

Steve Recca reflects on the impact of Chris Bellavita's 2008 HSAJ article, "Changing Homeland Security: What is Homeland Security."

By Steve Recca

Thinking about how we choose a *Homeland Security Affairs* article that made an *important contribution* to the field of homeland security, perhaps we might ask ourselves what constitutes importance. Certainly, by the nature and mission of the journal, authors have pushed the boundaries of knowledge; potholes in our understanding of homeland security have been filled, excavated, and re-filled; controversial ideas have been introduced and either settled, adapted, or discarded through inquiry and challenge. New policies have been driven by the thinking and writing in this forum. So, in context, the importance of an article's contribution might well refer to the legacy the author leaves for us. If so, arguably the most *significant* – in terms of application – and *enduring* – including continued relevance to the homeland security education enterprise – comes from Chris Bellavita's 2008 effort to address "What is Homeland Security?"

Spoiler alert: The author did not answer the question, at least directly. Rather, the article tackled something both more difficult and useful by bounding the question in ways that allowed the policy, practitioner, and academic communities to explore temporal interpretations of what we *do* in our homeland security space. Chris framed the definition of homeland security not as one-and-done, but as seven reasonable interpretations that made us think more generously about the melting pot of security cultures and issues that emerged following 9/11. He posed some important questions:

Seven years later — almost — is the homeland security environment any less uncertain? Are we any clearer than we were on September 12, 2001 about what homeland security is? Why is there still disagreement, even if only semantic, about what homeland security means?¹

We are now 20 years later — almost. The essential questions Chris asked then echo today and provide fertile ground for the natural evolution of how we think about and do homeland security, while providing a forcing function to avoid the complacency that often comes with certainty. For a bit of proof of the enduring value: the article remains a foundational requirement in many (most) graduate and undergraduate homeland security and emergency management programs. The next generation of homeland security practitioners and scholars will bring the rich thinking and active questioning with them to address the next wicked problems on the long road ahead.

About the Author

Steve Recca directs the University and Agency Partnership Program for the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Center for Homeland Defense and Security, and concurrently serves as the Humanitarian Assistance Program Advisor with the Pacific Disaster Center. Steve's previous positions include security policy assignments with the Central Intelligence Agency, State Department, Department of Defense, and in academia. He teaches Intelligence, Homeland Security, and Human Security courses at the University of Denver, University of Colorado, and University of Alaska, and is a Trustee for Marian University. Steve also is on the Review Boards for three additional peer-reviewed journals: *Homeland Security Affairs*, *Journal of Climate Security and Resilience*, and the *Journal of Security, Intelligence, and Resilience Education*. He may be reached at sprecca@nps.edu.

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1. Chris Bellavita, "Changing Homeland Security: What is Homeland Security?" *Homeland Security Affairs* 4, Article 1 (June 2008). <https://www.hsaj.org/articles/118>.
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