitization to a singular speaker addressing a specific audience, we present overlapping and on-going language security games performed by varying relevant actors during the key period between the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) in December of 2004 and the signing of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) in June of 2005, showing how multiple speakers participate in the continuing construction of a context in which this issue is increasingly treated as a matter of security. We also explore the language adopted by participants in the field, focusing on an expert panel convened by the Homeland Security Institute. We conclude that in the securitization of the US-Canada border there are inconsistencies between truth and discourse, as well as significant distinctions between official and bureaucratic discourses, further emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive model of securitization.

Résumé:

Dans cet article, les auteurs font l'analyse du processus empirique de la sécurisation de la frontière Canado-Américaine à travers la réflexion sur le modèle proposé par l'École de Copenhague. Nous soutenons que cette théorie de sécurisation simplifie trop le processus politique de son initiation et de l'acceptation de l'auditeur. Au lieu d'attribuer la sécurisation à un orateur, s'adressant à un public particulier, nous présentons les jeux de langage continuels effectués par plusieurs acteurs pendant la période suivant la Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) en décembre 2004, jusqu'à l'approbation de la Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) en juin 2005. Nous maintenons que plusieurs orateurs participent dans la construction continue du contexte dans lequel l'affaire est de plus en plus comprise dans le cadre de sécurité. Nous explorons aussi le langage employé par les participants dans le champ, observant surtout un groupe d'experts convoqué au Homeland Security Institute. Nous concluons que dans le cas de la sécurisation de la frontière Canado-Américaine il existe des incohérences entre le discours et le réel, ainsi que des distinctions significatives entre les discours officiels et bureaucratiques, mettant l'accent sur l'importance d'un modèle compréhensif de sécurisation.

Introduction

Over eighty percent of the Canadian population lives within 100 kilometers of the US/Canada border, and cross-border power dynamics have long structured political, social, and economic policy in Canada. For the majority of the twentieth century, the

bilateral relationship was characterized by ‘the longest undefended border in the world.’ This has fundamentally changed from undefended border to a smart border—and from a focus on facilitation to one of defense in depth.¹ In this article we examine how the representation of the US/Canada border changed in official and bureaucratic discourse. We apply the Copenhagen School theory of securitization to the discourse of border security, which is the model in which the elite names an emergency and with audience acceptance, the political sector becomes a matter for security policy, reducing possibilities for democratic debate. Securitization theory alone however cannot account for the complex changes we observe. Consequently, we use insights from the Paris School, based on analysis centered around notions of field and habitus borrowed from Bourdieu, to make two points: the process of securitization is not only a linguistic act but takes place within a social context; also, the process of securitization is not a single *coup de grace* but an iterative process within a particular field. We demonstrate this through discursive analysis of American policy statements between 2004 and 2005 and a participant observation of an American expert consultation on border security technologies in 2009. These two empirical findings demonstrate our key theoretical insights: first, ideas, narratives, tropes, and language used in the securitization of the US/Canada border have their own internal momentum that do not necessarily correspond to historical realities, in this example the case of Ahmed Ressam (the Millennium bomber) is almost entirely absent from the discourse; second, the trope of terrorism has come to act as a discursive trump (swallowing other security threats) within elite discourse, but not at the working level of law enforcement who are concerned with the day-to-day policing, suggesting that there are multiple speakers and audiences for securitizing moves.

Securitization Theory + Border Studies

Current analyses of American border studies are heavily weighted to the Southern border with Mexico, or the delocalized borders of visa and immigration policies. Empirically, this is driven by the scale of the ‘problem’ of border security: thousands of illegal migrants cross the US/Mexico border every day during the high season, whereas estimates of US/Canada annual infiltrations vary between the hundreds and thousands, with the vast majority of those illegal crossings being concerned with smuggling of goods or drugs rather than individuals. As a homeland security problem, there is little wonder that the US/Mexican border takes priority. However, as demonstrated by the recent expansion of the Secure Border Initiative and the launching of UAV (unmanned aerial vehicles) Predator Drone patrols across the remote northern American border, the US/Canada border has recent become a new security priority. Our first question was: how did this US/Canada border come to be treated as this kind of security issue, conditioned by both a sense of emergency and a new strategy of management?

Securitization Theory

¹ Questions of a North American security perimeter are beyond the scope of this essay, and are not taken seriously by policy-makers on either side of the border.

Within international relations, the Copenhagen School offers the most promising theory of how particular issues come to be treated as security issues, and suggests what the political impact of that securitization might be. Buzan made the argument that national security can be divided into sectors (military/security, societal, economic, political and ecological) (Buzan 1991). Within each of these, different issues are perceived or understood as security threats, while other issues are regarded as the subject of normal politics. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1997) proposed a theory of securitization: elites make a ‘securitizing move’ by which they describe an issue area within a sector as an existential threat that can only be met by emergency measures and extraordinary powers. If this securitizing move is accepted by ‘the audience’ – which is radically under-defined in the original version – then, the issue becomes a security issue, and democratic debate is shut down. Migration, for example, has been portrayed as a threat to societal security in Europe, but with limited success (Huysmans 2006: 149-150). Within this framework, the focus is on the ‘speech act’ of naming an issue a security issue, following the linguistic theory of illocutionary speech acts. While the theory allows for issues to have internal or natural characteristics that make some issues more amenable than others to securitizing moves, the social or contextual aspect of speaker and audience are largely absent from the initial formulation. Stritzel (2007), Balzacq (2005) and Salter (2008) have each made suggestions as to how to accommodate the social or contextual dimensions of securitizing moves. Our paper hopes to add to this critique of securitization theory by demonstrating clearly that, in fact, it is extremely difficult to identify single or signal instances of securitizing moves or acceptance within the complex field of border policy

Border Studies

Border policy is janus-faced, being concerned both with the preservation of domestic economic, social, and political integrity and also with international interaction. As a complex site of overlapping regulation, it often falls between international and domestic politics. Independent theories of borders and bordering processes are often concerned either with the abstract territorial instantiation of sovereignty and how that inside/outside boundary is created by the structure of domestic politics /international relations or with the micro-politics of borderlands or cross-border regions.

However, there is a rich interface of local, domestic and international politics in the border policy sector. We want to argue that securitization of the border is not a switch that is ‘on’ or ‘off.’ Rather, there is a complex negotiation of forces that seek to push a security agenda and forces that resist that securitization (even within the same bureaucratic scene, not to mention between states, provinces, or federal governments).

Methodology: Field vs. discourse

We offer two sites of data: discursive analysis of American public discourse and a participant observation of an expert meeting of the implementation of border security technologies. This follows dissatisfaction with the Copenhagen’s exclusive focus on the linguistic nature of securitization. We argue, along with Balzacq and Stritzel, that the

core process of securitization, a securitizing move that is accepted or rejected by an audience, is an essentially social process. And so in addition to mapping out those linguistic moves, we feel it is also important to understand how that language is used by the field of experts who work in this sector, expecting that the individuals who work on border security will use different language and play different political games than those who speak directly to the public (Bigo 2006). This kind of Bourdieusian political sociology presents a number of practical challenges. We seek to represent two slices of the American field of border security, with the understanding that there are multiple fields, actors, interests, and discourses that are competing for political, social, economic, and bureaucratic support. However, the two slices we offer give a new insight into how the border has become incompletely securitized.

Discourse Analysis

In order to better understand the process by which the US-Canada border is shifting further into the realm of security, certain relevant actors must be considered. For the purposes of this paper, the speakers included are: President George W. Bush and the Department of Homeland Security. It is important to note that these speakers constitute but a part of a larger grouping of speakers that contribute to the construction of the security context surrounding the issue of the US-Canada border. The statements include speeches, press releases and publications, and were selected from the period leading up to the signing of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America. The discourse was analyzed based both on content and on context.

The content analysis consisted of an examination of the discursive tools, mainly threat-naming and presentations of evidence, adopted by the speakers in their statements. . Presentations of evidence might include explicit references to particular incidents, budget information, public opinion polls, and personal accounts. Threat-naming would be identified ranging from general (such as the permeability of the border) to specific (a particular group of people participating in a specific activity).

The content analysis also considered what was *not* said by the speakers. Statements may contain elements called entailments and presuppositions (Chilton, 2004). An entailment is what may be implied by a statement based on a truth relation, regardless of its verifiability. A sentence such as: (a) *the border patrol agents arrested the driver of a vehicle containing illegal narcotics* entails the sentence: (b) *a person was attempting to transport contraband across the border*. If (a) is true, then (b) is necessarily true. Presuppositions serve as indications of the relationship between the speaker and the audience. Whether true or not, speakers may use language that is vague or that rests on knowledge that is assumed to be shared or common. The presuppositions of the statements presented by the speakers serves to clarify that which the speakers take for granted as common ground. It is also relevant to this research in that it serves to illuminate at what point a formerly explicit element becomes one that is implicitly presupposed – that is to say at what point a speaker finds it unnecessary to attempt to convince his or her audience of this argument and adopts it as already commonly

accepted. The statements were also analyzed within the political and historical context surrounding them, as indicated by relevant events and other statements preceding them.

Within critical security studies and critical foreign studies, discourse analysis has become a favored tool. Focusing on the language that is used to describe political events and situations follows from a post-structuralist critique of epistemic realism. Interests, roles, and rationalities are all constructed within language, and these language games make certain policy and identity choices possible. This method has been particularly emphasized in work following the Copenhagen School, because of their focus on illocutionary acts. However, it is our finding that these illocutionary acts do not spring fully-formed from the head of Zeus, George Bush or any other actor. Rather, the language describing a particular policy nexus is always already in play by the actors and agencies engaged in the day-to-day practices of border security. We highlight the system or the larger game in which these particular speech acts are situated.

Participant Observation

One of the drivers of International Political Sociology has been a recognition that discourse analysis must take account of the social context in which it is generated. The social and linguistic field is constituted through the *habitus*, or daily use in the life-world of experts. Rather than rely exclusively on public documents, this method implies observation and participation in the policy-discussions of the field of experts. For this article, we will focus on an expert panel convened by the Homeland Security Institute to gauge community perceptions of border security technologies. This gathering of Department of Homeland Security officials, police, representatives of civil society, and experts from both the United States and Canada provides an excellent sounding board to examine the *habitus* of border security. What issues were salient and what arguments convincing? What exemplars were used by police, bureaucrats, and experts? What is the common language of this meeting that constitutes the group as a field? The findings examined here are consistent with several other semi-public conferences in which Salter has also participated on the themes of security, privacy, counter-terrorism, and border security.

Within the field of border security experts, the management of the border is seen to be a multifaceted problem with economic, social, and political facets. There has been securitization of the issue-sector – there is no doubt that border security is paramount – but the particular policing policies or technologies are often debated within this larger frame. For example, the expert group differed radically on the scale and nature of the vulnerability of remote border regions: one technical official took a zero-tolerance approach to illegal border crossings intentional or not, whereas one working police officer took a much more lax approach to enforcements stressing the intentions of crossers. This finding corresponds with earlier work on Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs), which demonstrated that practical working cooperation amongst police forces on both sides of the border was built on informal relations rather than abstract policies driven by the federal government. Thus, while border security and the perception of border security are both primary drivers of policies, there are also internal pressures

for efficiency, accountability, risk management, inter-agency competition, and legitimate culture clashes. This supports the contentions of IPS scholars, such as Bigo, Bonditti, Scherrer, and others, that individuals, careers, professional networks – all of the agents and structures that constitute a field – must be accounted for in explanations as to what security policies are adopted.

Threat Images

Threat naming is an important discursive tool in the process of securitization. In the case of the US-Canada border, the speakers included in this research consistently identify the potential entry of terrorists into the United States as a significant threat to American security. Nearly all of the statements examined in this research either named explicitly or implicitly terrorism as the major threat requiring increased intensity of border controls between Canada and the United States. In the few cases where terrorism is not explicitly named as the primary threat related to this issue, it makes up much of the larger context in which the US-Canada border is discussed. That is to say that references to increased border security are surrounded – within the same statements – by claims that terrorism is the greatest threat to American and global security.

The use of the term “terrorism” without further qualification is problematic. The term as it is used implies that the threat originates from the outside. The speakers do not address the much more frequent occurrence of domestic terrorist attacks. Most of the terrorist (or attempted terrorist) attacks in the United States have been committed (or planned and attempted) by Americans. Ignoring this fact and adopting anti-terror discourse in a post-11 September, 2001 context reinforces the faulty perception of terrorism as originating from outside the national territory and thus legitimating increased vigilance towards those who may be attempting to gain access to the United States, resulting in increased border controls.²

Few incidents of international terrorism have occurred on American soil, but this remains a persistent concern in the discourse. The argument that the threat continues to be an important one is rarely explicitly justified. In the instances where the speakers do provide some logic to support the claim that the United States is still threatened by the possibility of a terrorist attack (presumably by international terrorists), they make references to specific events that have occurred elsewhere in the world.

“Thankfully, we have not experienced another attack on our soil since September 11th, 2001. But the rest of the world has not been so fortunate. If you ask residents of Madrid, or Beslan, or Bali, or Jakarta, they will assure you that not only the threat, but also the harsh daily reality of terrorism is ongoing.” (DHS, Feb. 16, 2005)

² Domestic terrorism is entirely absent from the discourse included here, but, while this could be the result of the statements selected – as they must discuss border security – some of these statements represent discussions of the larger anti-terror security project

This logic indicates that the speaker equates several terrorist attacks without distinction based on social, economic, political, or historical contexts. Removing these events from the contexts in which they have occurred allows the speaker to claim that they may be replicated in the United States.

As mentioned above, however, many of the claims that terrorism remains the most important threat to American security do not contain any explicit justification for this concern. Where this occurs, the logic is based on the presupposition that the threat persists, and this to the extent that it does and should guide U.S. security policy.

In addition to the failure to qualify the term “terrorism,” as well as the weak logic used to justify its persistence in the discourse, the threat remains vague as the speakers acknowledge the countless uncertainties that surround it. Aside from one reference to the suspicion that a terrorist attack will most likely come in the form of a land vehicle armed with explosives – a suspicion that is not further justified in the statement, and that is followed by the acknowledgement that there is very little to support this claim. At no point do any of the speakers attempt to legitimate the concern surrounding the threat of terrorism by providing more specific details about potential or hypothetical attacks. In some instances, speakers explicitly state that there is no way to know who might attempt to attack the United States, nor how, when, or where this might be carried out. Despite this, the speakers maintain that what is certain is that the threat remains and that complacency is a weakness that those hypothetical potential terrorists will certainly seek to exploit.

“Since September 11th, 2001, we have gone on the offensive against the terrorists. We have dealt the enemy a series of powerful blows. The terrorists are on the run, and we’ll keep them on the run. Yet they’re still active; they’re still seeking to do us harm. The terrorists are patient and determined. And so are we. They’re hoping we’ll get complacent, and forget our responsibilities. Once again, they’re proving that they do not understand our nation. The United States of America will never let down its guard.” (Bush, June 9, 2005)

They claim that the terrorist threat persists and that terrorist organizations are plotting constantly against the United States, waiting only for an opportunity to strike.

“America, in this new century, again faces new threats. Instead of massed armies, we face stateless networks; we face killers who hide in our own cities. We must confront deadly technologies. To inflict great harm on our country, America’s enemies need to be only right once.” (Bush, Dec. 17, 2004)

The speakers call for vigilance as they argue that the terrorists need only be right once in order to succeed, while the United States can never falter under any circumstances.

While the speakers acknowledge that the threat of terrorism is uncertain, they speculate the hypothetical forms that future attempts at terrorist attacks on the United States might take. Calls for the development and implementation of new detection technologies and techniques are accompanied by claims that future attacks may be attempted using biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons. “Weapons of mass effect, such as nuclear, chemical and biological, call for the rapid deployment of next generation radiation detection equipment at every port of entry.” (DHS, Jan. 13, 2005) WMD detection equipment is thus argued to be critical to border security as it “is an integral part of the DNDO comprehensive strategy to address the threat of nuclear and radiological terrorism.” (DHS, Feb. 7, 2005) Furthermore, there are references to the possibility and effects of cyber-terrorism. With such a vague and inclusive conception of the threat of terrorism, this creates the possibility to discuss the importance of many fronts in attempts to protect against it. Border controls are thus presented as a critical layer, among many others, used in securing the United States against future terrorist attacks.

Terrorism Dominating the Discourse

In the discourse analyzed in this research, it is apparent that discussions of security at the border are dominated by terrorism as the primary threat. What happens in these statements with regards to threat-naming is two-fold. First, the threat of terrorism is presented as that which trumps all others. Second, terrorism collapses all other ills into a generalized threat category. In many cases, the statements do not acknowledge the existence of threats other than terrorism. That this is the most prevalent border-related threat discussed in the discourse, and the only one discussed independently of others, outside general claims that the United States is in a state of insecurity, indicates that the political climate from which these statements have been pulled is one in which terrorism is highly prioritized. In the case of the US-Canada border, then, the threat of terrorism trumps concerns about other illegal activities.

Furthermore, discussions of the threat of terrorism overshadow concerns surrounding favorable activities such as trade and tourism. Throughout the discourse examined here, threats are at times presented in opposition with desirable cross-border activity. The speakers included in this research stress the importance of facilitating positive activities such as legitimate travel and trade. Where trade is discussed, there is a significant emphasis on the importance of the Canadian market to the United States and vice versa. The speakers included in this research make it clear that prosperity is collective, and thus must be sought through combined efforts to facilitate trade.

Much of the discussion regarding trade revolves around the tension between trade and security. While trade has often taken precedence in discussion of the US-Canada border, the discourse analyzed here reveals that the climate is increasingly one that prioritizes security. Statements released by DHS on December 17, 2004, with regards to Smart Borders and January 25, 2005, regarding the US-VISIT program, illustrate efforts to give the impression of a reconciliation between the seemingly conflicting priorities, that are trade/travel facilitation and increased security.

“At the heart of the Smart Borders process is the recognition that public security and economic security can be achieved simultaneously and are mutually reinforcing. Pre-clearance at the land border is an excellent example of how the United States of America and Canada can advance the dual objectives of security and facilitation.” (DHS, Dec. 17, 2004)

The demonstration of the ability to uphold simultaneously these priorities is central to appeasing both those who are concerned about security’s impact on economic endeavors, and those who are concerned that a focus on trade and travel facilitation will undermine the country’s security. So, while favorable cross-border activities are still included in the discourse, they remain within a context of security, often directly referring to protection against terrorists.

In a few cases, the speakers associate the US-Canada border with other threats to American security. What occurs, however, when these other threats are presented is that they are placed under the umbrella of “criminal activity.” This term may be used alone, allowing the listener to define it or characterize it in the way he or she will. At other times, however, those activities which fall under this category are named explicitly, but often in a single breath. These activities include drug smuggling, human smuggling, illegal immigration, document fraud, visa violations, criminal cross-border travel, and terrorism. For example, when discussing what is called “America’s Shield Initiative (ASI)” under the heading of “Revolutionizing the Borders,” DHS states that the purposes are to “guard against the entry of illegal aliens, terrorists, WMDs and contraband into the U.S.” (DHS, Feb. 7, 2005) The listed activities often represent a vast range of activities with many different motivations and consequences. The distinction between them, however, appears to be of little importance to the speakers. What remains central, rather, is that the US-Canada border is represented as a point of entry for any number of undesirables, and most importantly, that these include terrorists. Grouping these together allows the speakers to maintain the prevalence of terrorism as a threat, while reaching additional stakeholders and intensifying feelings of insecurity by associating it with others.

The New Era

The terrorist attacks on September 11 are not only treated in the discourse as evidence of the vulnerabilities of national security, but represent the beginning of what is considered a new era, a new political and security context. The speakers included in this research often refer to the current political context as the “post-9/11 era” or the “post-9/11 environment.” For example, President Bush describes the priorities set since the 11 September 2001 attacks. “In the new era the threat is different, but our duties are the same. Our enemies have declared their intentions – and so have we.” (Bush, Dec. 1, 2004) They compare this new context to those events and enemies that defined the political climates of the past. References are made to the Cold War and the two World Wars in order to illustrate that there are events and enemies that define the duties of a generation.

“Just as the Greatest Generation took on and defeated the threats of Nazism and Fascism, and Reagan’s generation won the Cold War, we are taking on efforts to defeat the very real dangers of terrorism. So let us continue to embrace this call to action and seek opportunities to improve our security and economic vitality. Let us embrace the vital responsibility of our generation and of our time.” (DHS, Feb. 14, 2005)

The speakers argue that the enemy and the threat are new in the 21st century and that the 11 September 2001 attacks brought them to light. The enemy is no longer a particular state or actor. The current generation has a duty to defeat a vague and elusive enemy: terrorism. Naming the terrorist threat as not only a security concern, but as a the defining point of 21st century American politics sends a powerful message of urgency to the speakers’ audiences, creating opportunities to legitimize expediting the security agenda and expanding existing security practices.

The discourse reveals that the speakers are consistent in their call to arms against the threat of terrorism. Border security is rarely discussed alone. Border controls are most often discussed, in the discourse examined here, as one component of the larger American (or in a few occurrences, North American) security project. The speakers included in this research describe this security project as a “layered” approach to protecting the United States against the threat of terrorism.

Assessing and Expanding Security

In the discourse examined in this research, the speakers discuss the successes and shortcomings of existing border security policies while making recommendations for future courses of action. The speakers present these elements in a number of ways, ranging from the very general to the very specific, but are not necessarily consistent or coherent throughout.

The stated goals of specific border security policies, of border controls in general, and of the larger security project are presented by the speakers in often very broad terms. The most commonly stated goal is simply to improve security. (DHS, Feb. 7, 2005b, Jan. 13, 2005) The purposes of border control activities are discussed more specifically in some cases with the presentation of referent objects and identification of the types of persons or behaviors targeted by these practices. The former is most often the United States and its population, while the latter is most often a list naming those deemed to be “criminals”, “illegals”, and “terrorists” in general. (Bush, Dec. 20, 2004, March 23, 2005; DHS, Feb. 7, 2005)

When the speakers discuss the accomplishments of recently implemented border security policies and practices, at times they simply provide general claims that the border or the territory is “more secure” without describing that from which the United States is more secure. (DHS, Feb. 14, 2005) In some cases, they also name those that border control practitioners and other law enforcement agencies have denied entry into the United States

or apprehended. Some statements include specific figures of those undesirables intercepted by these agencies. For example, DHS discusses repeatedly the results of the implementation of the US-VISIT program.

“The United States has been able to arrest or deny admission to 372 criminals or immigration violators because of US-VISIT. These included federal penitentiary escapees, convicted rapists, drug traffickers, individuals convicted of manslaughter and credit card fraud, a convicted armed robber and numerous immigration violators and individuals attempting visa fraud.”
(DHS, Jan 3, 2005)

The descriptions of those apprehended or denied entry range from specific, as in the quote above, to more general. For example, DHS has stated that the US-VISIT program has been responsible for the denied admission of “more than 407 people,” (Jan. 25, 2005) or on another occasion that, “more than 400 criminals and immigration violators have been stopped at our borders.” (Feb. 7, 2005b) In all but one case (DHS, Feb. 17, 2005) where the speakers discuss those who have been denied entry, there is no mention of attempted entries by (would-be) terrorists. It is unclear whether the absence of terrorists from these lists is a result of policy failures – in which case the discussion of these policies as successful is contradictory – or a result of there simply not being any attempts by would-be terrorists to enter the United States through the country’s shared land border with Canada. In either case, this illustrates a disconnection between the stated primary threat and the actual results of border control policy implementation.

Border controls are mainly discussed as successful, but are presented as insufficient. The majority of the occasions where the speakers state that border controls are incomplete or inefficient consist of general claims that insecurity remains. Statements made by both President Bush and DHS claim that “we are not safe.” (Bush, Dec. 4, 2004; DHS, Feb. 7, 2005b) These statements are not followed by claims that the existing policies are inappropriate to the concerns surrounding the border, but rather that they are simply insufficient. The claims that insecurity remains are on occasion made more specific than the general statements discussed above through the identification of particular dangers – again, most often listing those deemed to be “criminals”, “illegals”, and “terrorists” – that continue to threaten the integrity of the US-Canada border.

Following claims that the current border controls are insufficient to adequately address the dangers associated with land ports of entry, the speakers make general or specific recommendations for future courses of action. In the most general cases, the speakers state simply that more needs to be done. In some cases, the speakers argue that the existing policies need to be expanded or supplemented by other measures. None of the statements contained claims that any existing policies require revision or termination. The recommendations proposed by the President and DHS do not represent a departure from existing policies and practices. The speakers generally call for measures such as increases in the quantity of border patrol agents, improvements in personnel training with regards to newly implemented technologies, as well as increases in intelligence

collection, storing and sharing. (Bush, Jan. 26, 2005, Feb. 2, 2005; DHS, Dec. 17, 2004b, March 16, 2005, April 5, 2005b)

It is important at this point to examine the level of coherence between the four elements explored above. In terms of the level of specificity of the factors discussed under each of these headings, it is clear that each contains significant amounts of generalities. The stated goals are primarily discussed in a general sense, which corresponds to all other elements presented here. The successes are discussed with the most specificity, but the specific details included are only presented alongside more general statements that claim that border controls have increased security. What is important to note is that, given the general nature of the majority of these statements, there is a clearly coherent logic followed by the speakers when presenting the stated goals, how existing policies address these goals, and what needs to be done to successfully achieve them. At the same time, however, the majority of these statements provide very little content and thus the measures presented, as well as their purposes and results remain quite vague. The shortcomings of existing policies, and thus the justification for the expansion or implementation of new policies remain unclear. The recommendations put forth to address these shortcomings also remain largely undefined. It is thus difficult to identify the logic adopted by the speakers in this case and consequently to evaluate the soundness of this line of reasoning.

Where the discourse becomes more specific, the stated goals do correspond coherently to the stated successes of existing policies. The speakers claim that the implementation of border controls (including specifically listed policies) is intended to impede the entry of certain undesirables (also at times listed explicitly). These undesirables are revisited in the successes and remain consistent, with one flaw. The logic between stated goals and policy successes is interrupted by the absence in the latter of specific reference to terrorist interdictions. Terrorists are mentioned in discussions of policy successes, but only in a general sense. That is to say, speakers claim that the border controls put in place have succeeded in making it more difficult for terrorists to gain access to the United States. This success is not reflected, however, in the much more specific statements that list explicitly the types of exclusions and arrests that have been made through those policies.

Anomalies

Exemplars are crucial to the language of a field. Within the field of border security, a number of tropes, incidents, and narratives are often used as historical or policy short-hands to represent key political values or policy lessons learned. The INSPASS/NEXUS programs, for example, are understood to be solid policies to reduce the number of known and ‘safe’ passengers that cross the border frequently and with minimal risk. However, it is also commonly-accepted that the extremely low sign-up rate is due to perceptions of the cost of the privacy invasion is high and a lack of infrastructure at the border reduces the benefit of facilitation. Thus, at the expert meeting, a new tracking technology was dismissed as another NEXUS program, without having to elaborate these

common understandings. At other mid-level bureaucratic and public meetings, widespread skepticism about sign-up has been used rhetorically to question other secure document proposals, such as enhanced driver's licenses. Exemplars are short-hand for common experiences that help define the field, reinforce the limits of the possible, and reinforce bureaucratic or political lessons learned. Our analysis found two striking anomalies: an exemplar that was not used in the discourse and a false exemplar that was repeated as true.

The Millennium Bomber: Ahmed Ressam

Essentially an independent cell for Al-Qaeda, Algerian Ahmed Ressam planned to attack the Los Angeles International Airport on the eve of the millennium, 1999. After a failed bid for asylum in Canada in 1994, and an unexecuted deportation order, he engaged in minor criminality in Montreal until a trip to Afghanistan for training in 1998. Ressam obtained a fraudulent Canada passport using a forged baptismal certificate and a university identity card under the name Benni Norris and flew to the West Coast to launch his attack in December 1999. With a rented van, he used a ferry to cross from Victoria, British Columbia to Port Angeles, Washington where he was interdicted by Customs and Border Patrol. He later cooperated with American authorities to reveal that there were Al-Qaeda sleeper cells in the United States and giving evidence later used in post-11 September 2001 judicial proceedings and military tribunals. While the Canadian authorities had Ressam under surveillance, and could track him to the West Coast, they did not (or could not) provide specific intelligence on his intentions or identity to the American authorities. The border guard who stopped Ressam thought that he was smuggling drugs, rather than the nitroglycerin and timers that were eventually found in his vehicle. The case of Ressam vividly illustrates three weaknesses of US-Canada border security: the reliance and vulnerability of passports and other identity documents, the difficulties in international inter-agency communications, and the sheer difficulty of providing border security. Ressam passed a primary pre-clearance inspection before boarding the ferry because his fraudulently-obtained passport was authentic, and the pseudonym could not be connected to his outstanding arrest warrants in Canada.

A number of policy changes and new technologies have been adopted to prevent a repetition of the Ressam profile. Passport Canada eliminated baptismal certificates as a possible breeder document for an application, and, briefly, increased the rigor of its verification procedures by phoning the guarantors of the applicant. The US also advocated for the use of facial biometrics to be embedded within passports and the collection of fingerprints and digital photographs of all entrants to the US through the NSEERS and subsequently US-VISIT program. It should be noted, however, that the specific vulnerability of the Canadian passport that the Ressam case identifies has been complicated by recent policy. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) now requires all Canadian citizens to hold a valid passport for their entry into the United States, but Canadian citizens are exempt from biometric registration in the US-VISIT program. There is an exception, dual nationals or Canadians born abroad must still register. As the WHTI was rolled out, particularly for air travel to the United States, Passport Canada faced increasing delays due to the new rigorous application process,

causing a political furor. The agency changed its procedures to cope with the new American requirements. The unilateral WHTI precisely misses the lessons of the Ressam case – it privileges the passport as the primary document of security, even though passport application or security procedures have not radically changed since the Ressam case. In other words, what *should* be an exemplar of the dangers of relying on a passport for the identification of risks is not an exemplar within the policy community.

While, as will be discussed below, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 remain a persistent point of reference for the speakers included in this research, it is surprising that, with only one exception, there is no mention of the Millennium Bomber, Ahmed Ressam. Whereas this case could actually be used to illustrate the argument that the US-Canada border might be used as a point of entry for terrorists attempting to gain access to the United States, it remains nearly entirely absent from the discourse studied here. The only exception occurs during a hearing on June 9, 2005, when Secretary Chertoff responds directly to a specific question regarding the incident and what it means for border security between Canada and the United States. Chertoff discusses the case as an isolated incident, arguing further that such an event can only be prevented outside policy and protocol with what he calls the “intuition” of the border patrol agents. In this statement, the Ressam case is not related back to the continuously discussed current threat of terrorism and is disassociated from the larger security context. The event that is capable of drawing a tangible link between the threat of terrorist attack on the United States and the US-Canada border has forgotten in the security discourse examined here.

11 September 2001 and the Ontario-Vermont Border

The second exemplar is used more in public and political circles, and completely refuted within the professional field. The canard of the Ontario-Vermont border crossers must strongly suggest to analysts that it is insufficient to consider the public discourse without reference to the professional field of experts. Terrorists responsible for the 11 September 2001 attack did not cross the US-Canada border. The province of Ontario and the state of Vermont do not share a land border. However, both of these stories have been circulated in the American House of Representatives and the American public media. These two fictitious breeches reinforce a common perception that the Northern border is leaky.

With regards to the threat of terrorism as discussed in the discourse analyzed here, the events to which the speakers most often make reference are the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. There is no explicit link between those attacks and the US-Canada border. Those terrorists did not gain access to the United States due to any failures at the US-Canada border. Furthermore, at no point do any of the speakers included in this research attempt to justify the link between 11 September 2001 and the border in question. This means that the events of that day are presumed to be relevant to the US-Canada border. The speakers do not challenge each other’s references to these events, nor do they attempt to illustrate the logic that has brought them to consider the US-Canada border a key front in the war on terror.

Not only are the events of 11 September 2001 referred to in an attempt to securitize the US-Canada border, the date has become a marker for the birth of a new security era. As discussed above, these terrorist attacks are not viewed as an isolated occurrence, but rather as indicative of the shape of future threats to American and global security. These two anomalous exemplars suggest very strongly that discourse analysis must be actor-driven, because the reference points in the field of experts may be unexpected.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that the Copenhagen School's securitization theory is insufficient to understanding the process by which the US-Canada border is increasingly becoming considered a matter of security. We maintain that a more comprehensive approach to this process that takes into account not a singular speaker-audience interaction, but rather the discursive activities of a multitude of actors in varying settings will offer a more accurate perspective of securitization. Through a combination of official discourse analysis with participant observations of meetings with experts in the field, we have found two major inconsistencies that reveal that the securitization of the US-Canada border is occurring in a manner that is much more complex than the simple speech-act-performance – audience-acceptance model. The first important inconsistency is that of the relationship between truth and discourse. We have found that the statements contain language and arguments, both explicit and implicit, that do not correspond to the realities of the political and historical contexts in which they occur. The second notable finding is that the official discourses differ greatly from the language and priorities of those who are involved in the exercises of security on the ground. While official discourses prioritize the threat of terrorism above all others, those in the field are concerned with the quotidian practices and policing. Our findings point to an understanding of the securitization process that focuses on multiple speakers in diverse settings adopting different discursive tools and addressing various audiences in an attempt to guide the issue in question further into or out of the realm of security. While the discourses explored here all contribute to the perpetuation of the expanding security agenda surrounding the US-Canada border, it is important to recognize there are variations in the methods by which this activity is exercised depending on speakers and contexts.

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