James Ramsay reflects on the impact of John Mueller and Mark Stewart's 2011 HSAJ article, "Balancing the Risks, Benefits, and Costs of Homeland Security" on the development of Homeland Security as a field.

By James Ramsay

Over the past 20 years, "homeland security" (HLS) has evolved in countless ways; as a term of art, as a profession, as policy, as law, and as an academic discipline. Since 2005, higher education has added over 300 undergraduate programs as well as dozens of graduate and doctoral degrees, several annual conferences, and journals focused on application, theory and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

HLS is a complex, dynamic and value-laden construct, and a discipline focused on wicked problems. It's not surprising that both public and private sector agencies/organizations vary in their approach, performance metrics and skill in managing homeland/national security threats.

As I perused the *Homeland Security Affairs* Journal archives, I was impressed with the breadth of published scholarship about this emergent discipline and I recalled an article that remains a powerful observation about not only how homeland security has tended to operate, but as it will likely continue to operate. "Balancing the Risks, Benefits, and Costs of Homeland Security" by John Mueller and Mark Stewart (vol 7 article 16, 2011) deftly describes the economic reality of HLS as a risk-based enterprise, and fully captures the inherent tension when a society has competing needs, political motivations, and limited resources. Not only does the article neatly describe how economic decisions should be risk-based to best mitigate risk and equitably distribute social resources and optimize social justice and equity, but it also points out the consequences to society when decisions are based on political or other dubious types of rationale. For example, using allocations to counter-terrorism programs, the authors lay out the consequences when risk is overstated in order to "stoke fear"; that is, lives are lost, money wasted, risk is not mitigated, and opportunities to advance public health and security are forgone.

In the nearly 10 years since this article was published, I find its embedded observations and insights into HLS operations, strategies, and policy to remain relevant and powerful. Political motivations still muddle HLS decision making, infusing social justice into national security strategy remains incomplete, and security policy appears influenced by factors other than robust risk-based methodologies. Mueller and Stewart's article reminds us that we live in a world of finite resources, and as we struggle with wicked security threats such as pandemics, climate change, and glaring human insecurities world-wide, we have a moral imperative to allocate limited resources according to science-based risk methodologies to do the most good.

About the Author

James Ramsay has over twenty years of experience in public health, security studies, emergency management and occupational safety, and environmental health education. Currently he is a professor of security studies at the University of New Hampshire, where he is also the Founding Coordinator of the homeland security program and Founding Chair of the Department of Security Studies. Dr. Ramsay teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on environmental & human security; strategic planning and decision-making; emergency management; exercise design and evaluation; terrorism and intelligence. He also directs the internship program and the senior capstone consulting course. Dr. Ramsay also serves as the Editor in Chief for the *Journal of Homeland Security* and *Emergency Management*, on the Board for the International Association of Intelligence Education, the Academic Institutions Committee of the U.S. DHS Homeland Security Advisory Council and is the Vice President of the New Hampshire InfraGard Chapter. Dr. Ramsay's research areas include the relationship between climate security and homeland & national security, and wicked problems in intelligence. Textbooks include the *Introduction to Homeland Security, Critical Issues Within the Homeland Security Enterprise: A Casebook* and *Theoretical Foundations of Homeland Security: Strategies, Operations and Structures* all published by Routledge and *Foundations of Environmental Security: Concepts, Challenges and Case Studies* published by the American Meteorological Society. Dr. Ramsay was inducted as a Fellow in The American Society of Safety Professionals in 2019 and is the recipient of the inaugural Dave McIntyre Award for Homeland Security Education and Research in 2020 from the University Agency Partnership Program. He has previously served on the Board of Scientific Counselors to the Director of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health in the CDC and was the Founding President of the International Society for Preparedness, Resilience and Security. He may be reached at james.ramsay@unh.edu.

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