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Security Studies: The Homeland Adapts

Stanley Supinski

If there is any advantage to being at war, it is that it creates conditions for exploring new knowledge and gathering disparate players around the flagpole for support.¹ The war and political environment instigated by the events that occurred on Sept 11, 2001 created just such conditions, and academia immediately realized it had an important educational role to fulfill. It was clear from the outset that the nation's capacity to address the overwhelming challenges required for homeland security and defense needed to be significantly bolstered. There were academic programs at the time that focused on terrorism, emergency management, and other related disciplines, but none called "homeland security," and certainly none that covered the wide range of knowledge required. Academia and government joined forces to resolve this intellectual and personnel deficiency and during the past decade homeland security education and research have expanded at a phenomenal rate.

There was historical precedent for leveraging academia to support national needs. During World War II, the scramble to develop an atomic weapon led the government to undertake the Manhattan project, an intellectual and scientific enterprise. Though led by the federal government, academia took on a key role in conducting scientific research and development; their role in this process cannot be understated and the effects were far reaching. Just as significant was academia's part in the Cold War. Education programs aimed directly at supporting that conflict, including those in national security affairs, Eastern European/Soviet area studies, political science, and international relations, flourished nationwide. Academic programs that served to support the war indirectly, such as engineering and basic sciences that built the expertise needed for technological research and development, also expanded. The federal government bolstered these programs with dramatic increases in funding

through the National Science Foundation and other means.² The Cold War was responsible for an unprecedented growth of academic programs supporting national priorities "both in its material manifestations and through the ideological atmosphere that it was responsible for creating."³

The decade since 9/11 has seen a similar response. The federal government and its national security prerogatives helped drive academic priorities, and academia showed that it could rapidly adapt to national needs. The combination of federal support, adaptability, and the intellectual resources that academia provides have resulted in what many view as a new academic discipline.

A NEW REQUIREMENT – KNOWLEDGEABLE HOMELAND SECURITY PROFESSIONALS

The period immediately following 9/11 saw the enactment of hundreds of statutes and regulations, substantial changes in policy initiatives, the most massive governmental reorganization since 1947, and brought the new business of homeland security to the fore of American consciousness. This new mission set and political environment mandated personnel with an entirely new collection of competencies and knowledge. The new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) required expertise to meld its twenty-two formerly independent agencies into a functional organization. Every federal department assumed new responsibilities; each of the 87,000 government jurisdictions and their entities added homeland security to their mission set; and most major corporations established homeland security offices, all requiring personnel that understood the new way of doing business. Shortly after 9/11, Lee Hamilton, director of the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, testifying before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs recognized that:

The maintenance of American power in the world depends on the quality of US government personnel, civil and military, at all levels...The US faces a broader range of national security challenges today, requiring policy analysts and intelligence personnel with expertise in more countries, regions and issues...we must take immediate action in the personnel area to ensure that the United States can meet future challenges.⁴

The immediacy of this need made this challenge particularly daunting. Government, academia, and others involved in homeland security did not wait idly by for direction from a coordinating authority to dictate what their programs should look like. In true free enterprise fashion, a wide range of initiatives and approaches were undertaken to address the various aspects of the shortfall, including training, education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and various forms of research and technological development. While the effectiveness of the effort to develop homeland security education and training cannot be denied, the lack of a coordinating body, and the inherent breadth of what homeland security entails, has resulted in great inconsistency.

DEVELOPMENT OF AND INFLUENCES ON THE HOMELAND SECURITY “DISCIPLINE”

The fact that programs do not look alike is not surprising, nor is it necessarily a negative reflection on the homeland security academic community. Various influences have shaped what homeland security education looks like today; government led initiatives, faculty expertise (or lack thereof), and administrative groups have had influence over what and how higher institutions teach.

One example of a government led initiative has been the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) at the Naval Postgraduate School, which publishes *Homeland Security Affairs*. CHDS was established in 2002 through a partnership between the Department of Justice, Congress, and the Navy and its sponsorship moved to the new Department of Homeland Security in 2003. This partnership led to the

development of the nation’s first graduate Homeland Security master’s degree program, and other programs emphasizing policy and strategy have used the CHDS curriculum. Additionally, the Center was tasked to use its government funding to assist other academic institutions, at no cost to the institutions, to develop homeland security programs around the country by sharing curriculum advice and course materials.

The Homeland Security/Defense Education Consortium (HSDEC) is an example of an administrative group created to influence homeland security education. In an effort to establish curricular standards, support program development, and provide prospective students with an additional program selection data point, the HSDEC was established by US Northern Command in 2003. The organization morphed into the Homeland Security/Defense Education Consortium Association (HSDECA) and acquired independent, non-profit status in 2007.

A more recent government influence on the shape of homeland security education has come from the Transportation Security Administration’s Associates Program. The goal of the program is to generally increase the level of education for TSA personnel, and in particular provide them core homeland security knowledge. At program rollout in the Fall of 2010, the courses were being delivered by twenty-five community colleges in twenty-two states, almost all of which also offered them to their other student populations, especially those in law enforcement, fire science, and related programs. With the expected expansion of the program to all fifty states by the fall of this year, the TSA-driven and funded curriculum will have increased influence at the community college level.

When institutions decide to establish a program, they normally root them in an existing discipline, which offers a pool of potential faculty members and an existing constituency of students and after graduation employers. The majority of homeland security programs in existence today are linked to three primary content areas: public administration, emergency management, or criminal justice. However the breadth of the topic has also led to programs in departments of political science, history, psychology,

public health, law, and many others. For example, The University of Southern California's homeland security certificate is offered within their school of engineering and is influenced by their well-established aerospace program. Penn State's homeland security master's degree is offered within their School of Public Health. With such a disparity of influence, shaped by the unique approach taken by the hundreds of colleges and universities that have zealously pursued developing homeland security related programs, what these programs look like varies significantly across institutions.

In many cases, academic institutions have built these programs for altruistic reasons, but market demands have also exerted a powerful influence. Institutions want to be on the cutting edge of education and support the needs of the job market, but they are also lured by the prospect of high volumes of paying students. The rush to take advantage of the demand has resulted in wide variations in program quality and curriculum, with courses, often taught by faculty with little or no direct professional experience or background. This is also reflected in how programs have been initiated: right after 9/11, most were started bottom-up by individual or groups of faculty members interested in the subject; but as the discipline has evolved, institution administrations have seen the value and program establishment is now more often directed from the top.

So, after ten years, is there a homeland security academic discipline or is it just a collection of components from others? The debate still rages, but considering that it is a branch of knowledge which is taught or researched at over 300 institutions of higher learning, that it is defined by recognized academic journals devoted to the subject, and that there are learned societies and academic departments to which their practitioners belong, it is well on the way. The fact that several schools will be offering doctoral level homeland security programs beginning later this year, including Ole Miss and New Jersey City University, is further testament.

Additionally, although there is no agreement on a standard curriculum or what should or should not be included, ten years after 9/11 a general picture can be drawn. This basic framework, determined by

homeland security academics,⁵ consists of: current and emerging threats; context and organizations involved; policies, strategies, and legal issues; and processes and management. While this is a pretty generic list, it is the only way to provide an overall summary of what homeland security education looks like. However, this general outline does define the discipline's content, and it affords the flexibility demanded of this very diverse field of study.

FUTURE CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSION

While many in academia believed that homeland security education, and in fact the term homeland security itself, would be fleeting, the community that has been built is a testament to its value, and there is little doubt that it is here to stay. Nevertheless, making this community a permanent and respected part of the educational and research and development landscape will require more work.

First and foremost, there needs to be agreement on what specific knowledge parameters come with the term "homeland security professional." Despite the various existing influences on the topic, a commonly agreed to core will ensure consistency. Second, a broadly accepted validation authority, in the form of a member run accreditation association, should play a significant role in furthering the discipline. Unless standards are regulated to some degree, inconsistency and examples of poor quality are inevitable. Finally, closely related to the first two issues, is the need to develop a cadre of qualified faculty and researchers. The development of research PhD programs in homeland security, already begun, should address this issue in the long term.

The final question is just how much of a role should government have in the march toward a discipline? Government programs and legislation will always serve to sway the direction academia takes. The shift after Hurricane Katrina from an almost exclusive focus on terror to all hazards was certainly reflected in academic programs. However, shaping academic efforts should not go any further: government's role is to nurture, not to prescribe. We have gone in many

directions as we have developed our programs, and those directions are marked with both successes and failures. But the independence and autonomy of the universities, and those working within all settings of higher learning, must be maintained. Decisions regarding curricular content and assessments of academic excellence must come from within these institutions and from the accreditation procedures and bodies they construct.⁶ As our profession of homeland security continues to evolve, these bodies must become more active participants in the standard setting process.

The team effort by government and academia has contributed to developing the knowledge and resource base needed to handle all-hazards homeland security, but educating a workforce and populace is a long-term process. Our terrorist adversaries have shown they have the patience to make this a long-term struggle, and the number of natural hazards we have to contend with continues to climb. Only education can ensure we have the fundamental skills and knowledge needed to minimize loss of life

and property and handle the long-term threat most effectively. The academic community capitalized on the sense of urgency created by 9/11; maintaining the momentum is an enduring challenge. However, it is a challenge we as a nation must meet. The Honorable Paul McHale, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense, clearly recognized the value of educating society and the importance of it to our current effort when he stated: “Terrorism will be defeated by intellect, not dogma.”⁷

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stan Supinski, PhD, is the director of partnership programs and a faculty member for the Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, and an associate professor at the Long Island University, Homeland Security Management Institute. He founded and formerly directed the Homeland Security/Defense Education Consortium on behalf of NORAD/US Northern Command.

¹ R.C. Lewontin, “The Cold War and the Transformation of the Academy,” in *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, Noam Chomsky, ed. (New York: New Press, 1997), 1-24

² The budgets for colleges and universities increased twenty-fold, in constant dollars, from 1946 to 1991.

³ Lewontin, “The Cold War and the Transformation of the Academy,” 2.

⁴ L. Hamilton, *Critical Skills for National Security and the Homeland Security Federal Workforce Act* (s.1800), Congressional Testimony 32Y4136771038 (Washington DC: FDCH, 2002).

⁵ Two meetings were held by homeland security educators to determine what topics constitute a quality homeland security academic program. The first, looking at graduate level programs, was held at US Northern Command Headquarters in Colorado Springs in Aug 2005. The second, looking at the undergraduate level, was held at the Naval Postgraduate School in June 2009. Each meeting consisted of twenty-five scholars, and the full results of these efforts can be found at www.uapi.us.

⁶ Thomas E. Drabek, “Emergency Management and Homeland Security Curricula: Context, Cultures, and Constraints,” *Journal of Emergency Management* 4, no. 5 (2009): 33-42.

⁷ Mr. McHale’s address to a meeting of the Homeland Security/Defense Education Consortium held at the Uniformed Services University for the Health Sciences, November 2004.



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