

Expanding the Debate: The Effect of Reserve Borders on National and Human Security in Canada

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In general, the borders surrounding First Nations reserves are believed to undermine Canada's national security: it is repeatedly argued that these borders facilitate criminality. In contrast, the effect of these borders on human security – the protection of the physical and social well-being of the individual – is largely overlooked. A myopic focus on national security is unwarranted for at least two reasons. First, it is increasingly accepted that the referent object of security is not just the state but the individuals within it as well. Second, there is considerable evidence that reserve borders likely have an effect on both national *and* human security. More specifically, a review of the existing literature suggests that reserve borders are effective in controlling flows of goods and services. The outcome of this effectiveness is that reserve borders are not the weak link in the otherwise strong chain of Canadian national security, but they do diminish the human security of those living within them by creating zones where the delivery of social services is subpar relative to the rest of Canada. In sum, I argue that painting reserve borders as a threat to national security is a red herring: such thinking detracts from the real security issues concerning these borders.