

Social Perception on Security Risk - A Missing Element of the Security Culture

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ABSTRACT

The majority of scientific contributions coming from interrelated disciplines such as psychology, communication sciences, and sociology embraces the idea that perceptions ``have a reality of their own``, people generally using personal frames to interpret and confer meaning to reality. The same professional literature states that the very idea of ``correctly`` understanding reality is per se invalid, objectivity and correctness being intrinsically excluded as criteria of reference. Applying this hypothesis within the framework of national security, we can infer that a social actor addresses security in conformity with his/her own framework and grants it alternative significances. Based on these considerations and acknowledging the subjective nature of security which heavily depends on the shaping of individual perception in defining security risks, the paper aims to tackle with the need to negotiate between individual risk perceptions and risk conceptualization as apparent in the formalized practice of state institutions: e.g. doctrines, strategies, contingency plans etc. Subsequently, the paper offers an interpretation of social factors impacting security perceptions and identifies potential solutions for a better harmonization of the institutional frameworks with the needs and expectations of citizens. The methodological approach embraced in our analysis included a Q sort investigation, as well as a media content analysis.

Key words: risk, security, culture, perception, national

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