

## ROMANIAN'S SECURITY: EXPLAINING YOUNG CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT NATIONAL SECURITY

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**Abstract:** *In the last decades the issue of national security has become more transparent and a subject of interest for the common citizen. Much scholarly attention is paid to how people perceive national security and issues related to it. However, we know very little about what young citizens, members of generation Z, believe about this aspect. This paper addresses this gap in the literature and analyzes how young citizens perceive subjects related to national security. It uses Romania as a single-case study and semi-structured interviews conducted in January 2021-March 2021 with young citizens coming from different socio-demographic profiles, to explain the variation in how they understand national security. The paper seeks to test the explanatory power of several variables such as knowledge about contemporary events, media exposure and threat assessment. The paper also controls for several socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education and medium of residence. The findings indicate that citizens' perceptions are influenced by a combination of general attitudes towards the political system and society, the education factor and specific attitudes about potential threats.*  
**Keywords:** *Generation Z; security perception, Romania, national security.*

Each generation comes with a unique set of features and challenges. These characteristics are the result of an economical and historical context, various cultural events, technological evolutions that affect their personality, their way of thinking and their behavior. These characteristics also contribute to the way in which certain categories of citizens relate to security issues. The importance of understanding these perceptions is vital for the good creation of a performing society. In this logic, this article aims to analyze how the youngest generation, generation Z, perceives Romania's national security.

Researchers in the field of security studies have often analyzed how the population perceives national security. Despite innovative theoretical contributions of this topic, there is a lack of evidence on how those born between 1996-2010 understand what security is or what are the biggest threats to it. In this research, we offer an empirical contribution to understating young people`s perception on Romanian national security. The investigation departs from the following research question: What is the perception of members of generation Z about national

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security? To understand in depth, we interviewed 20 young people coming from different backgrounds and locations from Romania who shared their opinions on this topic.

The reminder of this paper is organized as follows: first we provide a framework in which we discuss the most important theoretical aspects about security perception and the main characteristics of generation Z, followed by a short discussion about the methodology and our main findings.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In the last decades the issue of national security attracted the attention of the general public and scholars in a different way. If immediately after the Cold War this matter was mostly approached from a military perspective, later on, multiple perspectives emerged. For example, national security was split into specific sectors, each of it dealing with various threats, risks and vulnerabilities. Also, the referent objects multiplied and nowadays national security covers more than the traditional approach. Simultaneously, scholars tried to better explain and understand how people perceive national security and other matters connected to it. Politicians also started to care more about this topic, either motivated by the competition for public support or by the need to have a comprehensive view in shaping their position or support for different policies.

As Schneier<sup>39</sup> noted: “Security is both a feeling and a reality”. Thus, individuals’ perception of security is often different from the objective reality of security. This approach is also supported by Rosling<sup>40</sup> who claims that humans’ perception can differ from the reality, especially when it comes to the current situation in the world, the perception of security, positive developments and evolution in general. He stated that “every group of people I ask thinks the world is more frightening, more violent, and more hopeless – in short, more dramatic – than it really is”<sup>41</sup>. Pinker<sup>42</sup> and Roser<sup>43</sup> are other scholars that support the same point of view. In addition, to understand and explain more deeply the individuals’ perception of national security a closer look to the existing literature is needed. In the next section of this paper, we will analyze the previous work on the perception of security.

Overall, the existing literature shows that security is an inherently contested notion that might be approached and defined differently by individuals,

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<sup>39</sup> Bruce Schneier, *The Psychology of Security*, in "Progress in Cryptology – AFRICACRYPT 2008. Lecture Notes in Computer Science", ed. Serge Vaudenay, vol. 5023 (Berlin: Springer, 2008), 50–79.

<sup>40</sup> Hans Rosling, Ola Rosling, and Anna Rosling Ronnlund, *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World - and Why Things Are Better Than You Think* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> Rosling, Rosling, and Rosling Ronnlund, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Steven Pinker, *Better Angels of Our Nature* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> Max Roser, *Why Are We Working on Our World in Data?*, "Our World in Data", 2017, <https://ourworldindata.org/why-are-we-working-on-our-world-in-data>.

institutions or other actors<sup>44</sup>. Moreover, realists argue that security is the realm of the state, while supporters of human security claim the idea that security starts at individual level and extend upwards<sup>45</sup>. Besides this, there are those who assess security as a socially constructed notion and a product of social realities<sup>46</sup>. In this case, when it comes about the perception of security, a difference between various groups within a society should be made. If we discuss about national security, in a state where there is a cleavage between regions it is required to differently analyze the perceptions<sup>47</sup>. Moreover, the same approach should be made between generations.

In the last decades there were several factors affecting the perception of national security. The literature centered on threat perception argues that the public perception can influence the citizens' support for various political measures and reforms<sup>48</sup>. Other scholars discuss about the effects of major events, like 9/11 terrorist attacks, that are considered the trigger that generated a new world order in terms of threat perception. For example, Sibley, Wilson and Duckitt claim that the terrorist attacks "resulted in chronic changes to schematic representations of the social world as a dangerous and threatening place for many people"<sup>49</sup>, raising a "new urgency to understanding the degree, origins, nature and consequences of threat"<sup>50</sup>. Moreover, the major shift represented by the expansion of security acceptance influenced the public perception. Nowadays, security is not only related to hard power and the threats and vulnerabilities are not considered only in term of military means. This change affects the public perception of threat and makes it more complex.

From psychological perspective, Marcus et al., Gibson and Gouws show that normative threat from disliked groups renders individuals both less tolerant and more responsive to information about threats<sup>51</sup>. Moreover, there are other who argue that there is a strong connection between threat and authoritarianism, which "stands about ten steps closer to the panic button than the rest of the population"<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *Defining Security: A Subaltern Realist Perspective*, in "Critical Security Studies", ed. Keith Krause and Michael C. William (New York, 2002), 121–46.

<sup>45</sup> Roland Paris, *Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?*, "International Security" 26, no. 2 (2001): 87–102.

<sup>46</sup> Thierry Balzacq, *Constructivism and Securitization Studies*, in "The Routledge Handbook of Security Studies", ed. Myriam Dunn Cavelti and Victor Mauer (London: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Ian Brunton-Smith and Patrick Sturgis, *Do neighborhoods generate fear of crime? An empirical test using the British Crime Survey\**, "Criminology" 49, no. 2 (2011): 331–69.

<sup>48</sup> Brian Burke, Spee Kosloff, and Mark Landau, *Death Goes to the Polls: A Meta-Analysis of Mortality Salience Effects on Political Attitudes*, "Political Psychology" 34 (2013): 183–200.

<sup>49</sup> Chris G Sibley, Marc S Wilson, and John Duckitt, *Effects of Dangerous and Competitive Worldviews on Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation over a Five-Month Period*, "Political Psychology" 28, no. 3 (2007): 368.

<sup>50</sup> Leonie Huddy et al., *The Consequences of Terrorism: Disentangling the Effects of Personal and National Threat*, "Political Psychology" 23, no. 3 (2002): 486.

<sup>51</sup> George E Marcus et al., *With Malice toward Some: How People Make Civil Liberties Judgments*, Cambridge Studies in Public Opinion and Political Psychology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); James Gibson and Amanda Gouws, *Overcoming Intolerance in South Africa: Experiments in Democratic Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Bob Altemeyer, *The Authoritarian Specter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 100.

As such, all these can also be considered as factors affecting the perception of national security, both from internal and external perspective.

The individual's perception of national security can be influenced by personal, social and environmental variables. For example, Gutierrez et. all discuss about the presence of communities of immigrants and the risk of legitimizing a racist attitude among the citizens<sup>53</sup>, while Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Priod find that perception of threats from immigration are directly linked to cultural identity<sup>54</sup>. The fear of crime can also be considered a factor. As noted by Miceli<sup>55</sup> it is influenced by the level of objective crime, physical or social uncivil behavior<sup>56</sup>, issues related to urban life (density, social integration difficulty, aggressiveness of street life<sup>57</sup>), socio-demographic variables (especially gender and age) and psycho-social variables related to the perception of vulnerability and individual's capacity to confront various situations<sup>58</sup>. Moreover, Huddy et. all add to gender and age another important factor: education and race, that are linked to perception of threat which affects the general perception of security<sup>59</sup>. Finally, there are authors who argue that media exposure influences the perceptions of "modern" and "postmodern" threats<sup>60</sup>. Although it is questionable the extent in which these factors influence the citizen's perception of national security, they are clear contributors to how the environment is perceived.

For the purpose of this research, it is also important to observe the state-of-the-art research related to how generations perceive security. It is known that, usually, individuals are under the influence of what is called "the generational effect"<sup>61</sup>. In short, this effect represents the shared experience of living through a period of history. This leads to differences in how security is perceived by generations of the same society/community. Additionally, age is another important matter, because individuals tend to have different concerns specific to

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<sup>53</sup> Alexandra Gutierrez, Esteban Agullo Tomas, and Julion Suarez Rodriguez, *Discursos Juveniles Sobre Inmigración: Un Análisis Psicosociológico En Estudiantes de ESO*, "Psicothema" 16, no. 3 (2004): 384–90.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Sniderman, Louk Hagendoorn, and Markus Prior, *Predisposing Factors and Situational Triggers: Exclusionary Reactions to Immigrant Minorities*, "The American Political Science Review" 98, no. 1 (2004): 35–49.

<sup>55</sup> Renato Miceli, Michele Roccato, and Rosalba Rosato, *Fear of Crime in Italy: Spread and Determinants*, "Environment and Behavior" 36, no. 6 (2004): 776–89.

<sup>56</sup> Sebastian Roche, *Le Sentiment d'insécurité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> Frances E Kuo and William C Sullivan, *Environment and Crime in the Inner City: Does Vegetation Reduce Crime?*, "Environment and Behavior" 33, no. 3 (2001): 343–67.

<sup>58</sup> Gabriel Moser and Claude Levy-Leboyer, *Inadequate Environment and Situation Control: Is a Malfunctioning Phone Always an Occasion for Aggression?*, "Environment and Behavior" 17, no. 4 (1985): 520–33.

<sup>59</sup> Huddy et al., *The Consequences of Terrorism: Disentangling the Effects of Personal and National Threat*; Leonie Huddy et al., *Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies*, "American Journal of Political Science" 49, no. 3 (2005): 593–608.

<sup>60</sup> Travis N Ridout, Ashley C Grosse, and Andrew M Appleton, *News Media Use and Americans' Perceptions of Global Threat*, "British Journal of Political Science" 38, no. 4 (2008): 575–93.

<sup>61</sup> P A de Winstanley and E L Bjork, *Processing Instructions and the Generation Effect: A Test of the Multifactor Transfer-Appropriate Processing Theory*, "Memory", no. 3 (1997): 401–21; Zachary A Rosner, Jeremy A Elman, and Arthur P Shimamura, *The Generation Effect: Activating Broad Neural Circuits during Memory Encoding*, "Cortex; a Journal Devoted to the Study of the Nervous System and Behavior" 49, no. 7 (2013): 1901–9.

different ages (without a clear connection with the generation). For example, the youth might be more concerned about financial aspects of security like the minimum wage or purchasing power while the elders think more about retirement revenue or access to different facilities. In this regard, our research is concerned about the Z generation and, since there is no solid research on how its members perceive national security, our literature analysis will have a broader focus.

The existing literature discuss about the Z generation as being formed by those who were born after 1995<sup>62</sup>, while other consider the year 2000 as the starting point of its development<sup>63</sup>. Overall, the persons who belong to this generation are extremely self-confident, have an optimistic view on the future professional life and tend to have entrepreneurial initiatives<sup>64</sup>. Moreover, if compared to Millennials, they put more of an emphasis on finding their dream job (which means are more oriented towards personal development and evolution) and follow their parents' influence<sup>65</sup>. Besides this, since they are known as “the internet generation”<sup>66</sup> or “digital natives”<sup>67</sup>, the individuals are growing up in an interconnected world. This leads to a higher engagement with others, when it comes about sharing or debating different ideas, opinions or views. Generation Z is characterized by an extensive participation in social media and on-line networks, giving them a different identity and perception of reality. Since they interact more with “foreigners”, they tend to show a higher level of tolerance and acceptance and contribute more to racial, ethnical and cultural diversity. It is unknown yet if there is a high level of flexibility when it comes about identity and the so called “grater good”, specific to communities.

A study conducted by RAND Corporation in 2014 shows that there is a significant difference between how Millennials and Baby Boomers perceive national security. In this case, Millennials are not as concerned as the previous generation<sup>68</sup>. The same study explains that “the results might indicate less interest in security threats and policies and more concern for domestic priorities as more Millennials move into position of authority”<sup>69</sup>. Since, there are strong similarities between Millennials and Generation Z (as researched by Pew Research Center<sup>70</sup>),

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<sup>62</sup> Karen Bolser and Rachel Gosciej, *Millennials: Multi-Generational Leaders Staying Connected*, "Journal of Practical Consulting", no. 2 (2015): 1–9.

<sup>63</sup> James Bennett, Michael Pitt, and Samantha Price, *Understanding the Impact of Generational Issues in the Workplace*, "Facilities" 30, no. 7/8 (2012): 278–88.

<sup>64</sup> Adecco, *Millennials vs. Gen Z: Key Differences in The Workplace*, 2016, <https://www.adeccousa.com/employers/resources/generation-z-vs-millennials-infographic/>.

<sup>65</sup> Adecco.

<sup>66</sup> Mustafa Ozkan and Betul Solmaz, *The Changing Face of the Employees – Generation Z and Their Perceptions of Work (A Study Applied to University Students)*, "Procedia Economics and Finance" 26 (2015): 476–83.

<sup>67</sup> Mary Lou Addor, *Generation Z: What Is the Future of Stakeholder Engagement?*, Institute for EMERGING ISSUES - NC State University, 2011, <https://iei.ncsu.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2013/01/GenZStakeholders2.pdf>.

<sup>68</sup> Corporation RAND, *Millennials Worry Less About National Security Than Baby Boomers Do—for Now*, 2018, <https://www.rand.org/blog/articles/2018/06/millennials-worry-less-about-national-security.html>.

<sup>69</sup> RAND.

<sup>70</sup> Kim Parker, Nikki Graf, and Ruth Igielnik, *Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues*, 2019.

the existing literature shows that the two generations share similar social and political views.

In addition, the literature abounds of studies that discuss how mass media applies a strong influence on public opinion<sup>71</sup>. Moreover, the social media impacts political views and attitudes<sup>72</sup>. Since, the Generation Z is a high consumer of digital media, their perception is highly influenced by the content they access<sup>73</sup>. Besides this, considering their age, the impact is even higher than in the case of older generations. As shown by Huddy and her co-authors, there is a strong relation between media coverage of terrorism and perceptions of future risks<sup>74</sup>. Similarly, Kushner found that increased level of media use can be associated with higher levels of threat perception that might generate greater support for interventionist military policies<sup>75</sup>. In this context, Generation Z is likely to shape their perception in accordance with the information they consume, which is not always checked and valid.

Overall, the existing literature does not clearly discuss how individuals of Generation Z shape their perception about national security. Moreover, the previous work analyzes the Generation Z' perception shaping in advanced democracies and not in social and political contexts specific to former communist countries, like Romania.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

From a methodological perspective, our study is constructed using the semi structured interview method as primary data collection method. To find out how young citizens perceive subjects related to national security, we conducted 20 semi-structured interviews between January and March 2021. We selected Romania as a single case study because of its communist past that can still shape some perceptions that may have effect even in the way younger generations look at the security issues. Moreover, as in other countries, Romanian`s generation Z, are considerate the future generation of leaders and decisions makers and understanding their perception is relevant for other countries.

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<sup>71</sup> Shanto Iyengar, *Framing Responsibility for Political Issues*, "The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science" 546 (1996): 59–70; Shanto Iyengar et al., *The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States*, "Annual Review of Political Science" (Annual Reviews Inc., May 11, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051117-073034>.

<sup>72</sup> Nick Hajli, *A Study of the Impact of Social Media on Consumers*, "International Journal of Market Research" 56, no. 3 (2013): 387–404; Lisi Merkley, "How Social Media Impacts Political Views," The Daily Universe, 2020, <https://universe.byu.edu/2020/08/06/social-media-use-impacts-political-views/>.

<sup>73</sup> Virgil Hawkins, *The Other Side of the CNN Factor: The Media and Conflict*, "Journalism Studies" 3, no. 2 (2002): 225–40.

<sup>74</sup> Leonie Huddy et al., *Fear and Terrorism: Psychological Reactions to 9/11*, in "Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public", ed. Norris Pippa, Kern Montague, and Marion Just (New York, 2003), 255–78.

<sup>75</sup> Shana Kushner Gadarian, *The Politics of Threat: How Terrorism News Shapes Foreign Policy Attitudes*, "The Journal of Politics" 72, no. 2 (2010): 469–83.

We used the method of semi-structured interviews because the respondent's point-of-view is the most salient concern for qualitative researchers<sup>76</sup> as this lets the researcher understand the phenomena they have encountered. Semi-structured interviews are more appropriate than structured interviews as they are more flexible.

The interviews we conducted had six questions through which we tried to find out, in depth, what is the citizens' opinion about the national security environment. We considered that this method offers us the opportunity to understand the complexity of opinions and views related to this topic. In terms of content, the interview aimed to understand how young citizens define security, what they consider to be the biggest threat to Romanian national security and their ideas about their role in the national security framework. (Appendix 1 presents the complete interview guide).

Our interview was applied to members of the general population with variation on age, sex and location. Participants were identified by one simple criteria: persons who are born between 1995-2000. The profile of our respondents is diverse. We interacted with young people (age: 19- 25) that come from several parts of Romania (Cluj, Alba, Bucharest, Galati, Satu Mare, Suceava) who are students in various fields (Appendix 2 provides an overview of the participants). The data collected represents the views of females and males, with rates of 40% and 60% respectively. The interviews were applied by phone but also face to face. The answers we received help us explain the citizens' vision on with regard to several issues of national security.

The analysis of the data will be guided by an inductive approach. This requires understanding participants' views and experiences in the specific context of our study. As thematic analysis involves the implementation of codes and themes within the data. Table 1 presents three major themes identified in our interviews.

**Table 1. Major themes**

This qualitative outlook on young people perception about security matters makes way for an in-depth understanding of how they relate to important issues and, in a way, what is their level of security culture.

Major themes	Codes/subthemes	Quotes
Biggest threat to Romania's security	The governmental leadership/corruption	„The biggest danger to Romania is corruption (...). Romania does not lack competent people, Romania lacks people to assume responsibilities, without blaming each other.” „In my opinion, the biggest danger to Romania's security is the government leadership”

<sup>76</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

	Russian Federation	„From my point of view, the greatest danger to Romania is represented by the actions of the Russian Federation for carrying out military operations on the Black Sea, intimidation, misinformation and other hostile actions.”
Ways to improve national security	Strong national strategies – strong army	„National security can be improved through a coherent and efficient national defense strategy with concrete solutions to ensure security.” „National security could be improved through a rigorous development of the army, so that citizens can be sure that someone can defend them at any time.”
	Cooperation	„I believe that the best solution for improving national security is cooperation and dialogue with other states in our area.”
	Better decisions – internal reforms	„I believe that national security would begin to improve with the better decisions coming from leaders who deal with the insecurities the country is facing.” „National security could be best improved by raising the living standards of the population.”
Youth role in current society	Change, development and involvement	„Young people have an important role to play because change begins with them. They should know best that their future depends on them.”

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the interviews we conducted reveals that the vast majority of those we interviewed are able to offer a clear definition for security. They refer to it as: „peace, the state of tranquility, safety, of being out of danger” (R1). Some of our respondents offered a more elaborate definition of the concept. The definitions we have received focus on several dimensions of this concept. In principle, young people studying in the field of security studies or political science are able to provide a much more complex definitions of the phenomenon:



„Security is the ability to be safe from any danger (internal or external) that may affect the state, the individuals or communities. Moreover, security also refers to the ability of the state to respond to threats, risks and vulnerabilities” (R3). Those who study, in other fields, like psychology refer to the concept of security through a slightly different filter: „security is a safety feeling that allows the individual to exist and evolve” (R9). The analysis of the answers to this question presents once again the subjective character of this concept.

One of the things we wanted to test was the young people's perception of the dangers facing national security. The analysis of the answers to question number two of our interview brings into discussion two great fears that young people have about Romania's security. One of these concerns is related to the internal situation with reference to the political element and the second is related to the external danger that may come from the Russian Federation.

The young people with interest in the field of biology, law, political sciences or IT brought into discussion the internal problems that Romania has and which could generate, according to them, national security problems. They refer to the incapacity of the political class to face risks and threats: „In my opinion, the biggest danger to Romania's security is represented by the government leadership, our politicians, because they are responsible with all the decisions. They are the ones who decide all the important things and, in my opinion, they don't seem to know how to do that.” (R1) Other mention the widespread phenomenon of corruption: „the biggest danger to Romania's security is represented by the phenomenon of corruption which makes the state unable to have strong institutions, trained politicians and therefore to be able to ensure good governance.” (R13) Similar to the existing literature, the answers confirm the fact that Generation Z' members are more concerned about issues related to internal politics and development than to matters concerning the international context.

Beyond the internal problems, several of our respondents also discussed the danger that may come from external actors. Most of them mentioned the external danger caused by the Russian Federation: „I believe that the biggest threat is the tense situation in the eastern part of Romania – mainly Russia” (R15), „From my point of view, the biggest danger to national security is that we are close to Russia. The unpredictability of this state does nothing but trigger the fear of a war, given the latest actions in Ukraine” (R6) In this case, the similarities between the Generation Z and Millennials is demonstrated by the fact that, when comes about external threats, the main concern is represented by Russia. If we consider that the respondents were born after the Cold War, their opinion might be shaped by two factors: the close interaction with family members (who lived during the communism and afterwards) and the social-media / mass-media. Also, education can play a central role in shaping their approach towards national security. Moreover, the respondents experienced the NATO accession and most of their existence is connected with European values.

Young people with interests in the field of security studies, but not only, also mentioned the problem of conflicts between states and those with concerns in the IT field mentioned the cyber dangers that Romania may face: „In a constantly changing society, in which technology has an important part in our daily life, I consider that a serious threat is represented by cyber-attacks” (R11).

Asked what would be the most effective means by which Romania's national security could be improved, our respondents had three categories of answers. A consistent part of them considers that through clear and efficient security strategies, Romania's security problems could be solved. Another category considers that only through cooperation and dialogue with other states and international organizations a security climate can be created while those who blamed the political element on Romania's security problems believe that security can be improved by making decisions and reforming the political element. In the case of this theme, like in the case of the others, there are no big variations between the ideas of our respondents. The educational background intervenes a little in the formulation of the perceptions they have on this subject.

Respondents with background in journalism, law, political science and security studies are prone to say that a good security strategy can be the key to better and stronger security for Romania. „National security can be improved through a coherent and efficient national defense strategy in which concrete solutions ensure security is provided.” (R2) Following the same logic, some respondents consider the military component to be very important: „national security could be improved through rigorous military developments so that citizens can be assured that someone will defend them at all times.” (R4) Others consider important to incorporate technological changes in the national security institutions while some address the issue of espionage: „elimination of all potential spies from the country” (R5). All these confirm the interest of Generation Z for living in a better social and political environment. Their opinions are stronger and more often expressed, even when related to important topics like military and security policing. Although they are not yet involved in the decision-making process, these attitudes show a higher voluntarily assumed responsibility.

Cooperation and dialogue with neighboring states and international institutions is a recurring theme for respondents with interests in the field of law, political science and psychology: „National security can be improved through dialogue with the great powers of the world and the great international organizations” (R12). Since the respondents are part of the most complex generation in terms of cultural, ethnic and religious identity, they better understand and accept that communication is a useful instrument to overcome all these challenges. So, cooperation is a key characteristic for this cohort. It is unclear if the same approach will be present in crisis situations.

Those respondents who considered that one of the biggest threats to national security is the political element, to the question related to the methods by which

the security of Romania can be improved, come with answers in the same logic. Some believe that better decisions are needed, others discuss compliance with the law: „the national security of the country can be improved by respecting the law and its correct application, but also by taking the best decisions regarding future actions” (R13), the elimination of abuses but also the increase of living standards: „national security can best be improved by raising the standard of living of the population, because a financially stable population is able to respond much more easily to any challenges that may arise” (R14).

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Interview questions**

How do you define security?

Which is, in your opinion, the biggest threat towards Romanian`s national security?

How can national security be improved?

Which is the role of young people in the contemporary society?  
 From where do you get your information related to the events happening in Romania?  
 Are you discussing politics or current events with your friends?

## Appendix 2 Overview of the participants

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Field of study</b>	<b>Location</b>
R1	22	Male	Biology	Satu Mare
R2	21	Female	Psychology	Harghita
R3	22	Male	Political Science	Cluj
R4	21	Female	Security Studies	Suceava
R5	20	Male	Technical Studies	Sibiu
R6	20	Female	Security Studies	Galați
R7	24	Male	Law	Maramureș
R8	19	Male	IT	Hunedoara
R9	19	Female	Psychology	Constanța
R10	19	Female	Natural Sciences	Hunedoara
R11	25	Female	IT	Cluj
R12	19	Male	Law	Neamț
R13	22	Female	Political Science	Constanța
R14	23	Male	Political Science	Caraș-Severin
R15	23	Male	Technical Studies	Sălaj
R16	23	Female	Journalism	București
R17	20	Male	Medicine	București
R19	23	Female	Security Studies	Alba
R20	20	Male	Chemistry	Brașov