NewStatesman

Technology, security and border control

Harnessing the power of data to protect the UK

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BY THE NUMBERS

Brexit and border control

12,429km
the length of the UK border (land and coastline), as measured by the CIA.

205m
the number of passengers who crossed the UK border from the rest of the EU in 2017, according to the NAO.

55%
the percentage of tonnage passing through UK ports from the EU, estimated by the Department for Transport.

11 out of 12
the rate of critical IT systems at the border that the Border Delivery Group has assessed as being at risk of not delivering on time and to acceptable quality post-Brexit.

145,000-250,000
the number of first-time customs declarations estimated by HMRC in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

2,230,000
the number of aircraft landings and take-offs at UK airports in 2017-18, according to the Civil Aviation Authority.

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SHUTTERSTOCK/GRAPHICS BY LEON PARKS

The British left should embrace security

As the UK prepares to leave the EU, the MP for Don Valley Caroline Flint argues that there has never been a better time to stop and reflect on the safety of our borders

Currently, two million illegal border crossings are made every year in the EU. The UK needs smarter borders to facilitate easy passage of legitimate trading, and to counter the porous nature of the EU border. This isn't an issue for post-Brexit, nor is it a consequence of the referendum. It's an issue we need to face today.

As a former Home Office minister responsible for tackling organised crime, and now in my capacity sitting on the Public Accounts Committee, I'm only too aware of the risks we face, and the complexities involved.

Organised criminal networks treat everything they move around as a commodity, and sadly that includes more and more people, who they can move through several countries into the EU with ease, because of the open-border Schengen system. That means right up to the French Calais region. As we've seen in recent months, it's a short but perilous passage across the Channel.

In the UK, we have a split personality over the central issue of the state and monitoring. We have probably more CCTV coverage than any other country in the EU, and I have never had a constituent asking me for less.

However, when Labour trialled the National Identity Database in 2006, the furore about an intrusive state helped the Tories to scrap it in 2010. David Cameron was looking for liberal policies to soften the Tory brand. The Tories wasted money already invested; but saved most of the cost of this project. Cancelling ID cards was a huge mistake.

Think of all the data Facebook has on millions of citizens – 39m UK citizens alone. It collects far more personal information than the state would ever ask for, that is far more intrusive and won't help an ambulance to find your blood type in a road accident. Why are we more afraid of the government than poorly regulated global internet giants?

We've introduced biometric passports since 2006, but we do not collect fingerprint data, unlike in the US. We have established a new seamless, intelligence-led border system, but the programme is running seven years late and the Public Accounts Committee suggests £1bn has been wasted so far.

On the left it's always been unfashionable to talk about border security, managing migration or tackling illegal immigration. Of course, we are more comfortable when talking about refugees – people in need. We are a generous country and our citizens donate millions every year to crisis appeals. We and our European neighbours could co-ordinate support for refugees far better.

We are less comfortable when addressing the hard facts that many of the people who are trying to force their way onto lorries and cross the Channel on boats, have no right to live in the UK. Many are just people seeking a better life and prefer the UK as a destination to France or Germany, as English is often their second language.

This government, and the next Labour government, needs to think hard about investing to save in the long run; how we use intelligence, data, drones, and new laser acoustics for surveillance around our coastlines, how our databases need to be modernised, and our passport and ID systems need to be an integral part of our security.

This isn't just about stopping criminal activity and dangerous people; it's also about making the smooth passage of people legitimately travelling for business and leisure safer and better. Technology, if well applied, is a huge ally in the effort for secure, fair trade and fair movement of people. It supports society; it doesn't undermine it.

Leidos and the *New Statesman* hosted a round table event in Westminster to discuss how technology can help the UK facilitate the effective and efficient movement of people and goods

The evolution of UK borders post-Brexit

As the United Kingdom prepares to leave the European Union, the role, purpose, and health of the country's borders have been called into question. In an effort to address these concerns, and move towards charting a technologically feasible path for the future, Leidos and the *New Statesman* gathered a group of policymakers, industry experts and researchers to discuss the pressing matters of technology, trade and migration policy in a post-Brexit UK.

In her opening remarks, the Member of Parliament for Don Valley, sitting member of the Public Accounts Committee and former Home Office minister Caroline Flint marvelled at the impressive technology being applied by the likes of Amazon to their operations. She said: "I am convinced that technology

well applied is a huge ally in the effort to secure fair trade and fair movement of people."

Research fellow in national security and resilience at the Royal United Services Institute, Alexander Babuta, noted that it was important "to make a clear distinction between trade and migration". Although methods being used to track suspicious packages were making strides, it was not simply a case of applying a similar type of technology to monitoring people, due to data protection and GDPR concerns. "[Monitoring of goods] is a very different type of technology that doesn't rely on things like biometrics in the way that passenger technology does … legally and from an ethical perspective it wouldn't necessarily come up against the same concerns around civil liberties."

Vice-president of business development and strategy at Leidos ,Tim Crofts, raised the possibility that "if you start forcing people to [opt in or out of certain sharing of data when you fill in your advanced passenger information] actually perhaps you might start to build a little bit of trust back into the system."

In his opening remarks, Leidos chief executive Matt Wiles called for a more unified and targeted approach to be developed to border policy, and this was a theme that kept being returned to again and again, as more round table participants highlighted problems with the government's current approach. He said: "We see lots of departments struggling to get their message across and get a clear single focus on this work. A body equipped and empowered to implement the government's will [is

THE PHOTO TEAM

security. And at the moment that kind of competition is institutionalised in Whitehall. How you take these decisions about flow at the border and how much information you collect is that trade-off. Having different ministers and departments responsible for each creates a bit more friction than there is in other countries."

Turning to Brexit, Babuta noted that if the UK left the EU without a deal, it would lose out on many border safeguards, including Passenger Name Record (PNR) information sharing. "We would lose access to those PNR capabilities and we would have to renegotiate a new agreement as a third country in the same way as the US and Canada has with the EU."

Reflecting on the referendum, however, Wiles concluded that people "have lost confidence in our ability to manage our borders; they want their borders back." Caroline Flint criticised the "elitist attitude of the establishment" which she said had failed to address people's concerns over immigration. She shared some of those concerns, arguing that improvements definitely needed to be made. "Look at the Windrush situation; for different reasons people are undocumented, but they have absolutely legitimate rights to be in this country … we have no facility to actually measure when people come in and when they go out." Despite any issues with the UK border, Flint did admit that "the fact we're an island nation has helped us immeasurably over decades".

Shadow Immigration Minister Afzal Khan, meanwhile, acknowledged the scale of challenge. "The movement in the world is not going to slow down. More than a billion people are flying every year now, and that is going to be increasing by four, five per cent every year." However, he struck a slightly different tone when discussing the correct approach to the migration challenge. "Britain doesn't accept its fair share of people … many countries are not carrying their fair share, and piling more pressure on a smaller number of countries."

Chair of the Science and Technology

"Technology is an ally for security"

needed] … it doesn't have to be the department for borders, but it needs to be a lead department that is empowered to deliver this."

Simon Daykin, chief technology officer at Leidos, explained how there is a huge amount of useful information "stuck in these different silos". He said: "I think some of the real opportunity is actually architecting the border as a joined-up operation, and then looking at the information that different agencies require and use, and how that can be shared with each other to actually provide a richer set of information to aid and inform policy, but also in order to enact policy."

Joe Owen, associate director of the Institute for Government, added: "You have two competing priorities which are the facilitation of trade, and then

"Why are we measuring that?"

Committee Norman Lamb reiterated the "absolute need to have an immigration policy post-Brexit that enables us to recruit the best people, and that sometimes involves bringing people in from overseas".

Although the table was united in excitement over the potential of technology to radically improve border control, many participants highlighted the need for a clear strategy before that improvement could be fully realised. When asked if it could play a role in the Irish border question, Simon Daykin responded that "technology can bring a huge amount of benefit," but this would be lost "until we actually get a clear idea as to what question we're asking of the technology; until we get that operational view of exactly what we're trying to achieve".

Robert McNeil, deputy director of the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, concurred. "Technology is always essentially the servant of policymaking and we therefore need to think about what the rationale is for the things that we're looking at." He argued that there was some confusion over the best measures to analyse – "what are we measuring, and why are we measuring that?" – and that some important signifiers were being overlooked. "For a start we should we looking at short-term migration as well as long-term migration. Net migration is a useful metric but immigration is also a useful metric."

Senior research fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) Marley Morris said a positive role that technology is already playing is in the Settled Scheme. "The scheme to ensure that EU nationals currently resident in the UK will have their rights protected is being developed through a new form of technology. There's a much simpler process of online application – it's a new system for the Home Office."

Alexander Babuta warned that better use of technology "will only be effective if it's accompanied by sufficient, substantial investment in the workforce" as Wiles said that an "open business framework" was required to allow new and evolving technologies to be incorporated into the border approach along the way.

Ultimately, the round table underlined a number of crucial challenges to developing a coherent borders and migration policy; however, it also exposed the exciting developments and leaps being made in technological solutions. "Leidos", Tim Crofts said, "is committed to supporting the government and other bodies to keeping the UK safe and prosperous, with a progressive and vigilant border that benefits everyone."

THE PHOTO TEAM

In the digital economy, data is king

Strong leadership is required in data collection and collation to improve immigration and trade, writes Matt Wiles, chief executive of Leidos UK

I n today's digital age, our borders are no longer simple lines drawn on a map, and border crossings do not only take place at distinct points of entry along those lines. From a business and security perspective, to operate efficiently in this environment of fluid border crossings, border service organisations require visibility of who or what is entering the country, and sharing data is at the heart of this.

However, the problem that the United Kingdom faces is that current systems for immigration and customs control have evolved over 50 years with departments layering legacy software system upon legacy software system. Our borders are often constrained by legacy systems, processes and technology silos; and the danger is that we can easily "fossilise" processes and the approaches based on existing systems constraints.

Fundamentally, we need to invest more in reimagining and transforming our borders to maximize our potential as a nation, making it easy to travel into and exchange goods with, whilst having proportional controls to secure our borders and grow our revenues.

Technology can be enabler of a frictionless and secure border but on its own it can never provide the complete answer. New and emerging technologies can inform our thinking but ultimately much of the information and tools we need to transform our border already exist, we simply are not exploiting the operational benefit.

To operate efficiently in this environment of fluid border crossings,

the UK requires integrated and borderless digital technology solutions, including advance passenger screening, registration, and immigration processing, virtual cargo screening and customs fee automation, as well as analytics that facilitate screening and highlight people and cargo deserving closer inspection. Border Force officers and HMRC must have easy access to both this information, and to the analytics that make sense of it, to facilitate customs and immigration decisions regardless of which "silo" the information was created in.

A more unified and targeted approach to border policy must be developed. Leadership is required across departments but a cross-functional "Future Borders" team working with the Cabinet Office is in situ; this team is probably best placed. With the right leadership and empowerment real strides can be made to drive the change needed. It's a massive undertaking requiring important strategic and operational changes for the UK and one that impacts Leidos and its employees as well, for we too have a significant national operation working with key government departments.

While it might be ideal to wipe away all of these systems and begin fresh with a clean slate on Brexit Day One, such a wholesale revamp of the UK's customs and immigration systems isn't practical or cost-effective.

In our view the task of reimagining and transforming our borders is neither insurmountable, nor does it require a proportionately greater expense to the UK taxpayer. On the contrary, by taking full advantage of advances in biometrics, in non-intrusive methods for examining persons and cargo to detect threats, and most crucially of all, in data sharing among government agencies, Leidos feels it's possible to enhance the security of border crossings, and accelerate processing of people and cargo to deal with the influx of new traffic — and to do all of this at a reasonable cost.

Securing our Sea, Land, Air and Cyber Borders

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