



Chapter VII

Security, Sovereignty, and Continental Interoperability: Canada's Elusive Balance

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Abstract

In an era of digital government, citizen-centric governance is a central aim, one that is often predicated on more efficient and responsive service owed, in large part, to greater digital connectivity internally (i.e., to share information in new manners), as well as externally (i.e., to gather information and reach out to citizens and stakeholders). Antiterrorism efforts accentuate this focus, albeit with a very different set of aims. Governments have been quick to establish new antiterrorism and homeland security measures that create new and expanded capacities for gathering, analyzing, and sharing information, both within governments and across governments and other sectors, notably the private sector.

Introduction

In an era of digital government, citizen-centric governance is a central aim, one that is often predicated on more efficient and responsive service owed, in large part, to greater digital connectivity internally (i.e., to share information in new manners), as well as externally (i.e., to gather information and reach out to citizens and stakeholders). Antiterrorism efforts accentuate this focus, albeit with a very different set of aims. Governments have been quick to establish new antiterrorism and homeland security measures that create new and expanded capacities for gathering, analyzing, and sharing information, both within governments and across governments and other sectors, notably the private sector.

In doing so, tensions have arisen with respect to both the appropriate scope of governmental action, as well as the proper mix of secrecy and transparency within a security apparatus operating under a unique and delicate balance between autonomy and accountability. Such tensions also extend beyond borders. In Canada, for example, not only is there a set of debates and concerns about public sector action within the country that closely resembles that of the United States, but there is growing awareness about technological and political interdependence on a continental scale. As a result, North American governance faces new and rising pressures to adapt to a post-9/11 nexus of security, technology, and democracy that carries implications for governance both within and across national borders.

Following this introduction, the second section examines the evolving nexus between homeland security efforts and digital infrastructure, as well as the central themes of information management and identity. The Canadian security response to 9/11 is then reviewed in the next section, drawing parallels and pressures for convergence between Canada and the United States. Then the fourth section further explores quandaries of continental governance from the Canadian perspective, and followed by an examination of two specific illustrations of such quandaries: the plight of Maher Arar tied to bilateral information sharing, and proposed new ID requirements for border crossings. The final section offers a brief conclusion.

Antiterrorism's Digital Infrastructure

Although there are many dimensions and meanings of “security,” we invoke the term here with respect to two, partially distinct areas. First, cyber-security and online reliability represent important foundational platforms necessary to underpin the sustained expansion of e-commerce, e-government, and all forms of online activity. Secondly, homeland or domestic security strategies devised to both respond to and proactively thwart criminal and terrorist threats are based upon information manage-

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