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Civic Homeland Security Culture: A Poll Study Approach and the Example of Pennsylvania

Alexander Siedschlag

Contents

Abstract

COVID-19 response experience around the world has demonstrated that it is indispensable to understand the public understanding of, and needs during, risk, hazards, and crisis in public policy, in particular related to the security of society as a whole. The ultimate goal of homeland security and broader civil (or sometimes referred to as societal) security alike, as well as of related security science research, is to accomplish resilient societies through a culture of preparedness. Civic security culture is a necessary ingredient to such a culture of preparedness. The security culture perspective also helps understand how a resilient society and nation can be fostered while enhancing democratic values. This chapter discusses civic security culture (different, for example, from elite culture, first responder culture, agency culture, organizational culture, or safety

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culture) using the example of U.S. homeland security. Specifically, employing and extrapolating from the results of a multi-year Pennsylvania representative opinion poll study, it demonstrates how to investigate civic homeland security culture empirically and portrays a picture of such culture in a large U.S. state that appears to allow for some reasonable generalizations. In its conclusion, the chapter also indicates how such study of security culture can help assess homeland and/or civil security policy and governance, identify gaps, and recommend improvements.

Introduction

Debates and analyses about COVID-19 response around the world have shown that it is indispensable to understand the public understanding of, and needs during, risk, hazards, and crisis in public policy, particularly as they relate to the security of society as a whole (Airhihenbuwa et al. 2020; Journal of Risk Research 2021). Following constructivist approaches to security studies (Adler 1997), the assumption that has been increasingly supplanted by research and practice is that security postures depend on culturally embedded meanings of risk and socially negotiated sense-making of security threats and means to address them (Siedschlag and Jerković 2018; Wuthnow 2010). Formation of policy preferences but also of public opinion regarding risks and their management is the result of socially negotiated and constructed sense-making within cultural contexts (Falkheimer and Heide 2006). The ultimate goal of homeland security and broader "civil security" (Dory 2003; sometimes also referred to as "societal security," going back to Wæver 1993 and addressed by the discipline of "new security studies"; see Burgess 2010) alike is to accomplish resilient societies through a culture of preparedness. Civic security culture is a necessary ingredient to such a culture of preparedness (Arfsten 2020).

The security culture perspective also helps understand how a resilient society and nation can be fostered while enhancing democratic values (Jerković 2018). Further, as current disaster research has re-emphasized, we need a deeper understanding of what of what constitutes "culturally respectable responses to diverse populations"; that includes actual communities' knowledge, expectations, and interpretations of hazards, treats, and responses (Knox and Haupt 2020). Moreover, an evidence-based security culture perspective with a focus on the actual people and their involvement and empowerment in public safety and security matters (hence, *civic* security culture) is necessary to implement a true whole-community approach, which rests on the following three pillars: "(1) understand and meet the actual needs of the community; (2) engage and empower all parts of the community, and (3) strengthen what works well in communities on a daily basis" (Cutter and Rubin 2020, p. 242).

Against such background, this chapter, expanding on Almond and Verba's (1963, 1989) classical concept of "civic culture," discusses security culture in terms of public culture (different, for example, from elite culture, first responder culture, agency culture, organizational culture, or safety culture that all are elements of

homeland and/or civil security cultures; see Siedschlag and Jerković 2018) using the example of U.S. homeland security. Specifically, employing and extrapolating from the results of a multi-year representative opinion poll study conducted in Pennsylvania, it demonstrates an approach to investigating civic homeland security culture empirically and portrays a picture of such culture in a large U.S. state that appears to allow for some reasonable generalizations, as discussed below. In its conclusion, the chapter also indicates how such study of security culture can help assess homeland and/or civil security policy and governance, identify gaps, and recommend improvements.

U.S. Homeland Security Context

"Homeland security" embodies a *security community,* a concept also used in culture-oriented security research, originally focused on international security (Adler and Barnett 1998). Such

> Communities are unified groups that share goals, values, or purposes rather than geographic boundaries or jurisdictions. These groups may possess the knowledge and understanding of the threats and hazards, local response capabilities, and requirements within their jurisdictions and have the capacity to alert authorities of those emergencies, capabilities, or needs. During an incident these groups may be critical in passing along vital communications to individuals and families, and to supporting response activities in the initial stages of a crisis. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2014, p. 93; for related conceptual foundations, see Dory 2003; Bach and Kaufman 2009)

As a distributed policy area, homeland (and civil) security do not fall within the unique purview of any single government agency or component. A wide-reaching public-private partnership effort, it centers around but at the same time transcends the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its various all-of-government partners. As well, homeland security is a civil security policy area with global reference and a policy sector also present in other countries than the United States (Givens et al. 2018; Morag 2018; Siedschlag 2015). Often characterized as a whole-community enterprise, homeland security is strategically defined as a concerted national effort: a nationwide comprehensive activity, including all-of-government across federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal levels; all first responder communities; the private sector; and a vigilant public (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2010b, p. 59–64). The nationwide, shared endeavor homeland security is rooted in an all-hazards approach, addressing the full range of risks: from terrorism and violent extremism to border and immigration, to cybersecurity, to industrial accidents and natural disasters, including pandemics, and beyond, with an increasing additional focus on national prosperity and economic security, including countering espionage (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2019a; U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2019b).

Homeland security, in addition to various government agencies at different tiers and the broad private sector, also counts on every single member of the public. Little

is known though about how it actually resonates with the public. Homeland security being an enterprise that involves the whole community and addresses an all-hazards spectrum of the greatest risks to the way of life (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2011, p. 1; U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2014, p. 14–15), it is essential to know people's awareness, understanding, and perception of it. This is so also for several more specific reasons, including for instance effectiveness assessment of homeland security-related public policy campaigns, determination of public approval ratings for the enterprise as a whole (since it transcends the federal U.S. Department of Homeland Security), recognition of people's expectation in homeland security policy and programs across tiers of government (federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial), or assessing public risk perception and community needs against the political goals and risk-informed priorities set for the entire homeland security enterprise by its federal lead(s) and legislators.

As importantly, within the ambition of the *National Preparedness Goal* to accomplish a "resilient nation" (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2015, p. 4) and the Federal Emergency Agency's (FEMA) strategic goals to "build a *culture* of preparedness" and "ready the nation for catastrophic disasters" (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2018, p. 4, emphasis added), it is essential to empower every segment of society to prepare and build adaptable capabilities to "to quickly meet the needs of overwhelming incidents" (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2021). COVID-19 has further demonstrated the need to build whole-community capacity to realize this goal also in a multiple-crisis context (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2020b). The COVID-19 catastrophe and the surge in violent domestic extremism have shown that it is essential to understand the public understanding of, needs during, and potential to contribute to domestic safety and security emergencies – in line with the three essentials of the whole-community approach, as reviewed in the beginning of this chapter: "1) understand and meet the actual needs of the community; 2) engage and empower all parts of the community, and 3) strengthen what works well in communities on a daily basis" (Cutter and Rubin 2020, p. 242).

As former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano pointed out,

> unlike the rest of the national-security apparatus, the department's primary responsibility is to local communities. We see the American people as our key partners rather than our charges. My team and I started by recognizing that no government agency, even one as huge as ours, could take the place of an empowered and vigilant public. (Napolitano with Breslau 2019, p. 50)

Civic Homeland Security Culture

Building upon Almond and Verba's classical work on *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963, 1989)*,* the homeland security civic culture can be defined as a combination of two characteristics: first, people's acceptance (based on some related

basic knowledge) of homeland security authority and responsibility where it falls within the enterprise and its policy space; second, a public conviction that participation in homeland security whole-community obligations is their responsibility. Rooted in a federal cabinet-level department as well as the whole-community approach, homeland security needs to embody both of those characteristics. With additions made to the original concept of civic culture by subsequent studies (Norris 1989, 2011), a third characteristic of the homeland security civic culture may be added: people's critical thinking about the defining criteria of homeland security, as understood by them; expectation in fair delivery of related policies; and, in case, firm grounding of assertive stance toward homeland security missions, methods, and outcomes in the principles of liberal democracy.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had conducted a *Bottom-Up Review (BUR)* in 2009, as part of the – then just started – Congressionally mandated *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* process (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2010a). Modeled after the classical Department of Defense *Bottom-Up Review* (Aspin 1993), it mainly was an *organizational efficiency assessment* of the new federal department in an era of new and transforming threats. What is currently needed is a *societal effectiveness assessment*: How is the homeland security enterprise reaching, and how is it perceived by, its ultimate end-users as well as essential contributors to the whole-community approach, that is, the American public? Furthermore, the homeland security founding mission of preventing and protecting from terrorism – that DHS has recently been laying an increasing emphasis on, subsequent to the surge in domestic violent extremism and domestic terrorism (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2021) – warrants such studies, as public perception is a chief target of terrorist attacks:

> Public perception, more than critical infrastructure, airports, or national historical sites, is the real target of terrorist attacks. Manipulating public perception and exaggerating their capability to do harm are terrorists' primary weapons. In order to be effective, terrorists need to arouse fear of their organizations and leaders. They target that fear by attacking the public's confidence in its national leadership's ability to protect society from the unpredictable and indiscriminate nature of their attacks. (Khalil 2006, p. 303)

From the practical as well as the civic security culture research perspective, the challenge remains to "transform a government-defined mission into a societal norm" (Bach and Kaufman 2009, n.p.) as still little is known about how the national effort and its whole-community impetus actually resonate with society (Dory 2003). Absent a thorough track of public perception studies of homeland security writ-large, public confidence specifically in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was studied early on and subsequently this included measuring public approval ratings of DHS (e.g. Drake 2013; Newport 2002; Pew Research Center 2015, p. 59–61, 189; Pew Research Center 2020, p. 4, 6–7, 13). Yet higher-granularity accounts are needed of if and how homeland security as a composite mission space resonates with the public as a networked whole-community enterprise. Existing studies of public perception related to homeland security have focused on specific

domains, mainly terrorism-related risk perception, and explored what public policy preferences and expectations in government action emerge from such perception; and then have gone on to explore how responsive public policy seems to be to the public's perception-based policy preferences (Liu et al. 2019; Davis and Barbish 2019). DHS-conducted studies, including the *FEMA National Household Survey,* have focused on disaster risk perception and people's preparedness efforts (Donahue et al. 2014). Most of those studies have aimed to either predict or foster policy change based on public risk perception, or to assess the implementation of priorities from the *National Preparedness Goal* and the annual *National Preparedness Reports* at the family and individual level.

Responsiveness of the homeland security enterprise to community preferences is essential for a truly whole-community approach and currently implemented for example via *Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment* (THIRA) and related *Stakeholder Preparedness Reviews* (SPR) (Siedschlag 2018). Those SPRs were renamed from "State" to "Stakeholder" Preparedness Reviews, thus underscoring the principle of community involvement in those reviews. However, THIRA/SPRs being focused on a comprehensive assessment of the status of preparedness capabilities, they do not assess community preferences within a civic security culture context or address community understanding of homeland security or perception of priorities.

More systematic knowledge about the public perception of homeland security is also important for evidence-based policy strategy. The *2019 National Preparedness Report* (NPR) (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2019) did not address any empirics of the American public's understanding of homeland security. Here and there referring to public awareness aspects, it apparently jumped to the conclusion that DHS campaigns automatically are successful, that is, actually raise public awareness. Prior studies have shown this to be questionable, and the findings of the present Pennsylvania poll study are in line with that:

For example, a nationwide Gallup poll in 2013 showed that less of half (45%) of Americans had heard the "If You See Something, Say Something™" slogan, and only 13% correctly identified it as designed to prevent terrorism. Although DHS has worked with a variety of organizations to spear the campaign across the United States, 55% had never heard of it according to the Gallup poll, which also indicated the campaign was not achieving whole-community objectives: rather, considerable geographical and social gaps were apparent. Only a majority of residents in the East (64%) were aware of it, as opposed to 44% in the Midwest, 39% in the South, and 37% in the West. College graduates (55%) were found more likely to be aware of the campaign (55%) than those without an academic degree (41%); overall, campaign awareness correlated with education level (Ander and Swift 2017).

The 2019 NPR moreover did not address public awareness of the homeland security enterprise as a whole, without which it is not possible to fully accomplish the *National Preparedness Goal* (NPG) of

> A secure and resilient Nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2015, p. 1)

The latest NPR of 2020 however itself raises some doubts about previously used awareness-building strategies in the context of COVID-19:

> Though several communities included a pandemic scenario in their 2019 THIRA, the majority of communities (58% of those reporting) did not identify a pandemic as a threat or hazard of greatest concern. This could represent a lack of awareness of the full scope of impacts a pandemic could have or a calculation that a pandemic would not cause as much stress to their capabilities as other risks in their communities. (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2020a, p. 2)

Poll Study Approach

In order to know what works well in communities and how communities understand and, cognitively and emotionally, react to homeland security – including emergency management – risks, policies, and policy implementation (or mission execution), it is necessary to collect relevant information and generate relevant data. However, the state of the art of empirical studies of the American public's perception of homeland security is still narrow. Early studies of public perceptions related to homeland security followed the technology acceptance model and assessed people's attitude toward technologies that were also relevant in a homeland security context. Using relatively small sample sizes, survey research for example tried to assess the perception of risks and benefits of technological solutions for homeland security use without an understanding of how people were perceiving homeland security itself, and its goals and missions (Sanquist et al. 2008). Other early work included mission-specific elite surveys of first-responder perceptions, such as on city managers' perception of local preparedness (Reddick 2007) or the perception of risk of a terrorist attack, related preparedness activities, and organizational response capacity in local law enforcement agencies (Giblin et al. 2008). For some states, for example Ohio, survey results on perception of insecurity are available, while not specifically focused on the homeland security domain (Donnermeyer n.d.). Public threat perception has also been studied in its behavioral impact (Jenkin 2006). Other work has studied public perception of agency performance and of agency representatives (Baldwin 2001; Brown 2009; Jones 2015). This has been added to by single-issue studies such as the perception of "military-style policing" by local communities (Stephens 2019).

The Pennsylvania study used an approach that was based on the results from representative polls of Pennsylvania residents' perception of homeland security: conducted in the fall of 2020, during the late Trump presidency and ahead of the most recent presidential election; in the fall of 2018, mid-term Trump presidency;

and in the fall of 2016, during the late Obama presidency and before the presidential election that was won by Trump.

The polls were conducted through the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg, using an open question within their omnibus poll instrument, using an open question within their omnibus poll instrument, with 660 respondents (and weighting of results to ensure representativeness) in 2016, 1047 respondents in 2018, and 1001 respondents in 2020 (using a new instrument). The objective was threefold: (1) to investigate how people define and value homeland security policy, risks, and related missions, based on their everyday knowledge of and experience with homeland security policy implementation; (2) to assess, based on those results, how effective the homeland security enterprise has been in communicating its foundations and priorities to the public and how responsive it has been to articulated constituents' needs; and (3) to assess the stability of public perception of homeland security policy and its hazards spectrum across time and over potential effects of political campaigning.

Rationale and Relevance of Pennsylvania as an Example

Studying public perception of homeland security using the example of Pennsylvania is relevant for a couple of reasons. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), today a component of DHS, was established after the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident in 1979 (Penn State Harrisburg 2014). Pennsylvania was directly affected by 9/11 events, as hijacked United Airlines flight 93 crashed in Stonycreek Township, Somerset County, Pennsylvania, after a passenger revolt, while believed to have been targeting Washington, DC. Among the senior leaders standing up the DHS were Pennsylvanians: former Governor and first U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge as well as Admiral (ret.) James M. Loy, the former U.S. Coast Guard Commandant who led the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) through its creation and then became Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security under Tom Ridge. Another factor is Pennsylvania's tradition as a swing state in presidential elections, where public perception of and attitudes toward certain policies can on the ballot make a difference of huge national consequence. Further, as to be discussed below, Pennsylvanians' overall positive view of homeland security in the first poll of 2016 (65%) was almost the same as the then recent nationwide public approval rating of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security found by Pew Research Center (2015, p. 51–61, 189) (64%). The approval rating at the time appeared stable as according to a poll study conducted 2 years before, in 2013, 66% of Americans had a positive view of the Department (Drake 2013). In the third Pennsylvania poll of 2020, 72% of respondents exhibited a positive perception of homeland security, and a Pew Research Center (2020, p. 4, 6–7, 13) survey from the same year yielded a DHS approval rating of 71%. These data suggest Pennsylvanians' perception of homeland security has not been outlying and could be indicative of issues relevant to explore in other states and territories and at the federal level.

Previous research has suggested that issue salience has a high impact on the public's approval of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. In particular, related studies found individuals' attention to terrorism positively correlated with their level of trust in DHS (Robinson et al. 2012). Thus, the ongoing public policy discourse on terrorism and radicalization could drive homeland security public approval ratings, while disguising civic security culture characteristics by masking lack of public understanding of or support for homeland security missions other than prevention of terrorism. As to be discussed below, Pennsylvania poll results can support such an assumption, once again suggesting some good potential for extrapolation.

Method

Besides the policy and strategy considerations above, the goals and rationale of the civic security culture study approach presented here are also supported by the National Research Council report on *Frameworks for Higher Education in Homeland Security*. As early as in 2005, that report had recommended for the study of homeland security to include addressing of threat perception in addition to strategic risk assessment, as well as contribute to a broad public and professional "dialogue as to what constitutes a socially acceptable definition of homeland security and what are the practical institutional means to achieve it" (National Research Council of the National Academies 2005, 4). Such a task is impossible to accomplish without more study of the public perception of homeland security and how the people would define its very concept.

The example study used the Lion Poll instrument of the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg, as described in Table 1, to generate its qualitative data that were then further analyzed and quantitatively coded.

The representative polls administered in fall 2016, fall 2018, and fall 2020 included the following open-ended question on the perception of homeland security:

> How would you define "homeland security?" Specifically, think about what homeland security protects you from and how it affects your daily life.

Responses were manually coded in a spreadsheet by content analysis. Some response categories have multiple coding so that percentages do not necessarily add up to 100. This approach allowed for starting a picture of an important dimension of the homeland security civic culture in Pennsylvania. The coding categories were derived and refined using previous poll responses conducted through the Center for Survey Research.

For example: If a responded replied "Homeland security is good to have. It protects me from possible terrorist or other attacks from other countries. I don't really think about how it affects me in my daily life," this would be coded as the response hitting the following categories:

Table 1 Lion Poll instrument methodology. (Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg)

Data consisted of responses from 660 randomly selected adult Pennsylvania residents in 2016, 1047 in 2018, and 1001 in 2020. The 2016 survey was administered by telephone through the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg between August 18 and October 15, 2016. The Center employed its existing methodology of a dual-frame design consisting of both landline and cell phone samples, with 61% of respondents interviewed via cell phone and 39% interviewed via landline. The survey cooperation rates for the landline portion and cell portion of the sample were 73% and 60%, respectively. Responses were weighted by demographic criteria to enhance representativeness. In 2018, the Center for Survey Research switched to a different methodology for their omnibus polls. The Center was and is now using the Marketing Systems Group (MSG) to recruit respondents. Those had previously enrolled to participate in web survey panels incentivized by nominal compensation. In the 2018 poll, respondents completed self-administered web surveys between August 1 and September 2, 2018. The poll used a quota-based invitation system to generate a final dataset representative of Pennsylvania's adult population. A total of 341,896 panelists were invited to participate, and the final dataset included 1047 responses, for a response rate of 1.4%. The response rate in this type of web-based survey should not be compared to response rates in traditional phone surveys. Quotas largely influence it that are used to ensure the final dataset's representativeness of adult Pennsylvanians by age and sex category and, separately, by region. Along with the reduced need for weighting, the quota-based approach makes the response rate a much lesser quality criterion for web panel surveys. In the 2020 poll, using the same methodology, a total of 1001 self-administered web surveys were completed by adult Pennsylvanians between September 3 and October 23, 2020. The final participation rate in the survey was 3.0%.

- Mission: Preventing Terrorism and Enhancing Security.
- Mission: Protecting from outside threats, foreign invasion, or interference.
- Homeland Security scope (all-hazards, whole community): Other/Don't Know/ No Response.
- Locus of responsibility for homeland security: Federal (as the response mentions protection from other countries).
- Perception of homeland security: Positive.
- Effect on daily life: Other/Don't Know/No Response.

The number of hits per category was then added and percentages were calculated based on the total hits per category in relation to the number of respondents (N).

Systematically, the study applied an interpretative research design, to apprehend the complexity of people's experience of homeland security. Interpretive research asks basic questions such as: "How do people make sense of the world? How do these understandings shape social life?" (Loseke 2013, p. 23) In this vein, the composition of the interview question and the approach used to analyzing it mirror the interest in finding out how people in Pennsylvania make sense of homeland security and if/how they feel what they think of as homeland security impacts their everyday life. The content analysis approach follows the interpretative research standard of "trustworthy" data analysis (p. 79–80).

This approach allows for the development of an empirical picture of the homeland security civic culture, based on evidence for conceptual understanding and everyday lines of reasoning about homeland security, as opposed to a snapshot picture of public perception of the prevailing threat perceptions of the day. In the center of the interest is the question of how the public would define homeland security, based not

on introspection but on their everyday experience with homeland security measures, as people perceive they affect their lives – regardless of the (federal, state, local) level of origin of those measures. A question kept at a generic level can better capture people's perception of homeland security than a more specific question asking respondents to think about "the hazards," "the threats," or "the risks" that homeland security protects them from. The term "hazard" may cause an association with "HAZMAT," thus wrongly limiting the scope of their response. Similarly, the term "threat" may evoke strong associations with "terrorist threat," possible causing respondents to believe answers that relate to other aspects of the homeland security mission, such as resilience to disasters, are undesired. Further, asking about "risk" may make respondents feel overburdened by the question, as they may feel being asked for their rational risk assessment, and interfere with the objective of collecting information about perceptions.

Limitations

Limitations lie in the methodology switch that occurred between the 2016 and 2018 polls and was beyond our control: While the 2016 poll had used a traditional phone survey instrument, the administrators of the overall 2018 and 2020 polls employed an internet-based panel survey conducted in collaboration with a third-party vendor. A further limitation lies in the open question's complexity: Somewhat counterintuitively, respondents seem to have been better able to comprehensively address the question when it was asked over the phone, like in the 2016 poll, as opposed to in writing, as in the 2018 and 2020 internet-based polls. As a result, fewer respondents addressed all of the question's dimensions in the 2018 and 2020 surveys. On the other hand, because of the panel methodology used in the internet-based polls, the 2018 and 2020 poll results can be considered more representative of a truly whole-community perspective on homeland security than the 2016 poll. The poll methodology change could negatively impact the interpretation of 2016 to 2018 results into trends. Identification of 2018 to 2020 trends may be more reliable as those years' poll results were obtained through the same survey method and participants were drawn from the same panel; thus, an unknown number of 2020 poll participants may have been the same individuals that had responded to the 2018 poll. Finally, a limitation may exist in the content analysis/coding approach that heavily relies on the coders' semantic understanding. As a mitigation measure, the same coding team was used in all three annual studies.

Public Attitude Toward Homeland Security

People interviewed in the three Pennsylvania polls typically can articulate a concept of homeland security, whether accurate or not. Overall, a clear majority (72%) in the 2020 poll define homeland security as something of positive value that provides needed protection to the American nation and its people. The positive view of homeland security remains substantial when responses are broken into party

affiliation: 81% of registered Republicans see homeland security as something positive, and 70% of registered Democrats do. However, a positive perception of homeland security is still more common among those who associate with one of the two large parties. Among those registered with other parties (such as Green or Liberal), or not registered, it only reaches 64%, which, however, is still a very good approval rating for a policy area mainly attributed by respondents to a federal department. The 2016 poll had found an overall positive attitude of 65% that rose to 81% in 2018 and now, though having dropped to 72% in 2020, is still above the pre-Trump presidency levels. As noted, findings for Pennsylvanians' positive perception of homeland security writ-large (72% in 2020 and 65% in 2016) in are consistent with public approval ratings for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security specifically, as found in nationwide Pew Research surveys (71% in 2020 and 64% in 2015; see Pew Research Center 2015, 59–61, and 189; Pew Research Center 2020, 4, 6–7, and 13).

These findings may be interpreted in consistency with the policy salience hypothesis, according to which public ratings of an institution rise as policy issues connected to the institution become more striking (Miller et al. 2017; Robinson et al. 2012). Between 2016 and 2018, that was the vase with a couple of policy issues related to homeland security, as exemplified by the political and public discourse on border, immigration, criminal networks, and violent extremism. In sum, we are experiencing – not only in the United States – a "ubiquity of the security topic" in scholastic and public discourse (Kaufmann and Wichum 2016, p. 67), as well as in "widely distributed policies and political programs" (p. 66).

At the same time, a considerable portion of Pennsylvania's population (20% in 2020, 13% in 2018, and 28% in 2016) views homeland security neutrally, has not heard of it, or has no opinion about it. Only a minority (8%) of 2020 respondents continue to expressly see homeland security as something negative, often citing surveillance of own citizens and infringement of liberty, overblown bureaucracy, or a lack of trust in the institution as reasons. This has been a consistent number (6% in 2018, 7% in 2016). Those 2020 respondents residing in rural Pennsylvania (70%) value homeland security almost as highly as those from Pennsylvania's urban areas (73%). This is an encouraging finding in light of homeland security's whole community goal.

Fig. 1 illustrates related 2020 poll results.

Perceived Scope and Missions of Homeland Security

Strategically, homeland security is based on an all-hazards approach driven by risk management (The White House 2011; Kilroy 2018), with the aim of fostering a culture of national resilience. All-hazards does not mean all and any hazards but risk prioritization based on strategic assessment across a broad spectrum, from terrorist threats, critical infrastructure protection, and the cyber dimension to natural disasters and industrial accidents. Homeland security today is therefore set up to protect against a range of threats and risks, at different tiers of priority following limited
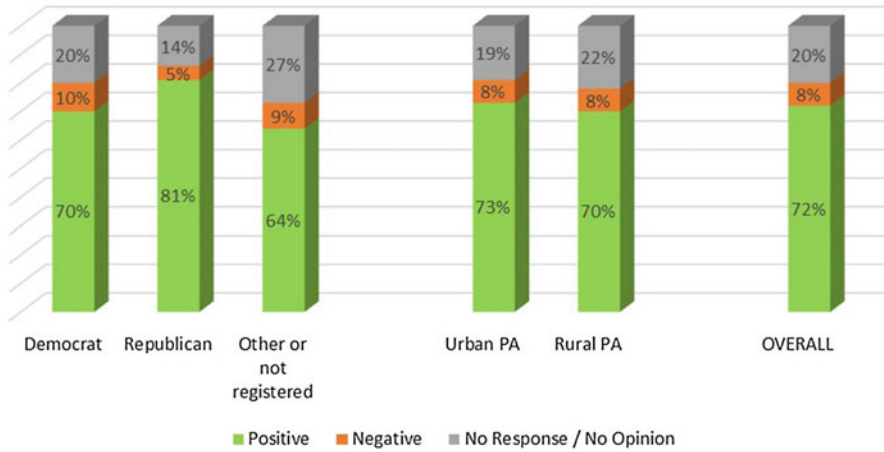
Fig. 1 Pennsylvanians' differential attitudes toward homeland security (2020)

resources and application of the DHS risk management doctrine. In addition to risk-informed priorities which may be time-bound, homeland security is rooted in core missions as defined in the first and confirmed in the *2014 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2014, p. 6–8) and marked blue in Fig. 2. The enactment of those core missions is not limited to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security but extends over the entire homeland security enterprise.

A remarkably large number of Pennsylvanians (28%) according to the 2020 poll still do not know, or do not state, what they see homeland security to actually protect from. The number went down from 38% in 2016 to 23% in 2018 and has now increased again. That said, currently almost a quarter (22%) of Pennsylvanians are aware of the all-hazards approach to homeland security and that its mission space extends beyond preventing terrorism (was 8% in 2018 and 16% in 2016). There are five homeland security core missions defined in the *2010 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2010b) and subsequently. The founding core mission, "Preventing Terrorism and Enhancing Security," is referenced by a third (32%) of Pennsylvanians in the 2020 poll (45% in 2018 and 37% in 2016). According to the National Preparedness Goal, the ultimate outcome of the national effort of all-hazards, whole-community homeland security is securing America's freedom in order to safeguard its way of life (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2015, 1, 8, and A-2). However, almost nobody in the Pennsylvania public has recognized that (2% each in 2020, 2018, and 2016).

Conversely, a quarter of Pennsylvanians (23%) in 2020 continue to tend to equate, inaccurately so, homeland security with national defense and protecting the United States from threats from other countries and from foreign invasion by other nations (other than terrorism, specifically). As this went up from 14% in 2018 (coding category not included in 2016 poll), we can speculate this to be a potential COVID-19 pandemic effect, as the underlying virus in President Trump's public
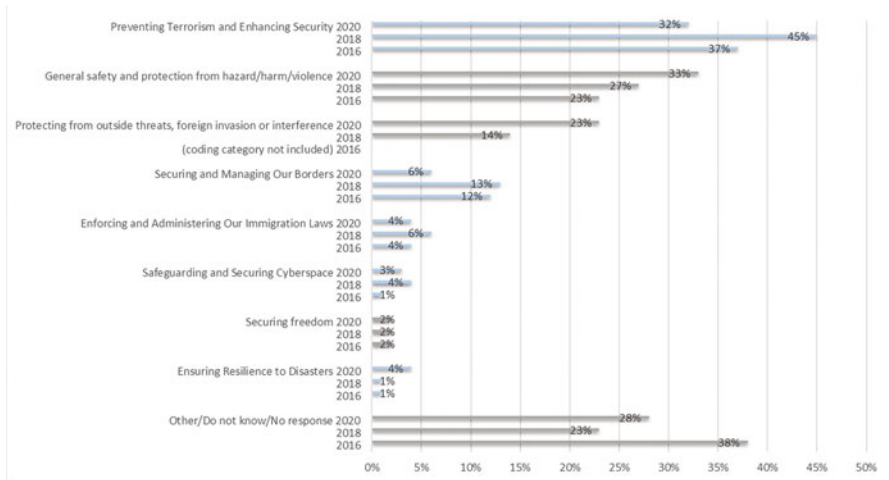
Fig. 2 Main homeland security tasks seen by Pennsylvanians in 2020, 2018, and 2016 (since respondents were able to mention more than one mission, percentages do not add up to 100 per year)

communication was often referred to as the "China virus." However, the view that homeland security prevents threats and invasion from other countries is almost equally distributed across registered Republicans (23%) and Democrats (26%), with the latter even expressing it slightly more often.

Not much awareness continues to exist for the other four core missions of homeland security. Only 6% of 2020 poll respondents cite the core mission of "Securing and Managing Our Borders" (was 13% in 2018 and 12% in 2016). No more than 4% refer to the core mission of "Enforcing and Immigration Laws" (which is a consistent finding, with 6% in 2018 and also 4% in 2016). That "Safeguarding and Securing Cyberspace" (3%) and "Ensuring Resilience to Disaster" (4%) are core missions of homeland security remains largely unknown to Pennsylvanians in 2020, with only 2–3 percentage points up from 2016 to 2018 poll results. This is an interesting result because the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a component of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), was the lead agency for the national COVID-19 response effort during the Trump presidency:

> Under the direction of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, FEMA moved from playing a supporting role in assisting the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which was designated as the initial lead federal agency for the response, to directing it. (United States Government Accountability Office 2020, p. 4)

This fact however was overlaid in media coverage by what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (represented by Dr. Fauci) do. As a result, it did not come unexpected that COVID-19 apparently has not increased public perception of disaster response and resilience as an essential homeland security mission.

As mentioned, the *2019 National Preparedness Report* (NPR) simply assumed that DHS campaigns are automatically raising public awareness, but poll results do not support such a postulation. One of several concrete examples is the 2019 NPR's discussion of the "#BeCyberSmart" campaign as a public-awareness raising tool (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2019, 29), whereas data from Pennsylvania show the public does not even connect cyber to a DHS responsibility or has any significant awareness of that it is a homeland security-related issue that affects its daily lives. This demonstrates how important it is to collect empirical data on public awareness of the homeland security enterprise and its missions and include them in strategic assessments such as the *National Preparedness Reports*. In fact, the core missions of "Safeguarding and Securing Cyberspace" and "Ensuring Resilience to Disasters" remain widely unknown to Pennsylvanians according to the poll results. These findings could be attributable to prior policy failure, as DHS shifted the incentives for local governments from mitigation to recovery, thus arguably motivating reliance on post-disaster funding (Birkland 2009), as opposed to preparedness and related substantial public campaigns.

Important to note, at the same time, a third (33%) of Pennsylvania's public, according to the 2020 poll, see an additional main mission in homeland security: Ensuring general safety and protection of the people, including protection from violence as such. The numbers went consistently up from 23% in 2016 and 27% in 2018. In the most recent 2020 poll, several respondents mentioned riots and violent extremism in that context. With countering violent extremism being a rising field of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's policy and operations, public opinion in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania would support a related expansion of the homeland security core mission set. The emphasis respondents to the Pennsylvania poll laid on ensuring general safety and security, well-being of the people, and protection from violence also indicates that the "homeland security vision" of the *2014 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review*,

> A homeland that is safe, secure, and resilient against terrorism and other hazards, where American interests, aspirations, and way of life can thrive. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2014, p. 14–15)

has started to resonate with the public at the state level. However, discussing the homeland security vision in the broader context of civic culture, it has to be noted that only 2% of respondents in each of the three polls mentioned the protection of freedom as a relevant mission for homeland security.

Fig. 2 illustrates those findings (since respondents were able to mention more than one mission, percentages do not add up to 100).

The fact that public perception of the border-related mission of homeland security did not change a lot from 2016 to 2018 indicates that public perception of homeland security functions is relatively stable and not strongly impacted by policy and media hypes. Otherwise, one would have had to see a clear increase in awareness for that particular mission following the policy and media reporting focus on border issues in the relevant time period. This finding is in line with previous relevant studies that

found the American public's risk perceptions and policy preferences to be stable over time, on a national average (Liu et al. 2019, p. 124).

Perceived Locus of Responsibility for Homeland Security

As the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* of 2007 had pointed out,

> America's constitutional foundations of federalism and limited government place significant trust and responsibility in the capabilities of State and local governments to help protect the American people. State, local, and Tribal governments, which best understand their communities and the unique requirements of their citizens, provide our first response to incidents through law enforcement, fire, public health, and emergency medical services. They will always play a prominent, frontline role in helping to prevent terrorist attacks as well as in preparing for and responding to a range of natural and man-made emergencies. (The President of the United States 2007, p. 4)

Over a dozen years after, this concept has not reached the public mind, according to the poll results, where most respondents did not perceive a state and local locus of responsibility for homeland security.

Pennsylvania has a Governor's Office of Homeland Security and participates in several federal homeland security preparedness grant programs (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania n.d.). Yet few Pennsylvanians are aware that homeland security transcends the federal level of government and that it also happens at state and local levels. A clear majority of 2020 respondents (64%) regard homeland security as a federal responsibility or activity (74% in 2018 and 63% in 2016). Awareness of state and local-level activity in homeland security has consistently shrunk to now 6% (from 13% in 2018 and 17% in 2016). Conversely, the number of those who are not sure about who is in charge of homeland security remains high, with now over a third of respondents (36%) in 2020 compared to 24% in 2018 and 30% in 2016. The concept of the whole-community approach only has reached a few: Just 1% of respondents, consistent across 2020, 2018, and 2016 polls, have referred to collaboration among several actors beyond the federal government. Those who do most often cite law enforcement as an example, followed by public transport including airlines. Fig. 3 illustrates some of the related results.

Perceived Impact of Homeland Security on Daily Life

Potentially, homeland security affects and involves members of the general public on a daily basis. Examples would be Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR), as thoroughly advertised in the "If You See Something, Say Something™" campaign (a national campaign that raises public awareness of the indicators of terrorism and terrorism-related crime, as well as the importance of reporting suspicious activity to state and local law enforcement, see U.S. Department of Homeland Security n.d.), but also cybersecurity awareness, active shooter preparedness, or pandemic
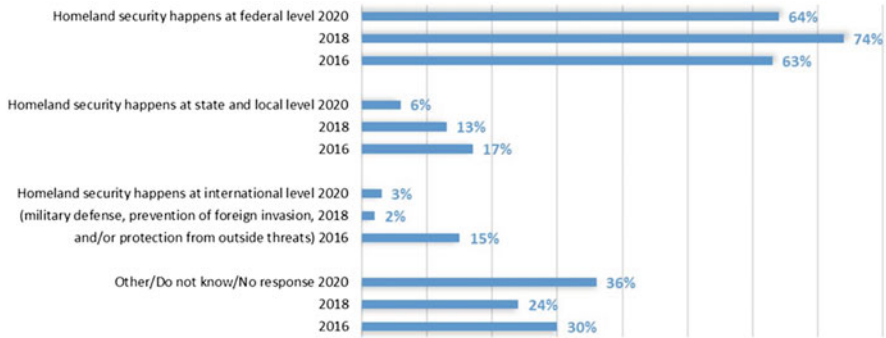
Fig. 3 Pennsylvanians' perceived locus of responsibility for homeland security in 2016, 2918, and 2020

response. The connection of prevention, preparedness, and emergency response communication to people's daily life reasoning and routines has long been identified by research as the lynchpin of local community involvement in homeland security missions, today known as the whole-community approach: Disaster research studies in the 1950s and 1960s had already demonstrated that real, timely, and credible information provided by authorities is essential in sparking people's "ego-involvement" in the situational management of threats or crises (Baker and Chapman 1962; Wolfenstein 1957). This involvement is not based on an instilled domain-specific public emergency culture but based on the accentuation of everyday habits and civic culture (Wolfenstein 1957).

As a result, although sometimes criticized as carrying a risk of creating constructed fears (Harvey 2008; Mueller 2009; Wuthnow 2010), mainstreaming of security in everyday culture enables national preparedness, protection of a society's commonly acquired values, and safeguarding of a nation's way of life. Therefore, public perception of the connection of homeland security to daily life is an important indicator of a whole-community homeland security "culture in action" (Swidler 1986).

An increasing number of the public in Pennsylvania (85% in 2020, up from 70% in 2016 and 82% in 2018) continue to be unsure about, or choose not to state, how homeland security affects their daily lives. Only 8% (down from 23% in 2016 and 11% in 2018) of respondents in the 2020 poll say they feel homeland security affects their daily lives – such as by keeping terrorists out, by preventing violent extremism and riots, by ensuring safe and secure neighborhoods; via the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) when traveling on a plane, through security precautions in public transportation; etc. As of 2020, roughly as many as those who explicitly state that homeland security does affect their daily lives one way or the other (8%) articulate that homeland security definitely has nothing to do with their daily lives (7%, was 6% in 2018 and 7% in 2016).

The most substantial finding in this regard being that a growing number of people do not know or do not state how or if homeland security affects their daily lives, the
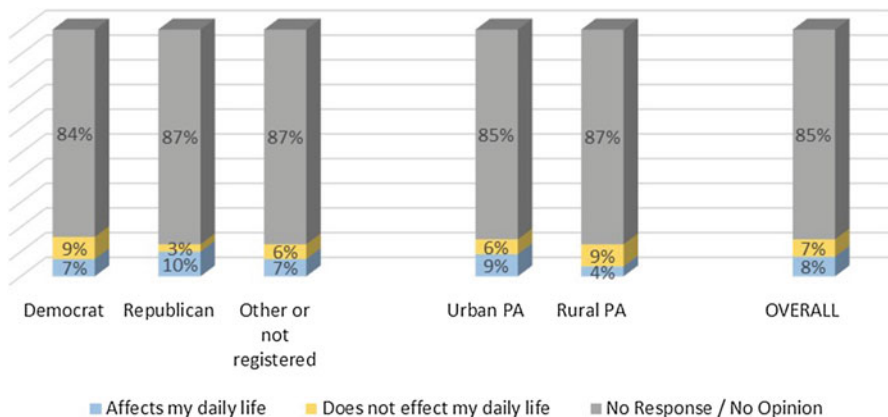
Fig. 4 Pennsylvanians' differential perception of homeland security's effect on their daily life (2020)

differential perception picture of homeland security's daily life effects is not unexpected: Based on the 2020 poll, fewer of those residing in rural areas of the state (4%) say that they experience effect of homeland security on their daily lives than residents of urban areas (9%). Conversely, more respondents from rural Pennsylvania (9%) than from Pennsylvania's urban areas (6%), if they make a statement at all about homeland security's effect on their daily lives, expressly say that it in fact does not affect their daily life at all. This is plausible, given the higher chance of interaction with TSA in urban areas that have airports or of being close to spots of violent extremist incidents or riots, as typical daily-life impact factors cited by respondents. While the very substantial no response/no opinion group is almost equally large across part affiliations, more Republicans (10%) than Democrats and those with another or no party affiliation (7% each) specifically state that homeland security does affect their daily lives one way or the other. On the other hand, more Democrats (9%) than Republicans (3%) and others (6%) say that homeland security does not affect their daily lives at all. Findings are illustrated in Fig. 4.

Conclusion

The Pennsylvania example indicates that the foundation of a civic homeland security culture is present in the U.S. public: People appreciate homeland security as something that the country as a whole does to protect broad public safety and well-being, prevent terrorism, and protect them from outside threats overall. Substantial deficiency in people's trust in homeland security policy and government activity, as identified in previous work, was not reproduced in any of the three (2016, 2018, and 2020) iterations of the Pennsylvania poll study.

However, the granularity of that culture is limited: Around 20 years after 9/11, still over a quarter say they are indeterminate about what homeland security is or does specifically. Regardless of their respective perception of homeland security,

however, almost three-quarters think of it in a positive sense. No more than a few though are aware that they themselves, as members of the public, are part of the national effort of the homeland security enterprise as a whole-community endeavor: for example, by contributing to cybersecurity with appropriate online behavior, or by reporting suspicious activity. In terms of the homeland security activity cycle (also known as national preparedness mission areas) of preventing, protecting, mitigating, responding, and recovering (The White House 2011), homeland security to the public first and foremost means protection and prevention, and to some extent response. This indicates that the civic homeland security culture still needs to ferment further to become an everyday "culture in action" (Swidler 1986).

Improved public communication and education, along with increased public-involving initiatives, are needed, which provides many opportunities for applied security science. Those initiatives should be placed into a common framework to increase homeland security recognition consistent with the whole-community approach. National campaigns in the United States, such as "See Something, Say Something™," state campaigns, such as for example "Ready PA" (http://ready.pa.gov), and sector-specific public safety campaigns, such as by AMTRAK railways, should be more visibly designed as homeland-security related and an element of the whole-community approach to foster a culture of preparedness. The same is advisable for public campaigns during a pandemic.

Communication gaps lead to an incomplete translation of homeland security goals and priorities from the federal to the local level, as well as common misperceptions of the homeland security enterprise in the public mind. This can lead to wrongly calibrated civic security cultures and suggests priority areas for research-driven homeland and civil security education: the education of continuing and emerging leaders who pursue security studies and research degrees about communicating effectively with the public; a contribution of institutions of higher education to informed public discourse on homeland and civil security affairs; and the provision of recommendations to homeland security enterprise partners on effectuating public risk communication and culture-of-preparedness campaigns.

The Pennsylvania study has exemplified the relevance of and need for an evidence-based civic security culture perspective. This perspective should be expanded in the future to consistently inform security research as well as policy practice. Further pertinent work in security science can in particular help to:

- Determine and evaluate gaps between public perceptions and government and agency definitions of homeland security and its mission space.
- Assess people's attribution of the locus of control (responsibility) for homeland security (such as local, state, or federal), for example, to identify the best practices for communicating with and educating the public in relevant domains.
- Contribute to a public opinion and perception-informed risk assessment track that can make homeland security administration more evidence-based and responsive to whole-community concerns and demands by providing actionable empirical information.
- Amend strategic national risk assessment in the national preparedness strategic process by a component reflective of public risk perception.

- Complement performance measures with evidence-based information on the level of implementation of the whole-community approach, thus helping to "inform key program management decisions such as setting program priorities, allocating resources, or identifying program problems and taking corrective action to solve them" (Homeland Security Studies and Analysis Institute 2014, p. 4).
- Define and implement a whole-community educational mission of homeland and civil security.
- Optimize educational opportunities to create and integrate knowledge to let the whole community approach more effectively resonate with the civic security culture.

As the COVID-19 catastrophe has demonstrated, it is indispensable to be cognizant of the public understanding of, and different needs during, local, state, national – and global – emergencies (Lazarus et al. 2020). It is necessary to collect and compare more relevant data in order to develop a civic security culture operational picture. Poll studies like the one presented here should become a regular part of comprehensively evidence-based national preparedness processes in the United States and elsewhere. Communicating the entirety of related security missions effectively to the public should be an integral part of security science-related action research and education. The multiannual opinion pall study approach presented here with results from Pennsylvania can be a model for other states and nations to assess and improve public risk and policy perception in civil security affairs and develop an operational picture of civic security culture. Specifically related to the United States, such studies should become part of periodic homeland security reviews at state and federal level and ideally be undertaken in all states and territories. Ultimately, the success of homeland and civil security policy, strategy, and practice is not only defined by the value of its goals but by the implementation perspective: to mirror the national effort in a corresponding civic security culture in action.

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