

POLICY BRIEFING NOTE

Title: Impromptu Initiative: security certificates and scale

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Research Question:

This paper offers some background and theoretical framing as part of a larger project on the Canadian Security Certificate Initiative. Here I consider questions about different ways of thinking about responses to national security and how they contrast with security concerns that do not invoke the need for secrecy.

Importance:

The use of secret information in legal proceedings is a tenuous topic that requires investigation. The acceptability of closed proceedings among legal actors influences its feasibility and legitimacy as a response to terrorism. There is a significant amount of influential legal literature on the Security Certificate Initiative and some sociological consideration. This paper attempts to fill in a gap by offering new sociological framing outside of “exceptionality” literature and an interpretation of the Security Certificate Initiative that is not “legal-centric.”

Research Findings:

Interviews with twenty individuals involved in varying capacities with the Security Certificate Initiative show mixed perceptions of the program. Overall, a minority of respondents indicate that they have faith in the Security Certificate Initiative as an efficient, effective, and just response to terrorism.

Implications:

Though the Security Certificate Initiative has not been used extensively to combat terrorism, it offers useful insight into the general use of secret information in legal proceedings. The initial findings of this project indicate that the Criminal Justice System provides a more suitable response to terrorism than immigration/administration measures.