

May 2021

## Security Concerns vs. Monied Interests?: The Role of Agenda Setting in Homeland Security

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### Recommended Citation

Ziegler, Andrew Christopher (2021) "Security Concerns vs. Monied Interests?: The Role of Agenda Setting in Homeland Security," *Hatfield Graduate Journal of Public Affairs*: Vol. 5: Iss. 1, Article 7.  
<https://doi.org/10.15760/hgjpa.2021.5.1.7>

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# **Security Concerns vs. Monied Interests?:**

## *The Role of Agenda Setting in Homeland Security*

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*This paper applies public policy concepts such as agenda setting, resource allocation, lobbying, and campaign rhetoric to the field of homeland security. The analysis examines the allocation of resources among the U.S. federal government's five broad homeland security priorities during the fiscal years of 2012-2017. An overemphasis on border security has led to a disproportionate allocation of resources among these various priorities. The uneven distribution is the summation of electoral ambitions, campaign contributions, and corporate lobbying. This analysis highlights the negative consequences that are a direct result of an unbalanced allotment, cumulating in a slow and uncoordinated federal response to both the COVID-19 pandemic and a series of domestic terrorist attacks. The article concludes with a series of reforms that can be implemented by policy makers in order to ensure that resources are distributed more evenly in the future.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Since 9/11, America's homeland security priorities have shifted dramatically. The Cold War era mentality was replaced, and the policy agenda shifted towards combating a broader range of both man-made and naturally occurring threats.<sup>1</sup> The term homeland security became the phrase used to describe government activities that did not fit within the pre-existing models of traditional law enforcement, national security, and emergency management. Almost immediately after the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, the funding for border security doubled.<sup>2</sup> Over the past two decades, border security has become the paramount homeland

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Dombrowski and Simon Reich, "Does Donald Trump have a grand strategy?," *International Affairs*. 93, no. 5 (September 2017): 1016 and 1017, <http://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix161>.

<sup>2</sup> Dombrowski and Reich, "Does Donald," 1023 and 1024.

security issue in regard to agenda setting. Agenda setting is the ability to influence which policy problems will be addressed by the government.<sup>3</sup> In addition, agenda setting determines when these policy problems will be addressed and the level of resources that will be allocated towards addressing them.

Agenda setting affects all aspects of public policy, including homeland security. The policy agenda is set based on a variety of factors. The most obvious factor is that specific policies may be addressed with varying levels of urgency depending on present circumstances. For example, infrastructure protection became a top priority after the 9/11 attacks in 2001 while response planning came into vogue after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and then again after Hurricane Sandy in 2012.<sup>4</sup> However, there are a number of less obvious factors which also determine the policy agenda, such as political rhetoric, corporate lobbying, and campaign donations. Such factors are not dependent upon the current circumstances and are usually the result of long-term trends, such as the growth of the private security industry and the prevailing policy assumptions held by elected officials. As described throughout this analysis, numerous government agencies as well as private corporations and advocacy groups all have a vested interest in setting the policy agenda.<sup>5</sup>

During the past twenty years, the U.S. government has redirected more funding, equipment, and personnel towards border security, at the expense of other homeland security priorities. This is because of two factors. First, political leaders have focused more on border issues without devoting an equal amount of attention towards other homeland security missions. Second, the lobbying power of private security contractors (PSCs) is used to shift the focus towards border security in order to secure lucrative government contracts.

This paper examines the uneven allocation of resources between the U.S. federal government's five homeland security priorities. In order to do so, three interconnected aspects will be analyzed: what is the uneven distribution, what is

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<sup>3</sup> Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*, new edition ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 6, [https://rider.instructure.com/courses/42546/files/2360548?module\\_item\\_id=659608](https://rider.instructure.com/courses/42546/files/2360548?module_item_id=659608).

<sup>4</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland Security Funding Analysis*, 349 and 351, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BUDGET-2017-PER/pdf/BUDGET-2017-PER-6-8.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*, new edition ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 3, [https://rider.instructure.com/courses/42546/files/2360548?module\\_item\\_id=659608](https://rider.instructure.com/courses/42546/files/2360548?module_item_id=659608).

causing the uneven distribution, and what are the consequences of the uneven distribution. This analysis combines scholarship in security studies with reports from homeland security practitioners and advocates. The federal government's slow and uncoordinated response to both the COVID-19 pandemic and a series of domestic terrorist attacks represent tragedies that have occurred. These tragedies are a direct result of policy makers focusing too much of their attention on one particular sub-problem of homeland security to the exclusion of the others.

### UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION – METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Based on a government report detailing the fiscal years 2012-2017, the U.S. federal government spent the following on five broad categories of homeland security related activities.

The first category is Border and Transportation Security, which is focused on enforcing immigration laws as well as preventing the smuggling of illegal drugs, weapons, and currency across international boundaries.<sup>6</sup> This classification involves providing physical security at ports of entry, processing immigration requests, conducting customs inspections, and patrolling the country's land and maritime borders.<sup>7</sup> The budget breakdown is \$25.5 billion from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), plus \$4.4 billion from the Department of State (DOS), which equals \$29.9 billion in total.<sup>8</sup>

The second category is Detecting and Countering the Threat of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Weapons, which is focused on developing countermeasures for these types of threats.<sup>9</sup> These activities include manufacturing detection equipment, overseeing decontamination efforts, intergovernmental coordination activities (such as standardized training programs), and related medical research.<sup>10</sup> The budget breakdown is \$2.9 billion from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), plus \$2.1 billion from the Department of Defense (DOD), plus \$1.2 billion from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which equals \$6.2 billion in total.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland Security Funding Analysis*, 348, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BUDGET-2017-PER/pdf/BUDGET-2017-PER-6-8.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 348.

<sup>8</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 348.

<sup>9</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 348 and 349.

<sup>10</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 348 and 349.

<sup>11</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 348.

The third category is Domestic Counterterrorism, which is focused on preventing terrorists and violent extremists from operating within U.S. territory.<sup>12</sup> Counterterrorism activities include intelligence gathering and analysis, related law enforcement operations, intergovernmental coordination activities (such as standardized training programs), and preventive measures (such as community outreach programs).<sup>13</sup> The budget breakdown is \$3.4 billion from the Department of Justice (DOJ), plus \$2.2 billion from both the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which equals \$5.6 billion in total.<sup>14</sup>

The fourth category is Infrastructure Protection Activities, which is focused on protecting both public and private resources that are of critical importance to the government and/or the economy.<sup>15</sup> Protection activities include food and water security, physical infrastructure security (such as bridges, tunnels, and mass transit), energy security, and cyber security.<sup>16</sup> The budget breakdown is \$10.3 billion from the Department of Defense (DOD), plus \$5.6 billion from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which equals \$15.9 billion in total.<sup>17</sup>

The fifth category is Preparedness for Catastrophic Natural and Man-Made Disasters, which is focused on training for and responding to emergency situations, which can include terrorist attacks, industrial accidents, extreme atmospheric or geological phenomena, and public health crises.<sup>18</sup> Preparedness activities include intergovernmental preventive measures (such as standardized training programs), public health security (such as combating infectious diseases), search and rescue operations, and the distribution of emergency supplies and equipment.<sup>19</sup> The budget breakdown is \$2.2 billion from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), plus \$1.9 billion from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), plus \$1.1 billion from the Department of Defense (DOD), which equals \$5.2 billion in total.<sup>20</sup>

Based on the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) summary (2020), the government spent over twice as much on Border and Transportation Security than

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<sup>12</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 348.

<sup>13</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 348.

<sup>14</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 348.

<sup>15</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 348.

<sup>16</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 349.

<sup>17</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 349.

<sup>18</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 349.

<sup>19</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 349.

<sup>20</sup> The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 22. *Homeland*, 349.

it spent on the other four categories (Figure 1). This amounts to 48% of all the homeland security expenditures (Figure 2).

Homeland Security Categories	U.S. Federal Government Spending (Billion Dollars)
Border and Transportation Security	\$29.9
Detecting and Countering the Threat of CBRN Weapons	\$6.2
Domestic Counterterrorism	\$5.6
Infrastructure Protection Activities	\$15.9
Preparedness for Catastrophic Natural and Man-Made Disasters	\$5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$62.8</b>

Figure 1: Broad Categories of U.S. Federal Government Homeland Security Spending (2012-2017) | Source: The Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

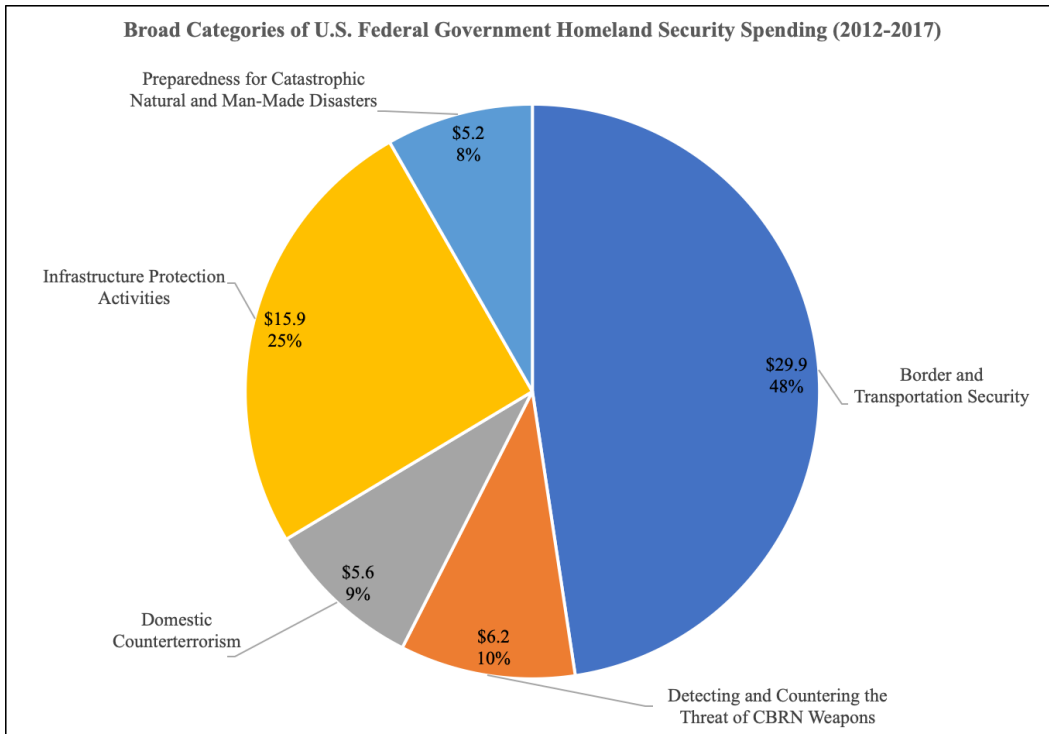


Figure 2: Broad Categories of U.S. Federal Government Homeland Security Spending (2012-2017) | Source: The Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

It is important to understand that these statistics are not just dollar amounts written in a government report; these dollar amounts have a direct impact on the ability of a governmental agency to do its job effectively. Agencies with larger budgets can hire and train more personnel, purchase new equipment, and expand their mission capabilities.

According to Figure 3 in Appendix 1, which is from a report from the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), the budget for the U.S. the Border Patrol has increased significantly since the year 2000 (Figure 3). The budget increased from \$1.06 billion in 2000 to \$3.8 billion in 2015. According to Figure 4 in Appendix 2, which is from an academic journal article by Bohn and Pugatch (2015), the number of Border Patrol agents has also increased significantly since the year 2000 (Figure 4). These figures demonstrate that as the budget increases, so does the level of personnel. In 2012, the Border Patrol included in excess of 21,000 agents.<sup>21</sup>

In a policy problem such as homeland security, there are a number of unconnected sub-problems placed under a large umbrella. It is important for policy makers to not focus on one particular sub-problem to the exclusion of the others. For example, sub-problems such as border security, disaster preparedness, health security, domestic counterterrorism, and cyber security are each very distinct policy issues. Given the diverse range of homeland security priorities, and the need to have adequate resources and distinctly trained personnel to combat each of them effectively, we would expect the dollar amounts to be divided among the five categories based on need. However, there is an uneven distribution of monetary resources among the five homeland security priorities.

## CAUSES BEHIND THE UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELAND SECURITY PRIORITIES

The uneven distribution is the result of two factors. The first factor causing this uneven distribution is that, over the past twenty years, political leaders have focused more on border issues at the expense of other homeland security missions. President Trump's border security policies were an extension of the border security policies

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<sup>21</sup> James M. Cooper, "The Rise of Private Actors Along the United States-Mexico Border," *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 33, no. 3 (Winter 2015): 483, <https://athena.rider.edu:6443/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=113657684&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

previously implemented by President Bush and President Obama.<sup>22</sup> Increasing the number of border patrol personnel and fortifying border crossings are not new concepts, rather they are a part of a continuing trend. This continuing trend has caused continuity between both political parties, as both Republicans and Democrats frequently promise to support “tough as nails” border security policies.<sup>23</sup>

Political leaders maintain their popularity by convincing voters that their policy proposals will benefit the country.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, since increasing border security is already a proven campaign strategy that will win the support of voters, there is little incentive for political leaders to change their rhetoric on the campaign trail or change the policy agenda once they enter office. In fact, the onus is put on congressional and presidential candidates who favor a more equitable balance between different homeland security priorities, as their opponents will often portray them as being soft on border security. This results in one-upmanship as candidates try to outdo each other in terms of proving how serious they are about border security. One of the most well-known examples of this one-upmanship was during the 2016 presidential primaries, when Republican U.S. Senator Marco Rubio’s stance on border security was heavily criticized by his fellow candidates, forcing him to adopt a new and more aggressive border security platform in an effort to salvage his candidacy.<sup>25</sup> Another high-profile example was during the 2018 mid-term elections, when Democratic U.S. Representative Henry Cuellar argued that private security contractors (PSCs) associated with border security needed to be awarded more government contracts, which would supposedly reduce violent crime and create new jobs within his congressional district.<sup>26</sup> With the exception of border security, current research has yet to discover such bipartisan solidarity within other areas of homeland security policy.

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Dombrowski and Simon Reich, “Does Donald Trump have a grand strategy?,” *International Affairs*. 93, no. 5 (September 2017): 1035, <http://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix161>.

<sup>23</sup> Greg Grandin, “In the border debate, Democrats should abandon dangerous ‘security first’ rhetoric,” *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), December 20, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2018/12/20/border-debate-democrats-should-abandon-dangerous-security-first-rhetoric/>.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Magcamit, “Explaining the Three-Way Linkage Between Populism, Securitization, and Realist Foreign Policies: President Donald Trump and the Pursuit of ‘America First’ Doctrine,” *World Affairs* 180, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0043820017746263>.

<sup>25</sup> Geoff West, “Immigration,” OpenSecrets -- the Center for Responsive Politics, revised July 2018, <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/issues/immigration>.

<sup>26</sup> Todd Miller, *More Than a Wall Corporate Profiteering and the Militarization of US Borders*, ed. Nick Buxton, Niamh Ní Bhriain, and Deborah Eade, 68 and 69, September 2019, <https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/more-than-a-wall-report.pdf>.



The second factor causing this uneven distribution is the lobbying power of PSCs, who have used their influence to shift the focus towards border security, which has allowed them to gain billions of dollars each year in government contracts. Three examples of these profitable government contracts include the following. In 2013, a Senate immigration bill called for surveillance drones to provide 24/7 monitoring of the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>27</sup> A number of PSCs would profit from this bill, as lucrative new contracts would be awarded for the purchase, maintenance, and operation of these drones.<sup>28</sup> In 2014, EFW Inc. was awarded \$145 million to construct watch towers in Arizona along the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>29</sup> Also, in 2014, Elbit Systems Ltd. was awarded a \$145 million contract for surveillance technology.<sup>30</sup>

The reason for such a firestorm of government contracts is the growing amount of influence held by these PSCs, which consists of two parts. The first reason involves employing large numbers of lobbyists, who have advised political leaders to dramatically increase the level of border security. Lobbyists play an important role within agenda setting, as they provide information to political leaders about specific policies.<sup>31</sup> However, it is important to note that the goal of a lobbyist is to convince public officials to re-set the policy agenda in order to benefit a specific corporation or political faction.<sup>32</sup> While the information that lobbyists provide is usually factual, it is also typically slanted to favor the interests of their clients. An example of how this might manifest itself is as follows. A fact mentioned by the lobbyist is that surveillance drones will help reduce smuggling at the border. However, the information that is not mentioned by the lobbyist is that in order pay for more drones, additional money will have to be allocated towards border security, to the detriment of other equally important homeland security

<sup>27</sup> Katharine Peña, "Accountability for Private Security Contractor Drone Operations on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Applying Lessons Learned from the Middle East," *Public Contract Law Journal* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2014): 141, <https://athena.rider.edu:6443/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=102725892&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>28</sup> Peña, "Accountability for Private," 141.

<sup>29</sup> James M. Cooper, "The Rise of Private Actors Along the United States-Mexico Border," *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 33, no. 3 (Winter 2015): 484, <https://athena.rider.edu:6443/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=113657684&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>30</sup> Cooper, "The Rise," 484.

<sup>31</sup> Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*, new edition ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 5 and 6, [https://rider.instructure.com/courses/42546/files/2360548?module\\_item\\_id=659608](https://rider.instructure.com/courses/42546/files/2360548?module_item_id=659608).

<sup>32</sup> Jones and Baumgartner, *The Politics*, 5 and 6.

missions. As described later in this analysis, federal laws restrict the lobbying power held by non-profit advocacy groups, which limits the type of information available to policy makers regarding the subject of homeland security.

Some of the lobbyists employed by PSCs have become key advisors to high-ranking government officials, moving from industry to government.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, several high-ranking government officials have become corporate executives at PSCs, moving from government to industry.<sup>34</sup> This revolving door is reflected in a number of high-profile examples.<sup>35</sup> One example was Robert Bonner, who served as the first U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) commissioner before joining the consulting firm Sentinel HS group; Bonner used his connections with top-ranking Border Patrol officials to secure a \$481,000 consulting contract for Sentinel HS in 2010.<sup>36</sup> Another example was Thad Bingel, a former CBP chief of staff, who was introduced as DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen's aide when he accompanied her to Senate confirmation meetings in 2017, despite the fact that Bingel was simultaneously working as a private consultant for several PSCs that were bidding for multi-million dollar DHS contracts.<sup>37</sup> The revolving door between industry and government raises serious concerns about the conflicts of interest that arise when the former colleagues of current policy makers seek government contracts.

The second reason for the firestorm of government contracts involves providing hefty campaign donations to congressional and presidential candidates. According to a report issued by the Center for Responsive Politics, the largest campaign contributors to members of both the House Appropriations Committee and the House Homeland Security Committee were PSCs that provide border security services.<sup>38</sup> Both of these committees make recommendations to the House of Representatives about the allocation of resources to federal agencies; many of these recommendations are enacted through legislation. During the years 2006 to 2018, large PSCs such as Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and General Dynamics donated \$20.6 million worth of campaign donations to members of the House Appropriations Committee.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, these same companies donated \$6.5 million worth of campaign donations to members of the House Homeland Security

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<sup>33</sup> Todd Miller, *More Than a Wall Corporate Profiteering and the Militarization of US Borders*, ed. Nick Buxton, Niamh Ní Bhriain, and Deborah Eade, 1, September 2019, <https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/more-than-a-wall-report.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, *More Than*, 1.

<sup>35</sup> Miller, *More Than*, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Miller, *More Than*, 5 and 70.

<sup>37</sup> Miller, *More Than*, 72.

<sup>38</sup> Miller, *More Than*, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Miller, *More Than*, 8.

Committee.<sup>40</sup> During the 115th Congress (2017-2019), members from both of these committees argued that an even greater increase in border security funding was necessary in order to prevent violent crime, smuggling, and other illegal activities in America's borderlands; these recommendations were bipartisan.<sup>41</sup> These recommendations (and the subsequent legislation that they produced) resulted in dramatic budget cuts to the other four categories of homeland security priorities so that additional funding could be re-directed towards border security expenditures and award more government contracts to PSCs.<sup>42</sup> The donors and recipients of these contributions would claim that the importance of border security justifies their actions. However, the connection between campaign donations from PSCs and the subsequent re-allocation of resources towards border security by the 115th Congress raises serious questions about whether America's policy makers are being influenced by ulterior motives.

## CONSEQUENCES OF UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION

A sobering example of the dangers that arise when policy makers focus too much of their attention on one particular sub-problem to the exclusion of the others is America's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Historically, America's responses to global health crises has been less than perfect. However, there have been a number of success stories over the past two decades. For example, research funds for agencies such as the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) increased dramatically after the emergence of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2002-2003 and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) in 2012.<sup>43</sup> Both of these viruses are genetically related to SARS-CoV-2, with all three of them being classified as coronaviruses.<sup>44</sup> SARS-CoV-2 is the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic which emerged in 2019.<sup>45</sup> Some of America's leading public health experts emphasized the importance of containing future outbreaks of pathogens, including coronaviruses, at a 2018 World Health Organization (WHO) summit.<sup>46</sup> In a similar fashion, agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were

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<sup>40</sup> Miller, *More Than*, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Miller, *More Than*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Miller, *More Than*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Betsy McKay and Phred Dvorak, "A Deadly Coronavirus Was Inevitable. Why Was No One Ready?," *The Wall Street Journal* (New York, New York), August 13, 2020, THE COVID STORM, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-deadly-coronavirus-was-inevitable-why-was-no-one-ready-for-covid-11597325213>.

<sup>44</sup> McKay and Dvorak, "A Deadly," THE COVID STORM.

<sup>45</sup> McKay and Dvorak, "A Deadly," THE COVID STORM.

<sup>46</sup> McKay and Dvorak, "A Deadly," THE COVID STORM.

given ample amounts of personnel and resources both during and after the Ebola pandemic in 2014.<sup>47</sup> Such an influx of personnel and resources allowed the federal government to quickly respond to this outbreak and construct testing sites, implement contact tracing, and collaborate with international researchers, steps that allowed public health officials to successfully contain the Ebola virus.<sup>48</sup> Although these responses were not perfect, it proves that America is capable of effectively responding to global health crises if adequate levels of funding and personnel are regularly provided to federal and state agencies.

Starting in the fiscal year 2018, however, the budget towards Preparedness for Catastrophic Natural and Man-Made Disasters was significantly reduced in order to redirect that money towards paying for the expansion of the border wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the Global Health Security Unit (formerly a part of the National Security Council) was disbanded, and many of the employees within the Global Health Section of the CDC were fired.<sup>50</sup> Both of these organizations were tasked with researching and predicting global health crises as well as formulating and implementing policies to combat these threats. In addition, \$667 million dollars were cut from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) disaster mitigation grants; this money helps state and local governments pay for disaster preparedness expenditures such as training programs and the procurement of new equipment.<sup>51</sup> Concurrently, the HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) requested \$2.58 billion for public health preparedness programs.<sup>52</sup> This request was denied by Congress.<sup>53</sup> Historically, these preparedness programs would have enabled hospital workers to

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<sup>47</sup> Sabrina Siddiqui and Warren P. Strobel, "Joe Biden Points to Ebola Experience in Pitching Coronavirus Plan," *The Wall Street Journal* (New York, New York), March 29, 2020, Election 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/joe-biden-points-to-ebola-experience-in-pitching-coronavirus-plan-11585483202>.

<sup>48</sup> Siddiqui and Strobel, "Joe Biden," Election 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Kim Soffen and Denise Lu, "What Trump cut in his agency budgets," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), May 23, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/trump-presidential-budget-2018-proposal/>.

<sup>50</sup> Laurie Garrett, "Trump Has Sabotaged America's Coronavirus Response," *Foreign Policy*, January 21, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/31/coronavirus-china-trump-united-states-public-health-emergency-response/>.

<sup>51</sup> Devlin Barrett, "Trump's DHS budget includes billions to build his border wall," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), March 16, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-would-boost-dhs-spending-for-border-wall-agents/2017/03/15/426b48d8-09ad-11e7-93dc-00f9bdd74ed1\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-would-boost-dhs-spending-for-border-wall-agents/2017/03/15/426b48d8-09ad-11e7-93dc-00f9bdd74ed1_story.html).

<sup>52</sup> Barrett, "Trump's DHS budget."

<sup>53</sup> Barrett, "Trump's DHS budget."

receive training to deal with epidemics as soon as novel strains of infectious diseases were identified.<sup>54</sup> The ASPR would work directly with medical practitioners in order to develop effective containment procedures.<sup>55</sup> Overall, there was a 17.9 percent reduction in the budget for the HHS, which is the largest reduction for this department in twenty years.<sup>56</sup>

Rear Admiral Timothy Ziemer, the Director of the Global Health Security Unit, and Homeland Security Advisor Tom Bossert opposed these budget cuts as no replacement agencies were tasked with overseeing America's health security policies.<sup>57</sup> Echoing these concerns were a number of advocacy groups such as the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association (AHA), Research America, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), as they also lobbied against these budget cuts.<sup>58</sup> They warned that the disbanding or downsizing of these critical agencies, as well as the cancelling of these grants, would hinder America's ability to respond to future health crises.<sup>59</sup> Ellie Dehoney of Research America was one of many advocates who expressed such concerns.<sup>60</sup> However, because these organizations are nonprofits, U.S. tax laws limit the amount of money that they can spend on campaign donations or lobbying activities.<sup>61</sup> As a result, many nonprofit organizations avoid any lobbying, believing it is the safest route to avoid risking the loss of their tax-exempt status.<sup>62</sup> As described earlier, the ability to spend millions of dollars a year on campaign donations or lobbying activities is necessary if a private organization has any hope of setting the agenda. When these advocacy groups were ignored, they were unable to set the agenda and the budget cuts were implemented.

<sup>54</sup> Barrett, "Trump's DHS budget."

<sup>55</sup> Barrett, "Trump's DHS budget."

<sup>56</sup> Amy Goldstein, "Federal health department would face a nearly 18 percent cut," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), March 16, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/federal-health-department-would-face-a-nearly-18-percent-cut/2017/03/15/b2a51242-09a2-11e7-b77c-0047d15a24e0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/federal-health-department-would-face-a-nearly-18-percent-cut/2017/03/15/b2a51242-09a2-11e7-b77c-0047d15a24e0_story.html).

<sup>57</sup> Laurie Garrett, "Trump Has Sabotaged America's Coronavirus Response," *Foreign Policy*, January 21, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/31/coronavirus-china-trump-united-states-public-health-emergency-response/>.

<sup>58</sup> Garrett, "Trump Has Sabotaged."

<sup>59</sup> Garrett, "Trump Has Sabotaged."

<sup>60</sup> Garrett, "Trump Has Sabotaged."

<sup>61</sup> National Council of Nonprofits, "Taking the 501(h) election," National Council of Nonprofits, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/taking-the-501h-election>.

<sup>62</sup> National Council of Nonprofits, "Advocacy vs. Lobbying," National Council of Nonprofits, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/advocacy-vs-lobbying>.

The concerns held by Bossert and Ziemer were proven to be justified by a training exercise called Crimson Contagion, which was held from January to August of 2019.<sup>63</sup> During the course of this exercise, policy makers, medical researchers, and frontline workers from a dozen federal agencies (such as the CDC, HHS, and FEMA) were given the task of working with state governments in order to implement a national response to a simulated pandemic.<sup>64</sup> During the course of the exercise, participants had to respond to a number of challenges, such as formulating social distancing protocols and distributing medical equipment to at-risk localities; players were critiqued based on what policies they choose to implement and when they choose to implement them.<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, the participants failed in their efforts to contain the simulated pathogen.<sup>66</sup> This was due to a variety of factors, such as the inability of federal agencies to manufacture and distribute emergency supplies including protective gear and ventilators to state governments, the absence of a clear chain of command among federal agencies, and the fact that many states chose to ignore federally issued social distancing guidelines.<sup>67</sup> As a result, a confidential government report was drafted in October 2019 as a follow-up to this exercise.<sup>68</sup> The report identified how unprepared the U.S. federal government was to address a real-life pandemic.<sup>69</sup> In December 2019, the first confirmed case of a human contracting SARS-CoV-2 occurred.<sup>70</sup> It is also important to note that in December 2019, members of Congress were briefed by HHS (part of the executive branch) about some of the concerns raised in the Crimson Contagion report.<sup>71</sup> Since that time, many of the scenarios that occurred during the Crimson Contagion exercise have come to pass, including shortages of federal stockpiles and inconsistent responses from state governments.<sup>72</sup> Between January and April 2020, federal agencies were unable to fulfill hospital requests for ventilators due to insufficient reserves and the distribution of CDC approved testing kits was delayed due to a lack of

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<sup>63</sup> David E. Sanger et al., "Before Virus Outbreak, a Cascade of Warnings Went Unheeded," *The New York Times* (New York, New York), Published March 19, 2020; revised March 22, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/us/politics/trump-coronavirus-outbreak.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Sanger et al., "Before Virus."

<sup>65</sup> Sanger et al., "Before Virus."

<sup>66</sup> Sanger et al., "Before Virus."

<sup>67</sup> Sanger et al., "Before Virus."

<sup>68</sup> Sanger et al., "Before Virus."

<sup>69</sup> Sanger et al., "Before Virus."

<sup>70</sup> Laurie Garrett, "Trump Has Sabotaged America's Coronavirus Response," *Foreign Policy*, January 21, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/31/coronavirus-china-trump-united-states-public-health-emergency-response/>.

<sup>71</sup> David E. Sanger et al., "Before Virus Outbreak, a Cascade of Warnings Went Unheeded," *The New York Times* (New York, New York), Published March 19, 2020; revised March 22, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/us/politics/trump-coronavirus-outbreak.html>.

<sup>72</sup> Sanger et al., "Before Virus."

manufacturing capabilities.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, DOS, HHS, and the White House jockeyed for control over response efforts while a number of state and local governments refused to implement social distancing protocols.<sup>74</sup> Many of these same problems persisted throughout the rest of 2020. A collaborative report from *The Washington Post* and Johns Hopkins University estimates that as of January 26th, 2021, more than 422,000 Americans have died as a result of contracting SARS-CoV-2.<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, that number will continue to rise well into the foreseeable future.<sup>76</sup> The U.S. federal government's slow and uncoordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic is in large part due to the fact that many of the agencies that were designed specifically to respond to this type of crisis were either disbanded or downsized as a direct result of the ever-increasing focus on border security. This ever-increasing focus also caused policy makers to ignore a number of prescient findings. Therefore, it would be reasonable to conclude that the severity of the pandemic could have been minimized had public health agencies received adequate levels of funding and personnel.

Another sobering example of the dangers that arise when policy makers focus too much of their attention on one particular sub-problem to the exclusion of the others is as follows. Starting in the fiscal year 2018, the budget assigned to Domestic Counterterrorism was significantly reduced in order to redirect that money towards hiring more Border Patrol agents.<sup>77</sup> In total, the various increases in Border Security since 2018 have resulted in the re-direction of \$2.6 billion.<sup>78</sup> As a result, significant budget cuts were made to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Urban Area Security Initiative; this money helps U.S. cities pay for counterterrorism expenditures such as training programs and the procurement of new equipment.<sup>79</sup> Attending training programs and purchasing new equipment

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<sup>73</sup> Yasmeen Abutaleb et al., "The U.S. was beset by denial and dysfunction as the coronavirus raged," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), April 4, 2020, Coronavirus – Investigations, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2020/04/04/coronavirus-government-dysfunction/>.

<sup>74</sup> Abutaleb et al., "The U.S.," Coronavirus -- Investigations.

<sup>75</sup> Bonnie Berkowitz et al., "U.S. coronavirus cases and state maps: Tracking cases, deaths," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), Published March 27, 2020; revised January 26, 2021, Coronavirus, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/coronavirus-us-cases-deaths/>.

<sup>76</sup> Berkowitz et al., "U.S. coronavirus," Coronavirus.

<sup>77</sup> Devlin Barrett, "Trump's DHS budget includes billions to build his border wall," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), March 16, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-would-boost-dhs-spending-for-border-wall-agents/2017/03/15/426b48d8-09ad-11e7-93dc-00f9bdd74ed1\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-would-boost-dhs-spending-for-border-wall-agents/2017/03/15/426b48d8-09ad-11e7-93dc-00f9bdd74ed1_story.html).

<sup>78</sup> Barrett, "Trump's DHS budget."

<sup>79</sup> Barrett, "Trump's DHS budget."

are both critical, as they provide law enforcement officers with the skills and tools necessary to prepare for and respond to terrorist activity and other forms of violent extremism. There were also budget cuts made to Transportation Security Administration (TSA) grants, which help state and local governments pay for security enhancements at airports and mass transit hubs.<sup>80</sup> In addition, the DOJ was instructed to prioritize border security efforts, which resulted in the hiring of more border prosecutors and deputy U.S. marshals as well as their subsequent deployment to the southwest region.<sup>81</sup>

A number of recent reports have highlighted the threat posed by homegrown terrorists (e.g. the private militia movement, racial supremacists), a threat that is now considered by homeland security practitioners as being equal to or greater than the threat posed by foreign jihadist groups.<sup>82</sup> In February 2020, FBI Director Christopher Wray reported that 2019 had marked the highest number of deaths as a result of domestic violent extremism since the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995.<sup>83</sup> Among other things, the FBI is tasked with investigating and arresting individuals who commit acts of domestic terrorism, with the goal of stopping terrorists before they can carry out an attack.<sup>84</sup> In July 2019, Director Wray testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee as part of a hearing concerning F.B.I. oversight, where he made similar warnings about the increasing dangers posed by domestic terrorism; his recommendations were promptly ignored.<sup>85</sup> Echoing these concerns were advocacy groups such as the Western States Center, the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism, and George Washington University's Program on Extremism.<sup>86</sup>

Given the large number of high-profile attacks since Director Wray's assessment in February 2020, there has been a sharp up-tick in domestic terrorism activity over the past two years. Among the dozens of recent examples of high-profile attacks, two are particularly noteworthy for the purposes of this analysis.

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<sup>80</sup> Barrett, "Trump's DHS budget."

<sup>81</sup> Sari Horwitz, "The DOJ's \$27.7 billion budget reflects Jeff Sessions's priorities," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), March 16, 2017, National Security, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/more-justice-department-funds-proposed-to-crack-down-on-violent-crime-and-illegal-immigration/2017/03/15/bf4f25f6-09ab-11e7-b77c-0047d15a24e0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/more-justice-department-funds-proposed-to-crack-down-on-violent-crime-and-illegal-immigration/2017/03/15/bf4f25f6-09ab-11e7-b77c-0047d15a24e0_story.html).

<sup>82</sup> Leah Sottile, "Inside the Boogaloo: America's Extremely Online Extremists," *The New York Times* (New York, New York), August 19, 2020, [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/08/19/magazine/boogaloo.html?action=click&module=Top Stories&pgtype=Homepage](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/08/19/magazine/boogaloo.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage).

<sup>83</sup> Sottile, "Inside the Boogaloo."

<sup>84</sup> Sottile, "Inside the Boogaloo."

<sup>85</sup> Sottile, "Inside the Boogaloo," 20.

<sup>86</sup> Sottile, "Inside the Boogaloo," 15, 16, 17, and 22.



The first high-profile terrorist attack was the thwarted attack on the Michigan State Capitol Building in October 2020.<sup>87</sup> The perpetrators were members of a group called the Wolverine Watchmen, and they planned to blow-up a highway bridge, kidnap the Governor of Michigan during an armed takeover of the State Capitol Building, and attack the homes of several police officers.<sup>88</sup> As they were plotting their attack, the thirteen malefactors illegally amassed an arsenal of firearms and explosives.<sup>89</sup> Fortunately, the FBI had learned of the plot during a previous investigation, which allowed the FBI and Michigan State Police to arrest the perpetrators before they could carry out their attack.<sup>90</sup> The second high-profile terrorist attack was the Capitol Siege/Insurrection in Washington, D.C. on January 6th, 2021.<sup>91</sup> In this case, authorities were unable to prevent members of QAnon, the Proud Boys, and various neo-Nazi organizations from perpetrating their attack.<sup>92</sup> Hundreds of malefactors assaulted U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) officers and illegally forced their way into the U.S. Capitol Building.<sup>93</sup> They brandished firearms and made death threats against law enforcement personnel as well as members of Congress during a violent pursuit.<sup>94</sup> Unfortunately, this attack resulted in the deaths of five individuals including a police officer, the injury of dozens of other individuals including several law enforcement officers, and the destruction of government property including damages to the House and Senate chambers.<sup>95</sup> A number of state and local agencies provided assistance to federal agencies such as the FBI, USCP, and the U.S. Secret Service during the difficult process of re-securing the Capitol Building and arresting the perpetrators.<sup>96</sup> These state and local agencies included the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia, the Fairfax County Police Department, and the Maryland National Guard.<sup>97</sup> Just as the United States did not prepare for a pandemic, they also did not prepare for a

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<sup>87</sup> Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, Shaila Dewan, and Kathleen Gray, "F.B.I. Says Michigan Anti-Government Group Plotted to Kidnap Gov. Gretchen Whitmer," *The New York Times* (New York, New York), October 8, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/08/us/gretchen-whitmer-michigan-militia.html?searchResultPosition=2>.

<sup>88</sup> Bogel-Burroughs, Dewan, and Gray, "F.B.I. Says."

<sup>89</sup> Bogel-Burroughs, Dewan, and Gray, "F.B.I. Says."

<sup>90</sup> Bogel-Burroughs, Dewan, and Gray, "F.B.I. Says."

<sup>91</sup> Mark Mazzetti et al., "Inside a Deadly Siege: How a String of Failures Led to a Dark Day at the Capitol," *The New York Times* (New York, New York), Published January 10, 2021; revised January 11, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/10/us/politics/capitol-siege-security.html>.

<sup>92</sup> Mazzetti et al., "Inside a Deadly."

<sup>93</sup> Mazzetti et al., "Inside a Deadly."

<sup>94</sup> Mazzetti et al., "Inside a Deadly."

<sup>95</sup> Mazzetti et al., "Inside a Deadly."

<sup>96</sup> Mazzetti et al., "Inside a Deadly."

<sup>97</sup> Mazzetti et al., "Inside a Deadly."

potential terrorist attack on the National Mall.<sup>98</sup> In July 2000, officials from the U.S. Park Police warned members of Congress that the lack of security could one day be exploited by terrorists, however, these prophetic findings were ignored.<sup>99</sup> The Michigan and Washington, D.C. attacks were committed by United States citizens within United States territory. These attacks showcased the critical role that state and local law enforcement agencies play in responding to domestic terrorism. This would cause any casual observer to ponder; could state and local law enforcement agencies have foiled more attacks by homegrown terrorists if they received these grants which would have allowed them to be better prepared?

## CONCLUSION

Over the past two decades, border security has been regarded as the priority within the homeland security policy agenda. Policy makers have redirected a disproportionate amount of funding, equipment, and personnel towards border security, regardless of how these redirections will impact other homeland security missions. Such a narrow-minded focus is not the result of genuine security concerns, rather it is the desire of political leaders to gain electoral support and the desire of corporations to quench their insatiable need for profits. However, such policies have resulted in a number of tragedies, and in many cases, the effects of these tragedies could have been mitigated if the policy agenda had been set to ensure that resource allocation was more equitable.

Given the recent policy agenda, it appears that the current trend of increasing border security will continue. Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent terrorist attacks in Michigan and Washington, D.C. will likely cause short-term changes within the policy agenda. Short-term changes can include a one-time emergency appropriation given as a reactionary measure, or elected officials can place an increasing amount of urgency on a particular sub-problem during the immediate aftermath of a crisis. An example of this would be the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which was signed into law by President Biden and, among other things, allocated \$7.5 billion towards a CDC-led national COVID-19 vaccine program.<sup>100</sup> However, given the various factors described

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<sup>98</sup> Arthur Santana, "Monuments are Found Vulnerable to Attack," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), July 2, 2000,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2000/07/02/monuments-are-found-vulnerable-to-attack/e2c63571-be02-4e77-81dc-0512e1f4baf8/>.

<sup>99</sup> Santana, "Monuments are Found."

<sup>100</sup> Barbara Sprunt, "Here's What's in the American Rescue Plan," npr WNYC, revised March 11, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live->

throughout this analysis, such as corporate lobbying and campaign donations, it does not appear that there will be long-term changes within the policy agenda. Long-term changes can include greater continuity between political parties within other areas of homeland security policy or a more equitable allocation of resources over the coming decades. Long-term changes cannot occur unless systemic reforms are added to the policy making process. These reforms could include placing limits on corporate campaign contributions, abolishing the lobbying restrictions placed on non-profits, and prohibiting lobbyists, private consultants, and corporate executives from serving as either aides or political appointees. Specifically, in regard to the revolving door phenomenon, the best way to award government contracts would be to use a variation of the double-blind peer-review system already used by academic journals. This system would ensure that the company with the best proposal wins the contract, as personal identifiers would be removed from contract proposals and all communication between companies and policy makers would be handled by an independent apolitical third party. Policy makers would then award contracts based solely on the merit of a proposal.

This does not mean that short-term changes are unimportant. Rather, this analysis demonstrates that the ability to prepare effectively for future crises depends largely on implementing long-term changes so that there is a more equitable balance among each of the U.S. federal government's five homeland security priorities. However, this cannot be achieved unless the policy making process is reformed in such a way as to reduce the influence of ulterior motives, diversify the information available to policy makers, and eliminate conflicts of interest.

The impact caused by the 2018 budget cuts in regard to Domestic Counterterrorism will benefit from additional research. As more information becomes available in the wake of these attacks, interested parties will be able to answer the question, could more of these attacks have been foiled if state and local law enforcement agencies had received the grants necessary to allow them to be better prepared?

Applying public policy topics such as agenda setting, resource allocation, lobbying, and campaign rhetoric to the field of homeland security provides a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the subject. Therefore, by expanding on the unique perspective offered in this analysis, future researchers will be able to bridge the gap between homeland security and public policy.

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[updates/2021/03/09/974841565/heres-whats-in-the-american-rescue-plan-as-it-heads-toward-final-passage](https://www.hatfield.edu/updates/2021/03/09/974841565/heres-whats-in-the-american-rescue-plan-as-it-heads-toward-final-passage).

## APPENDIX 1

According to a report from the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), the budget for the Border Patrol has increased significantly since the year 2000 (Figure 3).

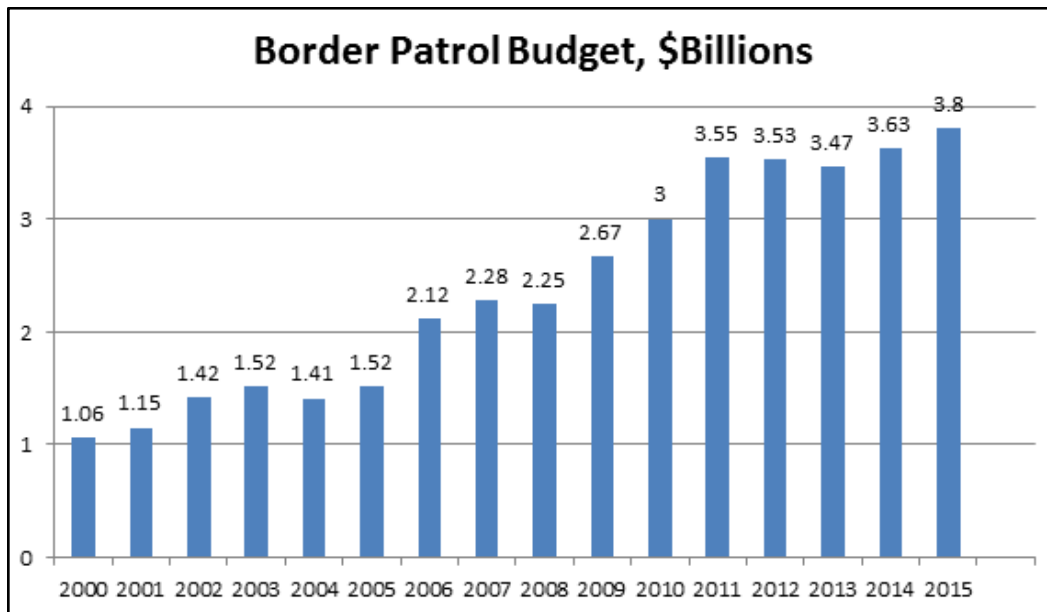


Figure 3: Border Patrol Budget from the years 2000-2015 | Source: The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)

APPENDIX 2

According to Bohn and Pugatch (2015), the number of border patrol agents has also increased significantly since the year 2000 (Figure 4).

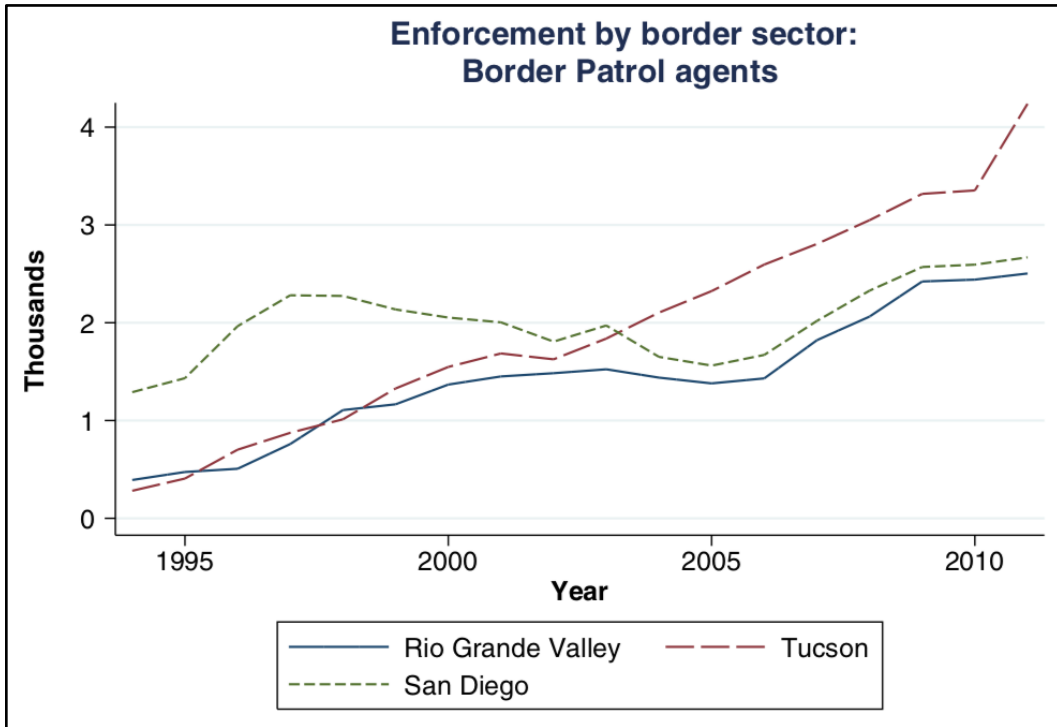


Figure 4: Number of Border Patrol Agents from the years 1995-2010 | Source: Bohn and Pugatch, DHS

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