STRATEGIC COORDINATION, INSTITUTIONAL FRAGMENTATION AND POLICY CHALLENGES IN GOVERNING ROMANIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

Niculae IANCU, PhD,
Vice-President of Maritime Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence,
Constanta Maritime University, Romania.
E-mail: nicu.iancu@marcyscoe.org

Abstract: Romania's national security governance operates within a complex institutional framework, where strategic coordination must balance national priorities and resource constraints with international commitments. The interaction between institutional mandates, jurisdictional boundaries, and decision-making processes influences governance effectiveness, yet persistent fragmentation affects policy coherence and strategic consistency. This paper examines how these dynamics impact decision-making within the Supreme Council of National Defence (CSAT), particularly in relation to the President's strategic leadership and the Government's executive role. Applying Neoclassical Realism to examine the interplay between external pressures and domestic political constraints, alongside New Institutionalism to account for the influence of both formal structures and informal practices on the national security apparatus within the Security Studies domain, this paper evaluates the extent to which national security governance fosters institutional effectiveness.
The findings suggest that Romania's national security governance exhibits both cooperative fragmentation, where institutions collaborate while maintaining autonomy, and conflictive fragmentation, which stems from executive competition and jurisdictional overlaps. They contribute to broader academic discussions on institutional fragmentation, governance efficiency, and executive power dynamics within national security frameworks, particularly in post-communist and NATO-aligned states.

Keywords: Institutional Fragmentation in National Security; Executive Power Dynamics in Security Governance; Neoclassical Realism and National Security Policy; Semi-Presidentialism and Security Decision-Making.

Introduction

As the 21st century progresses, national security remains a fundamental priority for all states, requiring robust institutional frameworks to safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity, internal stability, and the well-being of citizens. Situated at the geopolitical intersection of Western and Eastern Europe, on NATO's eastern flank and the EU's eastern border, Romania confronts a complex security environment that necessitates institutional adaptability and resilience. This paper examines Romania's national security governance through the analytical lens of Institutional Fragmentation Theory, employing Neoclassical Realism and New Institutionalism to provide a broader methodological context. Specifically, it assesses how external systemic pressures, domestic political constraints, and institutional structures influence security policymaking within the theoretical framework of Security Studies. This approach is particularly relevant for understanding Romania's national security policy evolution in the post-Cold War era, characterised by adaptation to geopolitical shifts, NATO and EU expansion, and significant institutional reforms.

During this period, Romania's political and institutional landscape has undergone considerable transformation influenced by systemic geopolitical imperatives such as NATO enlargement and EU integration, alongside internal political dynamics. Neoclassical Realism

provides analytical clarity on how Romania's alignment with international security frameworks has shaped strategic priorities, while domestic institutions and political leadership mediate the implementation of these external imperatives (Rose, 1998; Lobell, 2009). Concurrently, New Institutionalism highlights how institutional design, bureaucratic structures, and inter-agency coordination shape the practical execution and effectiveness of these security policies (March & Olsen, 2006; Peters, 2012).

Drawing on Institutional Fragmentation Theory, this paper evaluates the implications of institutional arrangements within Romania's security governance framework, distinguishing between cooperative and conflictive fragmentation. Cooperative fragmentation enables institutions to maintain autonomy while collaborating effectively, whereas conflictive fragmentation involves competition, overlapping responsibilities, and jurisdictional ambiguities that hinder strategic coherence and policy implementation. Central to this discussion is Romania's Supreme Council of National Defence (CSAT), whose broad mandate and coordinating role are crucial in managing these institutional dynamics. This analysis explores whether CSAT successfully navigates fragmentation, fostering strategic coherence and effective policy outcomes, or whether structural ambiguities limit its capability to mediate institutional tensions, complicating Romania's responses to its increasingly complex security environment.

Despite an extensive body of literature on security policy and strategy, research examining the interaction between geopolitical, technological, and economic contexts and the effectiveness of institutional frameworks remains limited (e.g., Gray, 2010). Existing studies tend to focus on the legal dimensions of institutional design (e.g., Michaels, 2015), particularly within security sector governance and the democratic oversight of security institutions (e.g., van Eekelen, 2010). However, such legalistic approaches provide an incomplete understanding of national security governance, as they frequently overlook the institutional mechanisms that structure strategic coordination and high-level decision-making.

To bridge this gap, the perspective of this paper extends beyond legal compliance, incorporating political and societal factors that influence national security effectiveness in post-Cold War security contexts (e.g., Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). This approach facilitates a more nuanced understanding of strategic-level national security governance by considering institutional structures, inter-agency coordination, and bureaucratic processes. In the Romanian case, the presence of structural ambiguities and fragmented decision-making suggests that these mechanisms may not function optimally, raising the question of whether fragmentation contributes to strategic flexibility or instead exacerbates governance inefficiencies.

Building on this institutional perspective, the effectiveness of Romania's national security governance is closely linked to both institutional structure and strategic leadership capacity. Effective leadership must coordinate policies, foster inter-agency cooperation, and proactively anticipate and respond to emerging security threats. As Romania's highest decision-making body for national security governance, CSAT is central to setting strategic direction and ensuring policy cohesion (Romanian Parliament, Law 415, 2002). Its authority extends across security, foreign affairs, defence, intelligence, and law enforcement institutions, aligning national security policies with national interests and broader strategic objectives. In fulfilling this role, CSAT reinforces institutional mechanisms that promote public policy coherence and continuity, which typically function within the broader executive framework of the Government.

These overlaps can at times create tensions between the President, in their capacity as CSAT chairperson, and the Government's priorities, particularly in moments of crisis. Such tensions may delay inter-agency coordination, disrupt institutional coherence, and complicate efforts to reconcile external strategic pressures with national security imperatives. Given the increasing complexity of Romania's security environment, a well-functioning CSAT is crucial for maintaining policy cohesion, balancing national and international security commitments, and strengthening institutional resilience. Therefore, this paper examines how the current institutional framework influences Romania's capacity to

govern national security effectively, contributing to broader debates on institutional fragmentation, strategic coordination, and executive power dynamics in national security governance.

1. Institutional Fragmentation Theory and Governance Challenges in Romania's National Security Framework

CSAT serves as Romania's supreme security coordination body, with a mandate encompassing the management of inter-agency dynamics, the mitigation of institutional fragmentation, and the maintenance of coherence across the national security landscape. As the highest authority responsible for aligning national and international security commitments, its effectiveness in fostering inter-agency cooperation and efficiently allocating security resources is fundamental to Romania's national security governance framework.

While traditionally hierarchical and rules-driven, security institutions must function as dynamic assemblages of norms and practices embedded within broader socio-political contexts (Nasu & Rubenstein, 2015). Within this framework, CSAT should serve not merely as an extension of executive power but as a structured governance mechanism that mediates institutional relationships, bureaucratic processes, and security coordination. Unlike traditional approaches that focus solely on rational state action, this institutional perspective, as explained by Powell and DiMaggio (1991), highlights how historical, political, and cultural factors influence the conceptualisation and implementation of national security policies. Institutional behaviour is shaped by formal mandates, historical precedents, bureaucratic norms, and political culture. This perspective underscores how Romania's security institutions have evolved under external pressures, such as NATO and EU integration, while facing internal constraints like institutional inertia, executive-legislative tensions, and bureaucratic rivalries, shaping both cooperation and fragmentation.

Moreover, in democratic societies, security institutions must balance operational effectiveness with democratic principles, including human rights, the rule of law, and societal oversight (Bruneau & Matei, 2008). While CSAT provides the highest level of strategic leadership, its effectiveness hinges on its capacity to integrate security institutions into a unified democratic governance framework. The extent to which CSAT can align security policies with democratic values while maintaining an effective response to external threats remains a critical factor in assessing its role in national security governance, particularly when this balance challenges the fragile equilibrium between security and freedom.

An additional key challenge in national security governance is the degree of institutional fragmentation. The extent to which security institutions within CSAT operate in an integrated, cooperative, or conflictual manner directly impacts the overall effectiveness of Romania's national security framework. While institutional fragmentation is inherent in all governance systems, the critical question is how it can be measured and assessed in the national security context, particularly given constraints such as secrecy, bureaucratic opacity, and the restrictive nature of the 'need-to-know' principle.

Institutional fragmentation theory categorises these relationships into synergistic, cooperative, or conflictive typologies based on the level of institutional integration and coordination (Biermann et al., 2009). Synergistic fragmentation represents the ideal model, as described by Thompson (1967), in which security institutions are effectively integrated, ensuring clear mandates, operational coherence, and efficient inter-agency coordination. This occurs when strategic leadership successfully unifies decision-making, creating a cohesive framework for national security governance. In this model, institutions function within a well-structured system, where roles are clearly defined, redundancies are minimised, and coordination mechanisms operate efficiently.

Cooperative fragmentation arises when security institutions maintain a degree of autonomy while still engaging in structured coordination within a broader security framework. Although this arrangement allows for institutional specialisation, inconsistencies in norms and principles may lead to ambiguities in inter-institutional relationships, potentially undermining strategic cohesion

(Krahmann, 2003). While cooperation remains a key element, divergent institutional priorities may cause operational misalignment and inefficiencies.

Conflictive fragmentation represents the most problematic form of fragmentation, occurring when institutional rivalries, bureaucratic inertia, and competing mandates obstruct effective security coordination (Biermann et al., 2009). This fragmentation frequently leads to policy incoherence, resource inefficiencies, and operational gaps, weakening security governance structures and their ability to function as unified decision-making bodies (Young, 1999). The lack of streamlined protocols can lead to duplication of efforts, operational delays, and gaps in intelligence-sharing, weakening national security responsiveness. When security institutions operate under conflicting principles and procedural inconsistencies, coordination failures impede national security governance, reducing the state's capacity to respond effectively to complex and evolving security threats.

Institutional fragmentation is not purely an operational challenge but also a reflection of bureaucratic politics. Internal competition among security institutions can thwart their ability to deliver a unified response to emerging threats. Moreover, fragmentation often results in inefficient resource allocation, as agencies prioritise their own institutional interests over strategic cohesion. Structural inefficiencies must also be examined through the lens of historical evolution, as Romania's national security governance remains shaped by post-Cold War transformations. Analysing the impact of institutional legacies, strategic adaptations, and geopolitical realignments is essential for addressing contemporary governance challenges and strengthening national security effectiveness.

2. Institutional Dynamics and Strategic Challenges in the Evolution of Romania's National Security Governance in the Post-Cold War Era

A nation's security governance is largely defined by the capacity and effectiveness of its institutions. In Romania, the structure of national security institutions within CSAT plays a central role in shaping strategic leadership and ensuring policy implementation. CSAT is responsible for harmonising institutional efforts, mitigating fragmentation, and aligning security strategies with broader geopolitical imperatives. However, institutional development has been influenced by a combination of structural, historical, and external factors. The post-communist transition has left enduring institutional legacies, while NATO and EU integration have significantly redefined security priorities (Tismaneanu, 2014; Iancu, 2011). Since the fall of the communist regime in December 1989, Romania has undertaken substantial institutional reforms aimed at aligning with democratic principles and integrating into Euro-Atlantic security structures (Papadimitriou & Phinnemore, 2008).

This transition has been predominantly structural rather than ideational, focusing on capability modernisation, functional interoperability, and security sector reforms. However, the adoption of Western security models has sometimes come at the expense of national perspectives and context-specific solutions. The persistence of a communist-era security mindset continues to influence institutional decision-making, reinforcing hierarchical structures and limiting operational flexibility (Young, 2017, pp. 35-37). Romania's security culture remains partially shaped by these historical practices, which prioritised secrecy, centralised control, and rigid decision-making. As a result, the full adoption of Western principles such as transparency, flexibility, delegation of command authority, and civilian oversight in security governance remains constrained.

Beyond historical influences, external security imperatives have been pivotal in shaping Romania's national security institutions. The necessity of aligning with NATO's collective defence priorities and EU security frameworks has often taken precedence over national and regional security considerations (Gheciu, 2005; Cornish & Edwards, 2001). Within CSAT, defence planning and capability development have been primarily driven by NATO integration, with a strong emphasis on interoperability, adherence to Western military doctrines, and standardised procurement strategies (Fluri & Born, 2003). As a result, Romania's force structure and operational planning have been shaped more by NATO's strategic outlook than by an independent national threat assessment tailored

to Romania's specific security environment. For instance, Romania has invested in strategic air transport capabilities and procured equipment designed for desert warfare, despite its geographical and strategic realities not necessitating such assets. These acquisitions reflected a broader trend of aligning with NATO-led missions and coalition operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, rather than addressing the country's immediate defence needs, especially given Romania's largely obsolete and insufficient defence capability level.

This structural dependency underscores a broader issue: the prioritisation of external alignments at the expense of internal strategic imperatives. While Euro-Atlantic integration has strengthened Romania's overall security posture, it has also limited strategic flexibility in addressing regional threats, particularly in the Black Sea region, where Romania-specific concerns have remained underdeveloped. However, the shortcomings of Romania's strategic initiatives in the Black Sea region stem not only from systemic constraints but also from a subsystemic deficit in strategic expertise, exposing broader limitations in state institutional capacity (Dungaciu & Dumitrescu, 2019).

The ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia's hybrid warfare strategies, including disinformation campaigns and cyber operations, and intensifying global economic and technological competition have further strained Romania's security decision-making processes (Bojin, 2022; Galeotti, 2019). These challenges have exposed institutional inefficiencies, limiting CSAT's capacity to coordinate a comprehensive national response to emerging security threats, as evidenced by the unprecedented cancellation of the presidential election in November 2024.

Additionally, although Romania has substantially increased defence spending in recent years, inefficiencies in budget allocation and procurement processes continue to slow capability development. Institutional rigidity and bureaucratic inertia further complicate reform efforts, impeding military structures from fully modernising and adapting to evolving security challenges. From a broader national security perspective, despite efforts to revitalise Romania's defence industry, enhance domestic production, and integrate into NATO and EU defence supply chains, the sector remains underdeveloped and technologically outdated (Halem, 2024; Iancu, 2024). Persistent structural limitations, outdated infrastructure, and insufficient research and development investment continue to hinder progress. Many state-owned defence companies operate with ageing equipment and inefficient production processes, restricting their ability to support Romania's evolving defence needs. Romania's reliance on foreign procurement for advanced military capabilities has deepened strategic dependence on external suppliers, constraining defence innovation and self-sufficiency. This dependency may not only limit CSAT's ability to develop a more robust national defence posture but could also amplify vulnerabilities to geopolitical shifts and economic disruptions.

In addition to structural and strategic challenges, democratic oversight and public engagement remain fundamental to ensuring a resilient national security framework. As Romania continues to consolidate democratic governance, civic engagement and transparency are essential for legitimising security policies, ensuring accountability, and aligning national security measures with public interests (Howard, 2013; Smith, 2017). However, despite formal commitments to democratic oversight, security institutions often operate with limited transparency, restricting meaningful public scrutiny. While legislative frameworks provide for civilian oversight mechanisms, their effectiveness is often undermined by limited public access to budget execution processes and a reluctance to engage in open dialogue with civil society (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2010).

Consequently, the evolution of Romania's national security governance reflects a complex interplay between historical legacies, external strategic imperatives, and institutional dynamics. While Euro-Atlantic integration has strengthened Romania's security posture and facilitated military modernisation, it has also contributed to structural dependencies that limit strategic autonomy and flexibility in addressing national and regional security priorities. Institutional rigidity, inefficient defence procurement, and an underdeveloped domestic defence industry further constrain Romania's ability to fully modernise its security sector. Additionally, while democratic oversight mechanisms exist, limited transparency and public engagement continue to hinder meaningful civilian

participation in security governance. Moving forward, Romania must balance its commitments to NATO and the EU with a more independent and context-specific security strategy, prioritising institutional resilience, capability development, and regional security initiatives, particularly in the Black Sea. Strengthening institutional capacity, fostering strategic expertise, and enhancing defence innovation will be crucial in ensuring Romania's ability to navigate evolving security threats while maintaining a robust and adaptive national security framework.

However, the evolution of Romania's security governance cannot be understood without closely examining the role of CSAT, the institution at the core of national security decision-making. As the principal strategic body responsible for security coordination, CSAT operates within the broader context of Romania's constitutional framework, aligning national security policies with both domestic priorities and international commitments. An examination of CSAT's role, evolution, and structural significance provides insight into how its mandate and decision-making processes influence Romania's national security governance and its capacity to address contemporary security challenges.

3. The Role and Evolution of Romania's Supreme Council of National Defence

As Romania's highest political authority on national security, CSAT supports the President in fulfilling constitutional responsibilities and ensuring a coordinated, unified approach to defence and security. Mandated by the Constitution, CSAT oversees national security policies in both peacetime and wartime, including Romania's participation in international military operations, collective defence commitments within military alliances, and peacekeeping missions (The Constitution of Romania, Art. 119, 2003).

In this context, CSAT can be understood as Romania's equivalent of a National Security Council (NSC), fitting within the broader theoretical framework outlined in the strategic studies literature. NSCs are generally recognised as essential entities within a state's power structure, responsible for coordinating national security strategies across various sectors and agencies. Their structure and function vary depending on a country's constitutional framework, operating either as advisory or decision-making bodies (Jordan et al., 2009). Typically chaired by the head of state, NSCs integrate key cabinet members and security officials, ensuring a unified response to both national and international security challenges.

The primary role of NSCs is to synthesise inputs from governmental bodies recognised as national security institutions, ensuring a coherent strategy to address complex security challenges. They are instrumental in policy formulation, responding to immediate threats, and enhancing the long-term preparedness of the national security apparatus (Betts, 2015).

Beyond crisis management, NSCs play a pivotal role in shaping national security policies that reflect state interests and strategic priorities, ensuring a balanced allocation of security resources (Daalder & Lindsay, 2013). Their strategic planning processes typically involve threat assessment, security risk management, resource distribution, and priority setting, all of which are essential for providing national security in a rapidly evolving global environment (Murray & Brown, 2012).

Additionally, NSCs must ensure that national security strategies remain flexible and responsive to geopolitical shifts while maintaining alignment with international law and alliance commitments. Their effectiveness is crucial in shaping a nation's diplomatic and intelligence standing, influencing its bilateral and multilateral security policies, and determining its ability to project influence on the global stage (Yarger, 2008). The decisions taken by NSCs not only impact national security but also have far-reaching socio-economic implications, affecting political stability, economic resilience, and institutional credibility.

While these theoretical considerations frame the role of NSCs broadly, Romania's experience with CSAT illustrates how these dynamics have evolved in practice. Established in December 1990,

CSAT was designed *'to coordinate and oversee activities critical to the country's defence and national safety'*. The initial legislative framework deliberately avoided the term "security", as it remained strongly associated with the former *Securitate*, the oppressive secret service of Ceaușescu's regime, which had left a deeply negative imprint on collective memory, as acknowledged by many politicians involved in the drafting process. The 1991 Constitution adopted the term "national safety", a narrower concept that was misapplied in high-level political discourse to refer to major state affairs, failing to capture the broader dimensions of national security. However, this wording has contributed to ongoing scholarly and professional debates I have attended on whether national security, conceptually, encompasses the country's defence or if defence constitutes a distinct concept rooted in fundamental concerns such as sovereignty and territorial integrity, thereby implying that all other matters fall outside the realm of high politics and instead belong to ordinary public policy-making.

Over a decade later, legislative updates reintroduced the term 'security' into the revised Constitution and CSAT's official documents, broadening the conceptual framework to include both the 'National Security Strategy' and the 'National Defence Strategy' as fundamental components of national security policy (Law No. 415/2002, Art. 1 & Art. 2). These amendments clarified CSAT's status as an autonomous administrative authority subject to parliamentary scrutiny, granting it expanded executive powers in national security matters, including the 'approval of draft normative acts initiated or issued by the Government' (Law No. 415/2002, Art. 2). The revision also expanded CSAT's membership to include senior policymakers and officials from key national security institutions, as well as representatives from other governmental branches responsible for managing critical national security resources.

Following these legislative revisions, CSAT's responsibilities expanded, covering the development and coordination of national security and defence policies, threat assessment, strategic response identification, and management of inter-institutional mechanisms in national security, particularly during crisis and wartime. It oversees the armed forces' organisation, national security plans and programmes, cooperation of national security institutions, aligns national security policies with alliance system policies, manages crises, and coordinates emergency responses. (Law No. 415/2002) This comprehensive mandate consolidates CSAT's central role in shaping and implementing Romania's national security imperatives within domestic and international frameworks.

As illustrated in Figure no. 1, the President of Romania chairs the CSAT, with the Prime Minister serving as its vice-chairperson. The members of the CSAT include the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Economy, the Minister of Public Finance, the Director of the Romanian Intelligence Service, the Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service, the Chief of the Defence Staff, and the Presidential Adviser for National Security. CSAT activities are subject to scrutiny and oversight by Parliament (Law No. 415/2002)
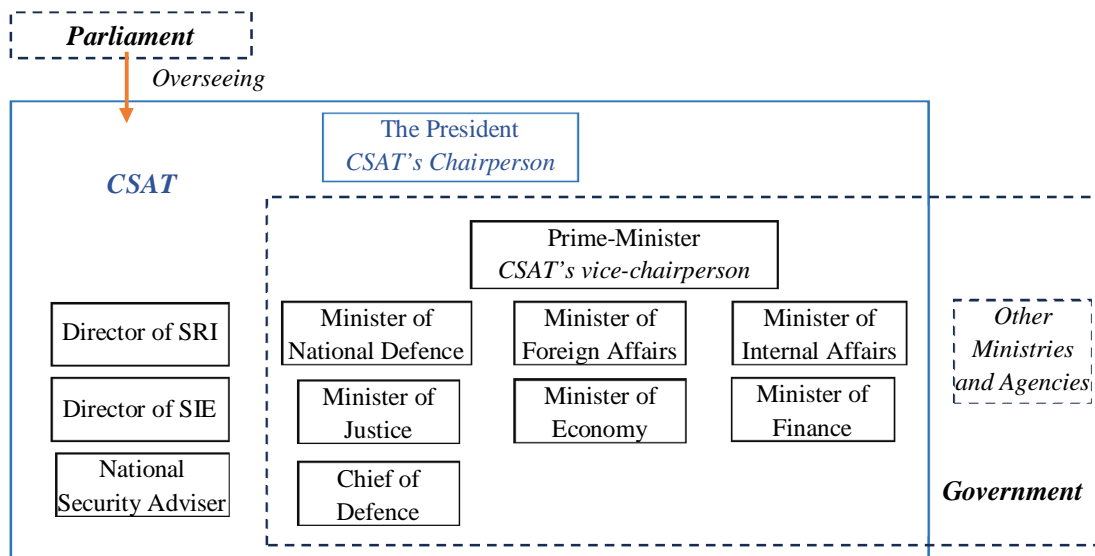
Figure no. 1: Romania's CSAT Institutional Organisation

Apart from certain ministers who hold a CSAT chair with direct responsibilities for national security execution, as well as security resource development and allocation, the Government, as a whole, is responsible for implementing broader national security objectives. As the executive authority, the Government operates based on a vote of confidence from Parliament, ensuring the execution of both internal and external policies and the overall management of public administration (The Constitution of Romania, Art. 102). The Prime Minister, who also serves as CSAT's vice-chairperson, plays a central role in coordinating these efforts.

The executive branch's national security objectives are outlined in the Government Programme and are implemented through various governmental bodies, both within and outside the CSAT framework. Additionally, the President of Romania may participate in government meetings concerning matters of national interest – including foreign policy, defence, and public order—at the request of the Prime Minister. In such cases, the President presides over the meetings (The Constitution of Romania, Art. 87).

While the President and the Government share responsibilities in national security governance, their overlapping mandates within the CSAT framework introduce additional institutional complexities. The interplay between executive authority and CSAT's strategic coordination role often creates ambiguities in decision-making and policy implementation. These challenges become particularly evident when addressing foreign and domestic security concerns, where the distinction between CSAT's strategic oversight and the Government's executive functions remains unclear.

These institutional ambiguities not only complicate national security governance but also raise broader questions about the distribution of power, jurisdiction, and coordination among Romania's key security actors. Understanding how authority is exercised within this fragmented landscape is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of Romania's national security framework.

4. Power, Jurisdiction, and Fragmentation in Romania's National Security Governance

Romania's national security governance is shaped by constitutional provisions that affirm the President's authority in security matters. This authority derives from their roles as CSAT's chairperson, supreme commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, and chairperson of the government's national security meetings (The Constitution of Romania, Art. 80, 87). Consequently, the President is widely recognised as *Head of State*, despite the absence of an explicit legal provision and

occasional contestation from political opponents. The multi-layered nature of Romania's security governance requires close coordination between the President and the Prime Minister to ensure coherent security strategies.

However, this institutional structure is complicated by Romania's semi-presidential system, which creates a dual legitimacy framework. The President and the Government share executive responsibilities while deriving legitimacy from different electoral mechanisms, a tension analysed by Schleiter & Morgan-Jones (2010). The President is directly elected by popular vote, whereas the Prime Minister is appointed by the President and requires parliamentary approval (The Constitution of Romania, Art. 81, 103). This dual legitimacy structure often fuels competition for authority, particularly in national security policy-making.

Beyond formal constitutional provisions, informal political factors also play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of national security governance. The symbolic power of the directly elected President, along with their personality and prior political experience, can influence security decision-making (Verheijen, 1999). This is particularly relevant in democratic systems, where political leaders' influence and public perception notably affect their authority. Public support, as a critical determinant of governance effectiveness, aligns with constructivist revisions of Security Studies theory, which emphasise the role of perception, identity, and discourse in shaping security policies and leadership legitimacy (Weber, 1947; Blondel, 1987; Wæver et al., 1993; Wæver, 1995).

The expansion of CSAT's mandate has intensified institutional complexity, leading to overlaps with the Government's responsibilities, particularly in managing emerging threats. A key challenge lies in defining what constitutes a national security matter, as the concept has expanded beyond military concerns to encompass economic, environmental, and social dimensions (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). While a broader interpretation allows for a more comprehensive response to security threats, it also introduces strategic ambiguities and institutional overlaps. Expanding the scope of national security too widely risks diluting focus, overextending resources, and undermining policy implementation.

These institutional overlaps are further compounded by the financial and operational constraints of national security governance. Given the substantial investments required to sustain defence, intelligence, and security operations, prioritisation becomes essential to balance diverse security concerns with long-term sustainability. Moreover, an expansive scope of authority can foster power struggles and inter-agency conflicts, as institutions compete to shape security policy in alignment with their strategic priorities. Historical and bureaucratic rivalries further exacerbate tensions, particularly in institutional leadership appointments and the prioritisation of specific threats.

A notable example of this executive tension occurred on 6 May 2010, when President Traian Băsescu – rather than Prime Minister Emil Boc – announced drastic austerity measures in response to Romania's economic crisis. His unilateral declaration of a 25% reduction in public sector salaries and a 15% cut in pensions, unemployment benefits, and other welfare payments underscored the ambiguous power dynamics between the President and Government (Ciutacu, 2010). This moment not only blurred the lines of institutional responsibility but also highlighted the President's influence over fiscal and economic decision-making, areas typically under the Government's jurisdiction.

Further illustrating the extent of executive competition, in 2012, the Financial Times' Brussels correspondent, Joshua Chaffin, wryly remarked on the EU Summit's political landscape: "Forget about Merkel versus Hollande, North versus South, or Barroso versus Van Rompuy. The real drama at this Summit is the dispute between the Romanian President, Traian Băsescu, and his Prime Minister, Victor Ponta" (Matis & Enache, 2012). This comment reflected the international visibility of Romania's domestic power struggles, particularly the dispute over which leader should represent Romania at the European Council. The rivalry not only complicated Romania's diplomatic engagements but also had direct implications for the country's national security and foreign policy stance.

More recently, President Klaus Iohannis (2014-2025) has also drawn scrutiny for his active role in national security matters, particularly his commitment to increasing defence spending in response to escalating security concerns in the Black Sea region. While Iohannis has been a strong advocate for military modernisation, his assertiveness in pushing defence budget increases has at times appeared to overshadow the Government's role in budgetary decision-making. However, I contend that his interventions risk overstepping constitutional boundaries, as Parliament retains the ultimate authority over national security spending and major defence acquisitions.

A key moment that fuelled these concerns occurred in 2023 when Iohannis publicly addressed the Government's failure to meet its defence spending commitments. Citing inflation, "budgetary difficulties," and the global arms crisis, he explained Romania's inability to allocate the full 2.5% of GDP to defence as initially pledged (Necsutu, 2024). While his statements underscored the importance of national defence, they also revealed the limitations of presidential influence in enforcing budgetary execution. This gap between presidential rhetoric and governmental action highlights the structural constraints of Romania's semi-presidential system, where the President's authority over national security policy remains contingent on governmental cooperation (Lonean, 2009).

Institutional fragmentation is not limited to high-level political actors but extends to inter-agency coordination. Figure 2 illustrates the overlapping responsibilities, areas of cooperation, and competition among security institutions within CSAT, highlighting the complexity of inter-agency coordination. In foreign and defence policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defence, and the Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE) are responsible for shaping Romania's international security posture, particularly within NATO and EU frameworks. These organisations manage defence, diplomacy, intelligence-sharing, and strategic partnerships, ensuring Romania's alignment with collective security arrangements, according to their institutional mandates.

At the operational level, the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs play a crucial role in cross-border security and intelligence cooperation. Their involvement is particularly sizable in counterterrorism, migration control, cybersecurity, and hybrid threats, where challenges extend beyond national borders. However, overlapping mandates can create bureaucratic inefficiencies, competition for policy influence, and coordination difficulties, ultimately hindering Romania's ability to project a unified security strategy in international negotiations. Similarly, in European and internal affairs, responsibilities are distributed across multiple institutions, reinforcing the broader issue of institutional fragmentation. While inter-agency cooperation is essential for an integrated security approach, rivalries over jurisdiction, resources, and strategic priorities can undermine decision-making efficiency.
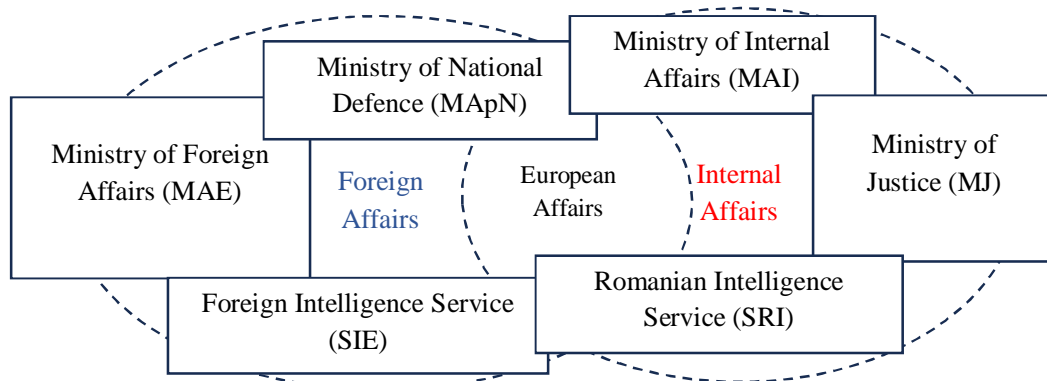

Figure no. 2: Areas of Cooperation and Competition Among
the 'National Security Institutions' within the CSAT

These overlappings underscore the need for enhanced strategic coordination within CSAT, ensuring that cooperation takes precedence over competition. Strengthening CSAT's role as a

unifying body is essential for minimising institutional redundancies, fostering coherence in security policymaking, and ensuring Romania's security governance operates as an integrated system rather than a fragmented bureaucratic network.

Conclusions

Romania's national security governance reflects a dynamic and evolving institutional framework shaped by historical legacies, legal provisions, and broader political dynamics. CSAT plays a pivotal role in ensuring strategic coordination and guiding national security policies within a complex governance structure. However, as Romania continues to adapt to emerging security challenges, the evolving security environment necessitates the continuous refinement of institutional roles and responsibilities.

A key challenge arises from the expansion of the security agenda, which has led to the creation of new institutional responsibilities without adequately streamlining or adjusting existing ones. This has resulted in an inflated national security framework marked by overlapping mandates, bureaucratic redundancies, and institutional competition, factors that risk undermining policy coherence and decision-making efficiency. While this framework has strengthened Romania's ability to address both internal and external security threats, it has also introduced jurisdictional ambiguities, inefficiencies in inter-agency coordination, and challenges in strategic prioritisation.

The semi-presidential system further complicates governance by fostering power struggles between the President and the Prime Minister, particularly in periods of cohabitation. The President, as CSAT's chairperson and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, holds significant influence over national security, yet their role remains constitutionally defined as mediatory rather than executive. This structural ambiguity has led to jurisdictional conflicts, especially when the President's security agenda diverges from the Government's broader policy priorities. In such cases, the absence of clearly demarcated executive competencies results in institutional fragmentation, affecting the effectiveness of security governance.

Additionally, Romania's national security institutions exhibit elements of both cooperative and conflictive fragmentation. While inter-agency collaboration is necessary for maintaining an integrated security framework, bureaucratic rivalries and institutional silos often hinder effective coordination. The competition among security institutions over jurisdiction, resources, and strategic priorities risks generating inefficiencies and weakening the coherence of national security policies. Functional overlaps in defence planning, intelligence coordination, and security resource allocation further highlight the need for a more structured governance mechanism to reduce redundancies and enhance institutional alignment.

To improve national security governance, Romania must pursue institutional streamlining and enhanced inter-agency coordination. Strengthening CSAT's role as a unifying body is essential for reducing fragmentation and fostering more effective strategic decision-making. While Euro-Atlantic integration remains central to Romania's security strategy, national security leadership must also prioritise the development of robust defence capabilities to address both conventional and emerging threats. As outlined in Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, collective security begins with national resilience, requiring each member state to develop and maintain the capacity to resist security challenges independently. Enhancing Romania's self-defence capabilities will not only reinforce national security but also strengthen its contribution to collective defence efforts within NATO and the EU.

Finally, these findings contribute to broader theoretical and policy debates on security governance, yet their practical applicability at both sectoral and cross-sectoral levels requires further

validation. Given the evolving nature of security threats, future research should explore the impact of institutional fragmentation on security policy effectiveness, strategic resilience, and Romania's ability to respond to hybrid threats and geopolitical shifts. A comparative analysis of governance models in other semi-presidential states could further clarify how structural inefficiencies may be addressed to enhance Romania's national security governance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Baylis, T. A. (1996). *Presidents versus prime ministers: Shaping executive authority in Eastern Europe. World Politics, 48*(3), 297–323. https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.1996.0029

Betts, R. K. (2015). *American force: Dangers, delusions, and dilemmas in national security.* Columbia University Press.

Biermann, F., Pattberg, P., van Asselt, H., & Zelli, F. (2009). The fragmentation of global governance architectures: A framework for analysis. *Global Environmental Politics, 9*(4), 14–40. https://doi.org/10.1162/glep.2009.9.4.14

Blondel, J. (1987). *Political leadership: Towards a general analysis.* Sage Publications.

Boin, A., & 't Hart, P. (2003). Public leadership in times of crisis: Mission impossible? *Public Administration Review, 63*(5), 544–553. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6210.00318

Bruneau, T. C., & Matei, F. C. (2008). *Towards a New Conceptualization of Democratization and Civil-Military Relations.* Democratization, 15(5), 909–929.

Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis.* Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Ciutacu, C., 22 September 2010, Government's shock tactics for recession, Eurofound, accessed on 12 March 2024.

David, R., Tolbert, P., & Boghossian, J. (2019, December 23). Institutional theory in organization studies. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Business and Management.* https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.001.0001/acrefore-9780190224851-e-158

Daalder, I. H., & Lindsay, J. M. (2013). *America unbound: The Bush revolution in foreign policy.* Brookings Institution Press.

Dungaciu, D., & Dumitrescu, L. (2019). Romania's strategic initiatives in the Black Sea area: from subregionalism to peripheral regionalism. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 19*(2), 333-351.

Elgie, R. (2011). *Semi-presidentialism: Sub-types and democratic performance.* Oxford University Press.

Gray, C. S. (2016). *Strategy and politics.* Routledge.

Halem, H. (2024, September 5). The Romanian defense industry and US policy. *Middle East Institute.* Iancu, N. (2024). *Strategia națională pentru industria de apărare 2024-2030: O nouă strategie pentru trecut.*

Iancu, N. (2011). A decade from 9/11. *Revista Română de Studii de Intelligence*, 5, 2011, 124–136.

Iancu, N. (2024, January 15). *Strategia Națională pentru Industria de Apărare 2024-2030*. LinkedIn.

Jervis, R. (1997). Complexity and the analysis of political and social life. *Political Science Quarterly, 112*(4), 569–593. https://doi.org/10.2307/2657566

Lobell, S. E. (2009). Threat assessment, the state, and foreign policy: A neoclassical realist model. In S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman, & J. W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy* (pp. 42–74). Cambridge University Press.

Lonean, I. (2009) Construirea formei de guvernare prin discurs în 2003 şi 2009. Republica semiprezidenţială în Constituţia României, accessed on 14.05.2024.

March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (2006). The new institutionalism. *American Political Science Review*, *78*, 741.

Matis, A. and Enache, I. (2012) Financial Times râde de România: Războiul Băsescu-Ponta, „Adevărata dramă" de la Consiliul European, Gandul, accessed on 12 March 2024.

Michaels, J. D. (2015). Separation of powers and centripetal forces: Implications for the institutional design and constitutionality of our national-security state. *University of Chicago Law Review, 83*(1), 267-314.

Mungiu-Pippidi, A. (2010). The Experience of Civil Society as an Anti-Corruption Actor in East Central Europe. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 24(1-2), 73-83.

Murray, D. J., & Brown, P. R. (2012). *The global war on terrorism: Assessing the American response.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Nasu, H., & Rubenstein, K. (2015). Introduction: The expanded conception of security and institutions. In H. Nasu & K. Rubenstein (Eds.), *Legal perspectives on security institutions* (pp. 1–24). Cambridge University Press.

Necsutu, M. Romania President Blames Missed Defence Spending Target on 'Budget Issues', 12 April 2024, Balkan Insight, accessed on 15 April 2024.

Papadimitriou, D., & Phinnemore, D. (2008). *Romania and The European Union: From Marginalisation to Membership?* Routledge.

Peters, B. (2012) Institutional Theory in Political Science: The New Institutionalism. 3rd edn. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Romanian Parliament. (2002). *Legea nr. 415 din 27 iunie 2002 privind organizarea şi funcţionarea Consiliului Suprem de Apărare a Ţării.* Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, Nr. 494.

Rose, G. (1998). Neoclassical realism and theories of foreign policy. *World Politics, 51*(1), 144–172. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100007814

Schleiter, P., & Morgan-Jones, E. (2010). Who's in charge? Presidents, assemblies, and the political control of semi-presidential cabinets. *Comparative Political Studies, 43*(11), 1415–1441. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414010371904

Smith, J. (2017). Enhancing democratic systems: The role of citizen participation and transparency in national security. *Journal of Democracy and Security, 12*(3), 154–171.

Tismaneanu, V. (2014). The legacies of 1989: The moving ruins. *Journal of Democracy, 25*(1), 59-70.

van Eekelen, W. F. (2010). The legal framework of security sector governance. *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).*

Verheijen, T. (1999). *Civil service systems in Central and Eastern Europe.* Edward Elgar Publishing.

Waever O; Buzan B; Kelstrup M and Lemaitre P. (1993). Identity Migration, and the New Security Agenda in Europe. London: Pinter Publishers.

Wæver, Ole. 1995. Securitization and Desecuritization. In On Security, ed. Ronnie Lipschutz. NY: Columbia University Press

Wæver, O. (2011). Politics, security, theory. *Security Dialogue, 42*(4–5), 465–480. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611418718

Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization.* Free Press.

Yarger, H. R. (2008). *Strategy and the national security professional: Strategic thinking and strategy formulation in the 21st century.* Praeger.

Young, T. D. (2018). *Anatomy of post-communist European defense institutions: The mirage of military modernisation.* Bloomsbury Academic.