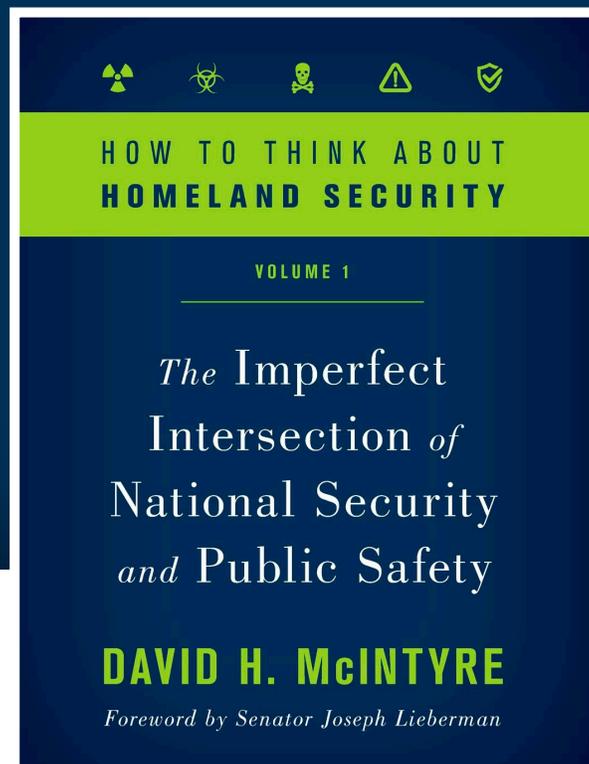# Book Review:
How to Think About Homeland Security: The Imperfect Intersection of National Security and Public Safety
by David H. McIntyre

Reviewed by Caleb S. Cage

HOW TO THINK ABOUT
HOMELAND SECURITY

VOLUME 1

The Imperfect
Intersection *of*
National Security
and Public Safety

DAVID H. McINTYRE

Foreword by Senator Joseph Lieberman

Suggested Citation

Since its relatively recent establishment, homeland security as an organizing concept for government services has received its share of criticism and scrutiny. In the United States, the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security as a cabinet-level agency following the 9/11 attacks has attracted confusion over its specific mission, derision due to the challenges associated with coordinating disparate subordinate agencies, and political attacks due to real or perceived mismanagement of responses to emergencies, disasters, or other crises. As practiced globally, variations of the concept of homeland security have also struggled at times and in some respects because of a lack of clear and agreed-upon definitions of the practices, doctrine, mission, and nature of a professional field that is at times law enforcement and at other times community redevelopment.

David H. McIntyre attempts to address this problem head-on in his book *How to Think About Homeland Security: The Imperfect Intersection of National Security and Public Safety*. If McIntyre intends to be provocative in his title by daring professionals to consider that they do not in fact know how to think about their field, his subtitle promises these same readers that the author will provide an informed exploration of the central quandary facing homeland security. Understanding this quandary is key to learning how to think about the field, he explains:

> Understanding public safety, homeland security, national security, and most other aspects of politics and government requires us to understand how we think. And that requires us to come to grips with two opposing concepts of knowledge. The first is that we know things through experience. The second is that we know what we know through a process of creating and testing theories. Many (perhaps most) of us hold both of these approaches in our heads at the same time. And therein lies a conflict at the heart of homeland security and its struggle to be established, respected, and implemented today. (37)

In order to explore these challenges, *How to Think About Homeland Security* provides a series of relevant and connected essays on the various aspects of McIntyre's subject matter. These essays are arranged in four sections, with each essay serving as a stand-alone argument. Each section provides an additional brick in the foundation of the concept of homeland security as the author understands it. In these essays, McIntyre lays out a vision of a coherent homeland-security field that has evolved to meet a fluid set of threats after being created in an *ad hoc* fashion in response to a series of attacks on the nation.

In building a foundation for homeland security, McIntyre begins at the most basic level. The first section provides brief essays that answer the questions posed in their respective titles: What is a nation? What is Security? And what is National Security? McIntyre follows these chapters with

foundational essays on the various philosophical approaches to security and on human nature, and he also introduces what he believes to be the core tension in the homeland security field: the fact that national-security professionals begin with an academic, theoretical approach while public-safety professionals begin from operational experience.

In the essays comprising the next section, McIntyre fleshes out the national-security side of the homeland-security equation. He explores the foundations of national-security strategy, both in the abstract and as applied to the current threat environment. He also explores how past strategies have been influenced by doctrine and structures at the highest level of government. Although each chapter remains distinct and pursues a limited explanatory objective, this section manages to incorporate effectively the foundational concepts and philosophies from the first section, allowing for the totality of McIntyre's argument to unfold clearly.

Against the backdrop of these opening sections on nationhood and national security, both of which benefit from centuries of academic study, debate, and practice, McIntyre pivots to the other half of the conflict at the heart of homeland security: the equal influence public-safety concepts have had in its founding. In these essays, he argues that homeland security was established as an important innovation to address such concerns as terrorism and other issues within America's borders, but that the innovation was built with three inherent challenges. First, it relies on a public-safety system that is already stretched thin meeting the normal needs of its jurisdictions. Secondly, public-safety agencies of various disciplines and levels of government approach homeland security issues from very different perspectives. Finally, homeland security lacks the unifying theoretical structure from which national-security fields benefit. Establishing these inherent challenges within the homeland-security concept and field, McIntyre concludes his book by offering the basis for the way ahead, which is, not surprisingly, based on his foregoing analysis of how homeland-security practitioners should think about their field.

If *How to Think About Homeland Security* has any shortcomings, they are due to the complex contradiction that McIntyre identifies as being at the heart of homeland security itself. That is to say, students of homeland security, the presumed audience of this book, are likely to have experience in national security, public safety, or both, and thus such a foundational approach may seem a bit elementary to them at times. Further, because so much time is spent in the early essays of this book covering foundational principles of nationhood and national security, readers have to wait until late in the book to begin delving into the question of how they should actually think about the operational foundations of their profession in the book's last few essays. While this may not seem like enough for a reader truly wanting to learn how to think about homeland security, McIntyre makes clear that this book is only one in a series, and indeed, the second volume is already available as well.

David McIntyre does important work in *How to Think About Homeland Security*. He offers important theoretical frameworks, historical background, and central challenges to practitioners of homeland security, and he does so in a way that is both laudatory and critical where appropriate. Homeland security as an organizing concept for government services likely still has difficult challenges ahead in proving and maintaining its coherence and credibility, but books like this will go a long way toward identifying and addressing the challenges that homeland security practitioners face.

About the Author

Caleb S. Cage *served as the Chief of the Nevada Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Advisor to the Governor from 2015 to 2019. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School. His latest book is _War Narratives: Shaping Beliefs, Blurring Truths in the Middle East. He can be reached at* caleb.cage@gmail.com.

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