

CONSTRUCTING SECURITY ON THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MINUTEMEN MOVEMENT

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This is an invasion, not a visit by neighbors asking for a cup of sugar. It is a raging invasion by illegal immigrants who are pouring unchecked into America. It could not be more obvious or more serious.
GILCHRIST AND CORSI (2006)

Introduction

It was in a Starbucks coffee shop in the city of La Mesa, California that I met Jim Gilchrist, president and founder of the Minuteman Project (MMP), for an interview. With a large cup of coffee in hand, Gilchrist gave me the inside scoop on how he feels about immigration politics. He believes that the United States is being “invaded by more than 30 million illegal aliens.” Since Congress and the president “failed” to enforce immigration laws, he is convinced that this “invasion” represents an “imminent danger” for U.S. society. In addition to considering “illegal aliens” responsible for the increase in crime and drug trafficking in the United States, he also thinks that terrorist organizations have already entered the United States by crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. With an MBA in taxation, Gilchrist blames illegal immigrants for the economic deficit. According to his calculations, the U.S. Department of the Treasury annually spends US\$384 billion to carry the cost of illegal foreigners who have and will become dependent on U.S. taxes (for education, health care, etc.). After 20 years, these expenditures reach US\$8 trillion to US\$9 trillion, an amount not surprisingly close to the U.S. deficit, which is approximately US\$12 trillion.

In order to offer an alternative to the “political corruption and dereliction of duty from the government,” Gilchrist, in collaboration with Chris Simcox, decided to found the MMP, a civilian border patrol that promotes strict immigration laws and security enforcement along the U.S.-Mexico border. Their goals are to 1) monitor U.S. borders against the “invasion of illegal aliens”; 2) draw media attention to “the chaos of illegal immigration and porous borders”; and 3) lobby the U.S. Congress and policymakers. Gilchrist insists that he is far from being the only one who

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believes immigration poses a threat to national security. He asserts that several national polls show that 80 percent to 90 percent of Americans share his vision. Following this logic, he proudly announced that the MMP has recently called those 250 million Americans “honorary members.” In other words, the MMP already has 4 out of 5 Americans in their ranks. Throughout the interview, Gilchrist used alarming, jingoistic rhetoric to praise the MMP, an organization he believes has “significantly influenced” the U.S. debate on immigration politics.

The Minutemen Movement

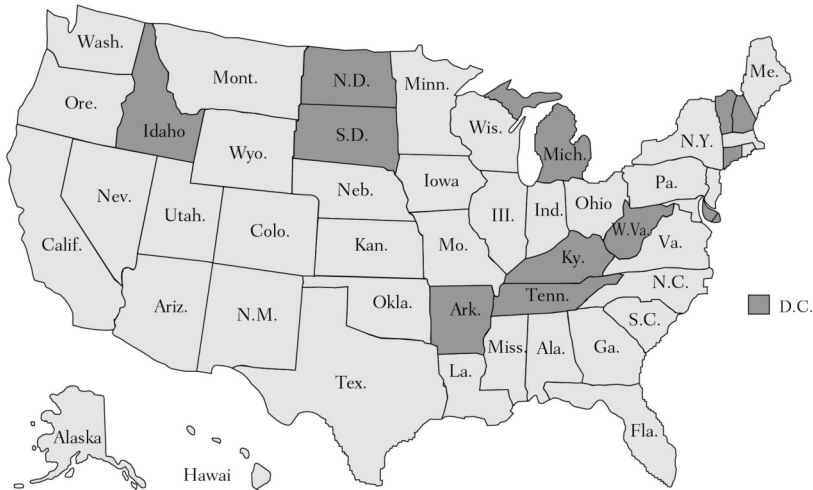
The MMP is far from being the first group to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border. The origin of civilian border patrol groups can be traced back to the 1970s with two local groups: the Hannigans in Arizona (1976) and the Ku Klux Klan Border Watch in California (1977) (Navarro 2009). In the 1990s and early 2000s, other civilian border patrol groups were formed, such as the American Border Patrol, Ranch Rescue, Light up the Border, and Voices of Citizens Together. However, it was only in 2005, with the foundation of the MMP and another association launched by Chris Simcox called the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps (MCDC) that the term Minutemen started being associated with the civilian border patrol movement.¹

It was Gilchrist, a Vietnam War veteran, and Simcox, a kindergarten teacher and editor of the *Tombstone Tumbleweed* newspaper, who came up with the idea of creating the MMP. In April 2005, they invited war veterans, ex-Border Patrol agents and other citizens to serve their country by participating in a month-long border patrol operation in Arizona. Before the end of the year, Simcox and Gilchrist had divided the organization into two separate entities: the Minuteman Project and the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps (MCDC). Gilchrist and the MMP have since lobbied Congress for immigration policy reform, while Simcox and the MCDC have focused on border actions (Douzet 2009, 4). In 2007, the MMP and the MCDC had 57 articles around the United States (see Figure 1). Furthermore, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, they have inspired many Americans to start their own civilian border patrol groups, and only in 2005 more than 40 were formed (Minutemen American Defense, Minutemen Party, San Diego Minutemen, etc.) (Buchanan and Holthouse 2007). These organizations are part of the broader anti-immigrant movement, or, as Daniel Tichenor calls it, the classic exclusionist movement.²

¹ The term “Minutemen” has become a powerful symbol of American patriotism. Originally, it referred to the colonial militia that allowed the colonies to respond rapidly to military threats. In 1775, the Minutemen fought the British in Lexington and Concord, two famous battles that began the American Revolutionary War.

² According to Daniel Tichenor (2002), the actors interested in immigration policy fall into four broad categories: 1) cosmopolitans; 2) nationalist egalitarians; 3) free-market expansionists; and 4) classic exclusionists. Classic exclusionists favor restrictions on both immigration admissions and immigrant rights, especially because of the economic and social burden they impose on the United States.

FIGURE 1
STATES WITH AT LEAST ONE MINUTEMEN ARTICLE (MMP AND/OR MCDC)



NOTE: States in light gray have at least one Minutemen article.
MMP= Minutemen Movement in
MCDC= Minutemen Civil Defense Corps.

In addition to the overwhelming amount of attention they have received from the public, the media, and policy makers, the Minutemen movement garnered interest in academic circles. It is important to note that most of the literature published on the Minutemen agrees that they have played a major role in the immigration debate in the United States since 2005 (Akers, Chacon, and Davis 2006; Chavez 2008; Dechaine 2009; Doty 2009; Gradsky 2007; Justus 2009; Lyall 2009; Navarro 2009; Sheehy 2009; Smith 2007; Yoxall 2006). Doty summarizes this point by arguing that the Minutemen have become “a powerful symbol and a rallying point for those who advocate stronger immigration enforcement, especially those who focus predominantly on border enforcement as a solution to the current immigration crises” (Doty 2007, 121).

Though the phenomenon has been examined using various theoretical approaches, there is an important lack of research analyzing the individual. If the role of the individual were to be thoroughly scrutinized in this context, the impact of the movement on the immigration debate could be demonstrated to a greater extent. An approach carrying out an individual level of analysis seems essential, as several facts question the vast national support that they say they have. Here is an example of why I believe this: Gilchrist explained that, despite the fact that he considers his organization has 250 million honorary members, there are only three main, “authoritative” members in the Minuteman Project (Gilchrist 2009). This observation coincides with the writings of Navarro, who maintains that Gilchrist and Simcox control all the actions undertaken by their respective organizations. “Their nation-

al boards of directors consisted of a few leaders, which both Simcox and Gilchrist handpicked. Democracy was absent, meaning that there were never elections held where the mass membership voted on who would be in the leadership role of either organization. From the beginning, both militias were ‘personality and not organization driven’ (2009, 193). Several researchers have reported internal disruptions in operations as well as many disputes and differences in opinion within the movement (Doty 2009; Navarro 2009; Justus 2009).

Given this conflict inside the movement, how can we understand the civilian border patrol movement having an important role in the national immigration debate in the United States since 2005? Or, to put it more broadly, how did the Minutemen movement become such an important symbol representing those who endorse border enforcement and strict immigration laws in the United States?

This article takes an original stand by focusing on key Minutemen members and their fundamental role in promoting, developing, and implementing strategies to influence the immigration debate. The following discussion will also demonstrate that the civilian border patrol movement, or, more specifically, the Minuteman Project and the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, would not have progressed as much as they have without the determination and the dynamism of their respective presidents, Gilchrist and Simcox. Before even commenting on what impact the Minutemen movement has had, it is imperative to understand that the degree of its impact on the national level is mainly due to the entrepreneurship of Gilchrist and Simcox. They must be viewed as “security entrepreneurs” in the contemporary movement of civilian border patrols and in the debate on immigration politics from 2005 to 2010.

The concept of “security entrepreneurs” is based on two theories: “political entrepreneurs” (Carter and Scott 2006, 2009) and the “securitization process” (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998). Often considered experts on undocumented immigration and border security, the Minutemen presidents can be defined as “security entrepreneurs,” a term meaning that they are engaged in initiating policy change or innovation, and in promoting their own security agenda. With their creativity, strategies, networks, and persuasive speech acts, security entrepreneurs raise new ideas and frame the debate on a specific issue. As security entrepreneurs, the Minutemen presidents have two main avenues of influence (that is to say, two main ways of influencing their audience about the legitimacy of their concerns around illegal immigration) for achieving their goals: discursive and strategic actions. The analysis in this article will focus on these avenues of influence in order to highlight the major role Minutemen presidents have played in the immigration debate. It will demonstrate that beyond the anti-immigrant symbol the Minutemen movement represents, its strike force depends largely on two members: Gilchrist and Simcox. The research is based on academic books and articles, Minutemen biographies, speeches, and websites, as well as on field research conducted in California and interviews with members of the MMP, scholars, and activists. This fieldwork has been conducted in accordance with ethical policies and procedures for research involving human subjects at the University of Québec at Montréal (UQAM).

Discursive Strategy: The Securitization of Undocumented Immigrants

Although some journalists and policy makers have discredited civilian border patrolling and dismissed the idea as an insignificant “movement,” one of most important avenues of influence for the Minutemen presidents lies in their discursive strategy. By deliberately framing undocumented immigration and border issues in security terms, Minutemen presidents helped determine and set the political agenda. In other words, they participated in what the Copenhagen School calls the “securitization process,” a framework used to analyze how an issue becomes securitized or desecuritized. Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde argue that “securitization is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics. Securitization can thus be viewed as a ‘more extreme version of politicization’” (1998, 23). According to this concept, a securitizing actor uses the language of security (speech acts) to define a problem not merely in political terms, but rather in security terms in order to convince a specific audience of a real, existent threat. The Copenhagen School suggests that for a political issue to become a security one, it must go through the following 5 steps: 1) designating a referent object to be securitized; 2) subjectively defining the existence of a threat that jeopardizes the survival of a specific referent object; 3) authority figures accomplishing the securitization process; 4) taking extraordinary measures in response to an existential threat; and 5) the audience accepting the new reality (Macleod et al. 2008, 402). It would be an exaggeration to consider emergency measures taken along the U.S.-Mexico border, such as the construction of the wall, the result of the work of the Minutemen presidents or any other anti-immigrant organizations. Nevertheless, it is possible to comment on and evaluate Gilchrist and Simcox’s level of participation in making undocumented immigration a security issue by studying how they are involved in the five steps of the securitization process.

Step 1: Designating a Referent Object to Be Securitized

According to many political scientists, immigration policies are increasingly viewed through a security lens (Bigo 1998; Buzan, Weaver, and De Wilde 1998; Doty 1998; Huysmans 2006). Even supporters of the Copenhagen School researchers argue that immigration is among the most important issues likely to be perceived as a threat to societal security. They postulate that the primary referent object to be secured in a context of social insecurity is the identity of a society or a community (Buzan, Weaver, and De Wilde 1998, 119-140). In the context of U.S. immigration politics, the referent object to securitize is the American identity, constructed and defined in opposition to the “other,” namely “illegal aliens,” who pose an existential threat. It is important to note that since the mid-1980s, undocumented immigration

has been perceived as a cause for insecurity where American identity is concerned.³ Therefore, the Minutemen presidents did not participate directly in the first step of the securitization process. They have only continued the work initiated by their predecessors. As for other anti-immigrant organizations, they have helped maintain this issue in terms of exception, risk, and confrontation (Bigo 1998, 5). In this context, the discursive actions of the Minutemen presidents must be viewed in relation to the global rhetoric that construes undocumented immigration as a threat to American identity.

**Step 2:
Subjectively Defining the Existence of
A Threat to the Survival of a Specific Referent Object**

The second step is to subjectively define the existence of a threat to the survival of a specific referent object. Gilchrist and Simcox describe undocumented immigration and border security issues as a threat to societal security in order to influence the way policy makers think, define, and shape immigration policies. Their speech acts are aimed at making American citizens believe that undocumented immigration constitutes a problem harmful to American identity and national sovereignty. The following paragraphs will focus on how Gilchrist and Simcox show illegal aliens to be “enemies” and portray the border as a “war zone.”

CONSTRUCTING THE IMAGE OF ILLEGAL ALIENS
AS THE ENEMY: ILLEGAL ALIENS ALLEGEDLY THE CAUSE
OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN THE UNITED STATES

Gilchrist and Simcox use undocumented immigrants as scapegoats, by holding them responsible for U.S. social problems, such as those pertaining to employment, health,

³ The United States has identified undocumented immigration from Mexico and Latin America as a threat to the American identity since the early 1980s. This is relatively recent, since Mexicans enjoyed special status for many years. Before 1929, U.S. law allowed Mexicans to cross the border without papers. After that, Mexicans benefited from the extensive guest worker Bracero Program, which sponsored 4 million Mexicans to work in the United States between 1943 and 1964. However, the end of this program and the socio-economic context in Mexico (particularly characterized by important population growth and the rapid urbanization of society during the 1960s and 1970s) threw many Mexicans out of work. Many of these unemployed Mexicans decided to work in border towns or to enter the U.S. without work permits. The problem of undocumented immigration began with the end of the Bracero Program and gradually increased. Americans began to recognize this issue in the mid-1980s when the number of undocumented immigrants came to approximately 4 to 5 million. With some difficulty, the U.S. Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986, granting amnesty to nearly 3 million undocumented immigrants, while enforcing sanctions on employers who hired undocumented immigrants and assigning new resources to the Border Patrol.

and crime. In an essay published at Georgetown University, Gilchrist argues that proactive enforcement of immigration laws and border security can have many benefits, such as the “preservation of a long-established American heritage and culture,” “the elimination of traffic gridlock, car pool lanes, or tolls for local highway use,” “a significant drop in crime,” “a positive future for the American youth,” and “the elimination of the thousands of undetected cases of communicable and deadly tuberculosis, leprosy, and hepatitis hosted by illegal aliens” (2008). The Minutemen presidents also worry about the preservation of the English language: in his essay, Gilchrist states that, by the year 2030, there could be an attempt to introduce a bill into Congress pushing for Spanish to become the United States’ official language (2008, 421).

Gilchrist and Simcox also argue that undocumented immigration harms the U.S. economy. As explained before, Gilchrist used his expertise in taxation to demonstrate how undocumented immigration leads the United States into a financial crisis. Simcox goes even further, asserting that militarization of the border would stimulate the economy: “There’s only one way to stop this. Mobilization! Militarize the Border! It would create a boom economy” (quoted in Ketcham 2005).

THE BORDER AS A “WAR ZONE”

The U.S.-Mexico border is often portrayed as a place of danger, chaos, and disorder (Payan 2006, 3). The Minutemen presidents’ discursive strategy contributes to the construction of this image, since their speech acts often rely on war metaphors to expose the immigration problem: “united army of illegal aliens,” “Minutemen battle to secure America’s borders,” “chain of command,” “stand my ground,” “Minutemen are dedicated to protect America against invaders,” “the United States are under attack,” etc. Simcox could not be clearer about this when he says, “Things are violent on the border. My God, the border’s a war zone. I don’t get out without a level 3 bullet-proof vest anywhere near the border” (quoted in Doty 2007, 125). More specifically, Gilchrist and Simcox try to prove that there is a “war” along the U.S.-Mexico border by connecting undocumented immigration with terrorism and crime, describing the growing number of undocumented immigrants with the “invasion” metaphor, and using the symbol of Uncle Sam in their recruitment campaign.

Firstly, they constantly assert that families and workers are hardly the only groups of people crossing the border illegally. The group of undocumented immigrants apparently also includes criminals, terrorists, murderers, rapists, drug dealers, and gang members. According to Gilchrist, 10 percent to 20 percent of undocumented immigrants from Mexico are criminals, and another 10 percent will become criminals after their arrival (Gilchrist and Corsi 2006, xxiv). Apart from being a danger, these criminals and terrorists are also “natural allies”: Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, La Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), Los Zetas, etc. (Dechaine 2009, 55; Gilchrist and Corsi 2006, 173). Moreover, Gilchrist and Simcox continuously link undocumented immigration with terrorism and drug trafficking to generate a greater sense of anxiety. Here are two examples:

Who knows how many Hezbollah or Al Qaeda operatives have bought their way into the United States across our southern border? (Gilchrist and Corsi 2006, 169)

Because illegal aliens murder 5 000 innocent Americans every year and we take a trillion dollar hit overall to our economy, illegal immigration rewards us with a 9/11 or worse every year. (Simcox quoted in Dechaine 2009, 55)

Secondly, Gilchrist and Simcox use certain metaphors and terminology such as the term “invasion” to emphasize the externality of the threat.⁴ In his book *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU*, Jef Huysmans explains that the term “invasion” is a powerful metaphor to securitize increased immigration without having to explain how it endangers the population (Huysmans 2006, 47-48). Gilchrist and Simcox followed this method by highlighting the danger of open borders. In a short essay published at Georgetown University, Gilchrist used the term “invasion” 15 times. Here are two examples:

At the current rate of *invasion*, by the year 2025, only 17 years hence, the Minuteman Project estimates that there will be more illegal aliens occupying U.S. territory than there will be citizen voters. (Gilchrist 2008, 7)

Annually, the size of the *invasion* explodes to the equivalent of 208 reinforced army divisions, or about five million persons, entering and occupying U.S. territory. That is larger than all the current U.S. military forces combined: Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Marines, Reservists, and the National Guard. No one knows who these millions of persons are, where they are, or what their intentions are. (Gilchrist 2008, 6)

Furthermore, Gilchrist fuels fear of a possible invasion of illegal aliens by reformulating the Greek myth of the Trojan horse. Here is how he summarizes this analogy:

The fear is that, like the ancient Trojans, we are naively bringing grave danger into our city walls. The illegal immigrants invading our country will quickly destroy the United States as a safe, economically sound nation that abides by the rule of law established by our Founding Fathers. We have allowed into our midst an army of illegal immigrants who will cause our downfall unless we do something about it now. (Gilchrist 2006, 20)

Simcox also describes the immigration issue using the invasion metaphor. On the website of his political action committee (PAC), the MCDL PAC, he posted an image featuring seven Latinos climbing the security fence. This image is accompanied by a notice board indicating the number of illegal immigrants entering the United States in “real time.” It is estimated that this figure increases by one immi-

⁴ The Minutemen are not the first to use this metaphor; many anti-immigrant organizations have done so before. Actually, the *U.S. News and World Report* was the first magazine to use the term “invasion” in 1977 on its cover to characterize immigration in the United States (Chavez 2001, 221).

grant every 45 seconds and today is higher than 15 million (MCDC PAC). According to Bigo, the use of such alarming statistics amplifies the immigration problem, “materializes the enemy,” and helps to subjectively define a threat to survival (1998, 4).

By defining the threat with the word “invasion,” the Minutemen presidents are engaging in an act of securitization. Based on the fear of “the other,” their speech acts help buttress the idea that border enforcement is necessary to control illegal immigration and protect American society. This method focuses on demonstrating the image of a harmonious society being hampered by an external attack (Huysmans 2006, 49).

Thirdly, the Minutemen presidents make analogies with past armed conflicts to demonstrate that there is a “war” on the U.S.-Mexico border. For example, Simcox used the popular image of Uncle Sam to recruit volunteers. Initially created to get people to enlist during World War I, this poster has become an icon of the United States and its government. Simcox decided to adapt it to the Minutemen reality by making two changes. First, he replaces Uncle Sam’s hat with the blue three-cornered hat of the original eighteenth-century Minutemen movement. Second, he modifies the original text, “Uncle Sam Wants YOU” for the U.S. Army, to suit the “border war” idea: “I want YOU - As a Minuteman Volunteer to Secure the U.S. Border.” By reasserting this popular image, Simcox suggests that the Minutemen have replaced Uncle Sam in the protection of the United States. Pointing directly to the viewer, the new Uncle Sam encourages Americans to join the Minutemen and fight the “war” against illegal immigration.

The aforementioned speech acts lead to the conclusion that Gilchrist and Simcox actively participate in the second step of the securitization process. Their rhetoric helps define the issue of undocumented immigration as a threat to the security of American society. To continue in this vein, a researcher might consider other figures of speech employed by Gilchrist and Simcox, such as those related to health (illness, infection, cancer, parasites, etc.) and natural disasters (flood, tsunami, tide, etc.).

Step 3: The Accomplishment of the Securitization Process

The third step is the accomplishment of the securitization process by a group of people whose authority to secure is recognized by the audience (i.e., the American government or public). For the speech acts to be recognized as legitimate, Gilchrist and Simcox must be perceived as experts on immigration politics. In other words, they cannot hope to significantly increase the probability of a political change without the approval of the audience.

And in order to be perceived as experts, Gilchrist and Simcox refer *ad nauseam* to the inaction of the state and policy makers to deal with immigration politics and border security issues, as shown in the following quote from Gilchrist:

Securing the border is something the government should be taking care of as a matter of course. As far as I can figure, President Bush is delusional, lying, or completely clueless as to the crisis this country is facing. Whatever the situation is, the president and most members of the U.S. Senate are wrong and, frankly criminally incompetent on this issue. (Gilchrist and Corsi 2006, xxi)

To demonstrate that they can effectively replace the government, Gilchrist and Simcox describe the members of their organization as citizens, patriots, pioneers, activists, and lobbyists who are all dedicated to monitoring the border and curbing illegal immigration. Simcox also claims that the MCDC is a good example of an organization promoting social justice, by being “one of the most important, socially responsible, and peaceful movements for justice since the civil rights movement of the 1960s” (MCDC n.d.). These presidents focus on their patriotism and commitment to the principle of the rule of law in order to be seen as legitimate.

This technique of denouncing government inaction and promoting the dynamism of the MMP and the MCDC seems to work. According to surveys, the Minutemen have a good reputation in the United States. For example, a report entitled *Americans' Immigration Quandary* revealed that 55 percent of Americans had already heard of the Minutemen, and 60 percent supported their actions (Pew 2006, 25). Another *Fox News* poll (2006) showed that 46 percent of Americans consider Minutemen “concerned citizens,” and that 34 percent describe them as “vigilantes.” Finally, a survey conducted by *NBC News* and *The Wall Street Journal* (2006) noted that 30 percent of Americans wish to see the Minutemen surveillance allowed by the law. This figure was 50 percent among Republicans. While these surveys do not express clear agreement among Americans on this issue, we can still conclude that the Minutemen’s position on illegal immigration has a lot of support.⁵

Step 4: Taking Extraordinary Measures In Response to an Existential Threat

While the Minutemen’s actions are generally accepted, or at least tolerated, the fourth step reflects the movement’s limits. According to the Copenhagen School researchers, all extraordinary measures are mainly the responsibility of the state. Making major decisions such as those pertaining to constructing a border fence, increasing border patrols, or amending immigration laws must, according to convention, be made by the U.S. government. Even if the presidents endeavor to take their own extraordinary measures, they cannot afford to follow through with these ambi-

⁵ It is important to note that the audience is not limited to the general public, but also includes policy makers. I will discuss Gilchrist and Simcox’s political strategy in Washington later in this article, but I can already mention that several members of the House of Representatives support these presidents and carry their message to the Capitol.

tions. During their border patrol actions, the Minutemen numbered barely more than 100 in the field. Moreover, the MCDC fence-building project is going slowly, as it is only 3.2 km long on a more than 3 000 km border (Fan 2008, 712). In other words, it is impossible for these groups to make a real difference with their limited civilian and financial resources. While the U.S. Border Patrol, with approximately 11 000 officers and no less than US\$7 billion invested in border security in 2006, has relatively failed to control undocumented immigration (Payan 2006, 56), we can safely conclude that the Minutemen cannot carry out such an operation. Even within the state, extraordinary measures remain difficult to achieve. Since 2003, the U.S. Congress has introduced many bills, but it was not until the Secure Fence Act of 2006 (HR6061) that the country faced a drastic change in security measures. This act authorizes the construction of 1 100 km of double barriers and the increase of the number of Border Patrol agents.

Step 5: The Audience Accepts the New Reality

Finally, to complete the securitization process, the audience must accept the new reality. When the Secure Fence Act was enacted, 46 percent of Americans were in favor of the security fence (CNN 2006). This statistic increased to 54 percent in 2010 (CNN 2010). This growing apparent desire to secure the U.S.-Mexico border signifies that the securitization of undocumented immigration is actually underway. Even though the influx of undocumented immigrants has seen a drastic decline since 2006 (Passel and Cohn 2010), strict immigration laws such as the Arizona Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (SB1070) have continued to appear, at least for debate or discussion, even if not ultimately put into effect. The U.S. seems to tend toward guarding against undocumented immigration.

By analyzing the five steps of the securitization process, it can be concluded that Gilchrist and Simcox have played major roles in describing undocumented immigration as a threat to American identity. It is important to note that we should not understand the Minutemen presidents' influence as if they were the cause of the securitization of undocumented immigration. However, portraying the border as a war zone and describing illegal immigration as a social and economic burden for the United States has certainly helped create an atmosphere that seems to justify stricter immigration policies. Thus, assuming that there is no single "actor" controlling the securitization process, we can say that Gilchrist and Simcox are two of the security entrepreneurs who participated to a great extent in it.

Strategic Actions: Patrolling U.S. Borders, Attracting Media Attention, And Influencing Political Decisions

The Minutemen presidents' second avenue of influence is to undertake strategic actions. Specifically, they participate in the debate on immigration and on border security by patrolling the U.S. borders, increasing media coverage, and influencing political decisions.

PATROLLING U.S. BORDERS

According to Gilchrist and Simcox, the first step in protecting the nation's sovereignty is to immediately deploy the U.S. army to the southern border until a complete security fence is erected. Once the physical barrier extending from San Diego to Brownsville is built, 35 000 Border Patrol agents should be deployed, and the ports and the Canadian border should be secured. Since they believe the federal government "has no serious intention of enforcing the borders," they started their own patrolling actions to prevent the entry of illegal immigrants (Gilchrist and Corsi 2006).

Their first surveillance operation was organized in April 2005, in Cochise County, Arizona. Since then, they have patrolled the U.S.-Mexico border as well as the U.S.-Canada border. The MCDC reported that in 279 days of patrolling, 30 671 illegal immigrants have been seen, 326 rescued, and 13 710 arrested (MCDC n.d.). These numbers are obviously exaggerated, as the number of volunteers deployed daily at the border rarely reaches 100. In addition to their daily patrolling activities, the MMP and the MCDC have organized demonstrations against the employment of undocumented immigrants in day labor centers in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Idaho, and Michigan.

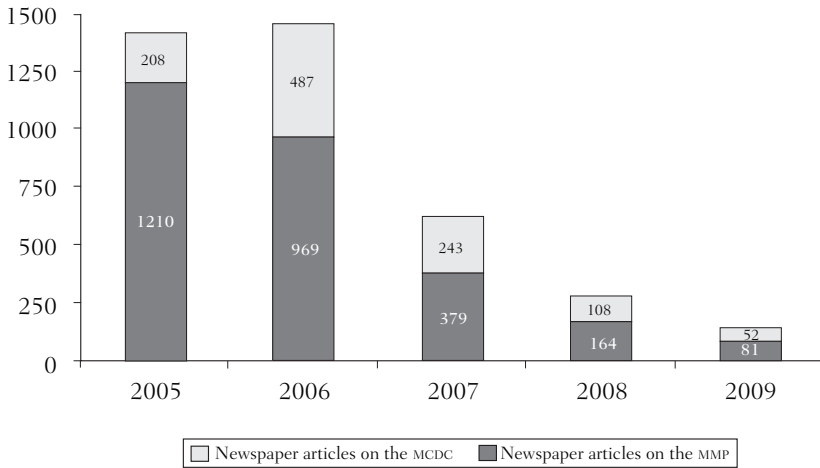
It is important to note that it is almost impossible for these groups to make a real difference with such limited civilian resources. The Minutemen's success cannot be calculated in terms of arrests and border crossings, but in terms of the attention received. According to Chavez (2008, 25), the Minutemen presidents' goal is to produce a "spectacle" that draws public and media attention and influences policy makers. Gilchrist appears to agree, for he says the following:

That first border event was a dog-and-pony show....It was political activism. I organized it to draw attention to the failure of the government to secure our borders, and it did that in spades. Patrolling the border is only about 5 or 10 percent of what the Minuteman Project is about. The other 90 to 95 percent is driving this issue up through city councils, mayors, state legislatures, and governors into the halls of Congress to force change. (quoted in Thomas 2008)

In short, the surveillance operations help draw attention to certain possible solutions (border enforcement, strict immigration laws, etc.) at the expense of

others (temporary foreign worker programs, legalization of undocumented immigrants, etc.).

GRAPH 1
NUMBER OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLES PUBLISHED ABOUT THE MMP AND MCDC
(2005 TO 2009)



SOURCE: FACTIVA Database (n.d.).

ATTRACTING MEDIA ATTENTION

To influence the debate on border security and immigration politics, Simcox and Gilchrist spread their message using various media such as newspapers, radio, the Internet, and television. According to Gilchrist, the core Minutemen media strategy is to build strong collaboration with radio and television hosts who will promote their ideas (2009). Over the years, Gilchrist and Simcox have developed solid collaboration with Lou Dobbs, Glenn Beck, Bill O'Reilly, and local radio hosts like Roger Hedgecock, Michael Savage, and Mark Edwards (Akers and Davis 2006, 237; Gilchrist 2009; Navarro 2009, 179). For instance, the Minutemen presidents appeared 18 and 22 times respectively on the program *Lou Dobbs Tonight* between March 2005 and March 2007 (Doty 2009, 69). Dobbs has never hidden his support for the Minutemen organizations. In response to an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal*, he said on air, "I just want to be clear to the *Journal* and to this audience, I support the Minuteman Project and the fine Americans who make it up in all they've accomplished fully, relentlessly, and proudly" (quoted in Cabrera and Glavac 2010, 692).

Moreover, the MMP and MCDC are hot topics in the media. From 2005 to 2010, over 3 900 articles on the Minutemen were published in the United States. As

the chart indicates, the Minutemen phenomenon was more popular in 2005 and 2006; 75 percent of the articles were published during the movement's first two years. Specifically, the month-long border operation in Arizona in April 2005 and Simcox's ultimatum for Bush to build a fence at the U.S.-Mexico border (May 2006) garnered most of the attention.

INFLUENCING POLITICAL DECISIONS

As important as the patrolling actions and the media strategies can be, the ultimate goal of Minutemen presidents is policy-related. Gilchrist and Simcox actively promote and present their ideas to the Immigration Reform Caucus (IRC), finance political campaigns through their political action committees (PAC), participate actively in politics—they ran for Congress—and lobby the national legislature.

Gilchrist, Simcox, and the Immigration Reform Caucus

In April, 2005, Gilchrist and Simcox, accompanied by 20 Minutemen volunteers, formally met with IRC members. In fact, about 10 days after the launch of the border operation in Arizona in 2005, former IRC Chairman Tom Tancredo (R-Colorado) said that the MMP was a success and invited Gilchrist and Simcox to Capitol Hill (Sheehy 2009, 258). The following IRC members congratulated and have publicly supported the Minutemen political agenda: Tom Tancredo, John T. Doolittle (R-California), Lamar Smith (R-Texas), Scott Garrett (R-New Jersey), J.D. Hayworth (R-Arizona), Phil Gingrey (R-Georgia), Virgil Goode (R-Virginia), Walter Jones (R-NC), Tom Price (R-Georgia), and J. Gresham Barrett (R-South Carolina) (Yoxall 2006, 545-546). Thereafter, Tancredo has collaborated several times with Gilchrist, a notable example being his writing the preface of Gilchrist's book, *Minutemen: The Battle to Secure America's Borders*. In the preface, he recognizes Gilchrist and Simcox's leading roles in the Minutemen movement:

The first Minuteman operation was a tremendous success, and much of that success was due to the tenacity and vision of Jim Gilchrist and his Minuteman Project partner, Chris Simcox, publisher of the *Tombstone Tumbleweed News* paper and founder of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps. (Tancredo quoted in Gilchrist and Corsi 2006, xi)

Another IRC member, Charles Norwood (R-Georgia), took a stand in favor of the Minutemen movement by publishing a report on the first border operation in Arizona. According to Norwood (2005), the MMP have demonstrated that, with more manpower deployed at the border, illegal crossings could be reduced significantly. This report also suggests that auxiliary personnel, such as Minutemen volunteers, should help the Border Patrol, as they can be trained and deployed to the

border in three days, as opposed to the Border Patrol agents, who take two years to be trained (20-21).

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES

In order to recruit, endorse, and financially support candidates who promote the Minutemen political agenda in Congress, Simcox created the Minutemen PAC and the MCDC PAC, while Gilchrist launched the Minuteman Victory PAC. According to their websites, these PACs benefited 35 members of Congress and challengers during the last mid-term elections in 2010. Each PAC had revenue ranging from US\$200 000 to US\$720 000 (Open Secrets 2010). Despite these substantial revenues, only 11 percent of contributions has been redirected to candidates, while administrative costs accounted for most of the expenses. In fact, a third of candidates received direct funding for a total of US\$13 250. Indirect funding (for example, advertisement and direct mail to support a candidate) ran to US\$115 591 and benefited only two candidates (Open Secrets 2010). These numbers demonstrate that the Minutemen's PACs did not significantly support congressional candidates, but again, these actions have helped to put the Minutemen movement on the map in Congress.

Minutemen Presidents Run for Congress

Gilchrist and Simcox both actively participated in politics by running for Congress. Gilchrist was the first to adopt this political strategy, running in 2005 on the American Independent Party ticket in Orange County, California. It was a good opportunity for Gilchrist, since Christopher Cox (R-California), who had held the position for 16 years, was the newly appointed Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Aware of the Republican tradition in the 48th Congressional District, Gilchrist openly said he was taking the opportunity to bring immigration and border security issues to the public and policy-makers' attention. He finished third, with 25 percent of the vote. Despite his defeat, he managed to persuade the incumbent, John Campbell, to publicly declare that he favored enhancing border enforcement and that he was against any bill that would allow the creation of temporary foreign worker programs. After the balloting, Gilchrist said, "I had a big smile on my face...the day after the election. There were four bills dealing with immigration chaos introduced in Congress that day. Ten weeks before, none of them were in the works. I have to give myself some credit for that" (quoted in Thomas 2008).

Five years later, in 2010, Simcox announced his candidacy for John McCain's Senate seat. His aim was to challenge McCain (R-Arizona) on border security. He said, "John McCain has failed miserably in his duty to secure this nation's borders and protect the people of Arizona from the escalating violence and lawlessness. He has fought real efforts over the years at every turn, opting to hold our nation's border security hostage to his amnesty schemes" (*The Economist* 2009). Simcox

accused McCain of being a “Republican in Name Only” (RINO), a pejorative term used to discredit Republicans who have more liberal values and principles (Simcox 2010). By mid-February 2010, Simcox had decided to drop the race and endorse Republican J.D. Hayworth, a candidate who promoted strict border enforcement. Hayworth is well-known for his anti-immigrant ideology, well summarized in his book *Whatever It Takes: Illegal Immigration, Border Security and the War on Terror* (2006).

LOBBYING CONGRESS

Since the founding of the MMP and the MCDC, many bills legitimatizing civilian border patrols have been introduced in Congress: the Illegal Immigration Enforcement and Empowerment Act (SB1823), the Border Security and Modernization Act of 2005 (SB2049), the Protecting America Together Act of 2005 (HR3704), the Border Protection Corps Act (HR3622), the Homeland Security Volunteerism Enhancement Act of 2005 (HR4099), and the State Defense Force Improvement Act of 2005 (HR3401). Although none of them have ever passed, the existence of these bills shows that Congress has not just been shrugging off the Minutemen phenomenon. Furthermore, the Congressional Research Service has issued two reports on civilian border patrols. Commissioned by the House Judiciary Committee in 2005, the first analysis provides a historical overview of the Minutemen movement (Nunez-Neto 2005). The second sheds light on political and legal issues surrounding civilian border patrols by breaking down the national debate during the 109th Congress (Vina, Blas Nunez-Neto, and Bartlett Weir 2006). Despite these actions, it remains difficult to identify Gilchrist and Simcox’s direct role in influencing Congress. However, we can say that the fact that this issue is much disputed in Congress is partly due to their activism. A further study can be conducted to investigate to what extent they have helped members of Congress to introduce these new bills.

By describing Gilchrist and Simcox’s strategic actions, we can conclude that even if the Minutemen goal is apparently to monitor the U.S.-Mexico border, they also have farther-reaching objectives, which are to draw media attention as well as to shape the political agenda. Obviously, not all their strategic actions are effective, but Gilchrist and Simcox are the ones who have taken the Minutemen movement to the heights it has reached nationally.

Conclusion

Even if the Minutemen’s rhetoric and actions are hyperbolic, their presidents’ activism has been effective insofar as they have succeeded in bringing the issue of undocumented immigration and border security to the public, the media, and policymakers’ attention. Furthermore, their alarming rhetoric associating immigration with a “war,” a “disease,” and an “invasion” has certainly helped create a climate of

insecurity that justifies stricter immigration policies. It would be inaccurate to claim that Gilchrist and Simcox are the ones mainly responsible for the *securitization process* of undocumented immigration. However, their leading role in the U.S. anti-immigrant movement has helped promote strict immigration laws and border enforcement. In conclusion, this research suggests that even though Gilchrist and Simcox do not directly call the shots on border security, they can be qualified as “security entrepreneurs” in the anti-immigrant movement. Their persuasive speech acts, their surveillance operations at the border, their numerous appearances on television and radio, as well as their lobbying actions in Washington have raised new ideas and helped shape the political agenda. By focusing on the individual level of analysis, this research has demonstrated how only two members of the Minutemen movement have managed to influence the debate and become perceived as experts on immigration and border security issues.

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