BULLETIN

Manifestations of security culture at national level

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Abstract

We are moving towards a new security paradigm in which the predictability and stability of the system of international relations are directly impacted by global strategic rivalry, with a significant potential for rearranging the relationships between strategic players with global interests. The concept of security culture must be understood in this context, integrated into the security paradigm, and tailored to the dynamics of the international security environment, as it affects a variety of fields in addition to security, including the military, economic, socio-political, and cultural ones. Using several studies and opinion surveys conducted by public opinion polling institutions and, respectively, by non-governmental organizations, regarding the measurement of the security culture and the reactions to it, it is crucial to examine the relationship between security culture and hybrid threats, societal resilience, information warfare, cyber security, or emerging threats. It is also important to follow the evolution of the concept of „security culture" in Romania. Last but not least, this essay aims to examine the distinctive components of security culture from fields and action directions while also offering a number of suggestions for raising security culture in Romania.

Preliminary considerations

Social dynamics and the evolution of the security environment require a thorough analysis not only of doctrines, strategies, and plans but also of the concepts themselves. We are moving towards a new security paradigm, with a high potential for reconfiguring not only relations among strategic actors with global interests, but also the system of international relations. Conflicts, crises, and tensions are not limited to certain areas and regions and, although separate, have a global reach. At the same time, their size and relevance are also determined by the domain of action, which is not only military or only economic or only political-social but can be found simultaneously in several of them, manifesting in all environments, from land, air, and sea to space and cyber. The escalation of the Ukrainian conflict, the hostility between China and Taiwan, North Korea's nuclear and ballistic tests, the tense relations between Israel and Iran, or the ongoing conflicts in Africa are just a few examples that demonstrate the need for a new strategy for fostering a culture of security and preparing a country to deal with the changes brought on by the evolution of the security environment. We get a complex picture that highlights how unstable and easily destabilized the international socio-political environment is, as well as how challenging it is to predict and foresee the positions of strategic actors on a global scale if we combine these situations with the COVID-19 Pandemic, the economic crisis, and the energy crisis.

The COVID-19 epidemic altered the social paradigm and compelled us to adjust to a new social reality that included isolation, travel limits, working from home, individual and collective health discipline, and controlled economic rationalizations, things that were previously difficult to imagine. It is not difficult to detect and foresee the social impact and political-social consequences at the level of Romanian society if we add the economic crisis (inflation, monetary policy), as well as the energy crisis, on top of these aspects, at least in terms of the national security dimension.

Beyond giving a brief overview of the concepts, their development, and current usage, this article's main goals are to highlight the significance of security culture, identify the distinctive aspects of Romania's security culture, from its fields and directions of action to its perceptions as measured sociologically, and offer a number of suggestions for raising the country's level of security culture. A multi-domain approach is necessary to fully understand security culture since it affects not just the security area but also the social, political, economic, and cultural domains.

1. Conceptual, diachronic approaches and manifestations of the security culture concept

A broader environment must be considered while examining security culture. Combining the phrases "culture" and "security" produced a brand-new idea with a

distinct meaning from the ideas explored independently. Although the concept of security culture seems more and more often associated with the fields of security, defense or cyber, it is important to remember that man and human nature are the most important elements to consider as security culture exists and manifests itself in every organization, even though it is not received and treated distinctly and most of the definitions refer to "ideas, customs, values and social behaviors that influence the security of a group" (Carpenter and Roer 2022, 30).

1.1. From culture and security to security culture

Durkheim (1933) defined culture as "the way a community thinks about itself in relation to the items that effect it" (Lincoln and Guillot 2004). Culture can be categorized sociologically into general, material, patrimonial, intellectual, or diversified knowledge in numerous domains. It can also be broken down into common behaviors, language, and communication, as well as values and beliefs. Security culture, as seen from a sociological angle, is "a culture of democratic resilience, an institutional culture that promotes the perception of institutional predictability and positive collective feelings, such as trust, optimism, and assertiveness" (Dumitrescu 2018a).

Barry Buzan comes up with a distinct approach to the concept of security and defines the concept of security as being "about the right to be free from threats and about the ability of states and societies to maintain their independence, identity and functional integrity against forces considered hostile who want to change it. The key to security is survival, but this also reasonably includes a number of concerns about existential conditions. The difficulty lies in the boundary between concerns that are attributed to security (threats sufficient to justify urgent action or exceptional measures, including the use of force) and those that are part of everyday uncertainties' (Buzan 1991, 432-433). Hama reinforces Professor Buzan's idea of linking the definition of security to "establishing the area of relevance", also emphasizing the 5 relevant sectors – political, military, economic, social and ecological - that can affect "the security of human collectives" (Hama 2017).

Piwowarski defines security culture as "a material and immaterial whole of elements of a consolidated heritage of people, intended to cultivate, recover (if it has been lost) and increase the level of security of individuals and collectivities". In this context, the author reviews the concept of culture, defined in 1871 by the anthropologist Edward Taylor, as a concept that includes "knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, as well as other capabilities necessary for a man, as a member of society" and arrives at the three "pillars of culture: individual, social and material", after analyzing "components of culture: material reality, social culture and ethical culture", defined in 1952 by Alfred Louis Kroeber (Piwowarski 2017, 17).

Buluc defines security culture as "the outcome of social interactions that take place in groups, organizations, communities, and societies concerned with aspects of social

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security, which have in common certain learning and knowledge accumulation processes" in order to meet the needs of people in terms of trust, protection, and safety (Buluc, et al. 2019). Security culture must be understood as a living, evolving concept that responds to social change, is passed down through generations, and attempts to provide individuals the skills they need to not just identify threats but also to prevent them and learn how to respond to and neutralize them. The social milieu, the geostrategic and regional context, and the normative social structure all influence societal developments.

Security culture is defined as "the entirety of values, norms, attitudes, or actions that determine the understanding and assimilation at the level of society of the concept of security and its derivatives (national, international, collective security, insecurity, security policy, etc.)" in Romania's National Defense Strategy Guide from 2015 and here we also list the ideas connected to or deriving from the idea of security (presidency.ro 2015a).

According to Lesenciuc, security culture is "a set of norms, values, attitudes and behaviors resulting from a people's customs, traditions, symbols, and behavior patterns, which are in turn conditioned by the adaptation to the environment (including the response to threats), which ensures the understanding and assimilation of the concept of security and derived concepts (including the Security-freedom balance), the achievement and maintenance of a necessary minimum level of security" (Lesenciuc 2022, 124-141).

The shift from the two concepts of culture and security to the concept of security culture, which has a distinct meaning, preserved the norms, values, attitudes, and actions and integrated them into a pattern or model, determined the functional processes that develop state institutions' capacity to prevent and act, and helped people develop the skills they need to not only be aware of threats but also to prevent them and learn how to neutralize them.

1.2. Security culture and political culture

Traditionally, security culture may be thought of as conceptually descending from political culture. The renowned political scientists Sidney Verba and Gabriel Almond (1963) identified three categories of political culture: parochial, dependent, and participative after analyzing the cognitive, evaluative, and emotional attitudes of the populace toward politics and society (also called civic culture). According to Almond and Verba, "public participation in any form, but especially through association with others, trust in citizen competence, largely equivalent to participation (as opposed to dependent competence, which only requires knowledge and obedience to the law)" are guarantees of democratic stability (Bujder 2010). Because the security culture also shows itself in the political sphere and uses the same social and security values and norms, the political system can only continue to guarantee democratic stability if it is able to harmonize with the social, economic, cultural, and security

systems. Dumitrescu underlines that "both can be operationalized on the cognitive, evaluative, and emotional dimensions and arises from the experience of citizens with a more or less predictable institutional grid", emphasizing the connection between the political and security cultures (Dumitrescu 2018b).

1.3. Strategic culture and security culture

Jack Snyder first coined the term "strategic culture" in 1977 when researching how Soviet leaders differed from American ones in terms of culture and conduct during the Cold War. This idea is regarded as the forerunner to the term "security culture" (Lantis 2002, 87-113). The ideas put out by Snyder are adopted and developed by Colin S. Gray in his article *National Style in Strategy: The American Example* from 1981. Gray notes that the US, like Russia, has a unique strategic culture, which has important consequences for nuclear strategy. Strategic culture was described by Gray as a manner of "Thinking and behavior that are influenced by ideas about the nation's past and goals for self-definition (such as „Who am I as an American? How should I feel, think, or act?) and various American citizen-specific experiences (geographical, political, philosophical, and civic). Thus, geopolitical, historical, and economic experiences all contribute to the uniqueness of American strategic culture" (Zaman 2009, 68-88).

With a focus on the perception of the concept of security culture, we can conclude from an analysis of the definition that the influencing factors mentioned can particularize security culture in other geographic areas that are not strictly defined by state borders. For instance, an American will understand security culture differently than a Romanian, a Russian, or a Chinese due to different reference systems, in which norms, national values, experiences, and other factors differ.

1.4. Security and resilience culture

In the Global Strategy of the European Union from 2016, the term security is equivalent to that of resilience. In the view of Brussels, "the resilient state is a democratic state, which systematically produces trust in its own institutions and which ensures sustainable economic development. The resilient state diffuses, therefore, a culture of resilience, i.e. the perception of institutional predictability" (Mihai, et al. 2022).

Resilience is described as "the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to prepare for, to resist, to adapt and recover quickly from situations of stress and shock, without compromising long-term development prospects" in the Communication "The EU approach to resilience: learning from food security crises. "The dual approach to resilience can be seen: the community and individual level, the ability of an entity to recover quickly from impact and the intrinsic strength of the person to better withstand stress or shocks (European Union 2012). The capacity for resilience can be found in other areas as well, and the EU has approved national recovery and resilience plans for its member states.

Through these plans, the states can implement reforms and investments aimed at reducing the socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, facilitating the nation's transition to a greener, more digital economy, or putting more of a focus on the needs of young people by bolstering the education sector (EPRS 2022).

Within NATO, the concept of "resilience" has also seen two approaches. The NATO Treaty (signed in Washington, 1949) emphasizes, in Article 3, the resistance capacity of each state "in order to be more effective in achieving the objectives of this Treaty, the parties, separately and together, through their own forces and mutual aid, will maintain and develop individual and collective ability to withstand an armed attack" (NATO 1949). At the 2016 NATO Summit, the approach to the concept of resilience and the need to strengthen it, considered the alteration of the security environment following the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine from 2014 "a necessary foundation for credible defense, deterrence, and efficient performance of the Alliance's core task". According to the hybrid threat model, resilience is defined as "the capacity of a government to continue functioning, to continue maintaining the delivery of services to the population, and to also continue providing civilian support for military operations". Regarding the need to build resilience, seven fundamental areas are specifically targeted: the continuation of government and essential government services; energy supply; the capacity to deal with the unrestrained movement of people; the management of water and food resources; the capacity to deal with catastrophic losses; the operation of telecommunications and cybernetic networks; and the viability of transportation systems (NATO 2016b). Resilience is a national obligation and a shared commitment, as the Madrid Summit underlined. "We are boosting our adaptability, in part through nationally determined targets and execution plans that are driven by goals created in collaboration with Allies. Additionally, we will improve our energy security" are the components spelled out in the final declaration, which all heads of state signed (NATO 2022).

So, through a security culture planned at the national or allied level with civil society input, resilience is either generated or strengthened. Through the process of educating and increasing public awareness, security culture can significantly boost resilience in areas like security, social cohesion, and political stability, implicitly supporting the maintenance of institutional stability (state or alliance of states).

1.5. Security culture and information warfare
One of the effective battle strategies Sun Tzu outlined in The Art of War was the eradication of resistance and the destruction of the enemy's will to fight. "An operation carried out to obtain an information or cognitive advantage over the adversary and consists of controlling one's own information space, protecting access to one's own information, while also acquiring and using the adversary's information, destroying his information systems, and disrupting the flow of information", according to the definition of information warfare (NATO 2016a). Although information warfare is not a new phenomenon, it has creative components

due to technological advancement, which makes information spread more quickly and on a larger scale.

By "projecting an alternate reality onto an established target population to create a perception of the target group that allows pressure on decision makers and the alteration of well-considered, evaluated, and strategically planned decisions relate to a narrow, concrete, delicate, and important subject related to the topic on which the alteration of the decision is desired" (Chifu 2022). Therefore, whether the goal of the impact is to change a strategic choice or create a destabilizing scenario, the efficiency of information warfare is also tied to the degree of security culture of the population, which can be targeted and acted upon to shift perception. An atmosphere that is favorable to information warfare tactics might be produced by a low-security culture.

1.6. Security culture and hybrid threats

The term "hybrid threats" refers to a group of "coercive and subversive tactics, conventional and non-conventional strategies (such as diplomatic, military, economic, and technological) that can be coordinated by state or non-state actors to achieve particular goals while staying below the threshold of the state of war. Typically, the goal is to impede decision-making processes by exploiting the target's weaknesses and creating ambiguity" (Frunzeti and Bărbulescu 2018, 16-26).

Combining the old information war weapons of propaganda, disinformation, and fake/fake news in a new and inventive way, hybrid threats weaken the line of the terrain of conflict between the actors. The Internet has supplanted the physical world as the place where action, impact, and influence are needed. Campaigns to spread misinformation are increasingly using social media to coordinate threats and hybrid activities, radicalize potential participants, and dominate political discourse.

Frunzeti lists the elements included in a study carried out by three institutions from Finland, Romania, and Sweden that "to the creation of hybrid threats": "The post-Cold War international order has changed; globalization, advanced communication technologies, and explosive changes in the online environment essentially contribute to increasing the action potential of state actors, but also of non-state actors; utilizing the potential offered by new media technologies as well as new tools for social influence" (Frunzeti and Bărbulescu 2018, 16-26). Since social influence tools are "double-edged weapons," they can both exploit the effect on the vulnerable population and help to increase the level of preparedness and resilience of the population by providing quick and affordable means of informing it. This is why the need for a security culture is a factor that has the potential to reduce these kinds of threats.

1.7. Security culture, cyber security, and emerging technologies

The evolution of the technological field also determines, implicitly, the diversification of threats and security risks that will increase the uncertainty and volatility of the global security environment, becoming more and more difficult to anticipate and counter. "Cyber attacks, activities specific to the information field (actions of

influence in the public space, disinformation generated by fake news), emerging technologies (5G, artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing), threats to critical infrastructures, communications, transport and trade can lead to the emergence of interconnected risks and threats; the risks, the need for data protection and user education "complement" the beneficial effects generated by these technologies for citizens and the business environment. Drone technology (UAVs) has dramatically changed the shape of warfare and created a constant impact on the psyche of democratic societies." These types of capabilities, that threaten military security, may have a terrorist use or may affect critical infrastructure, energy security, or may be used for surveillance or influencing actions on specific targets (Chifu 2022).

Mihai notes in the report on the strategic resilience of the European Union that a number of crucial industries, including transportation, energy, health care, and finance, have become more and more reliant on digital technology to carry out their fundamental functions. "Despite the fact that digitalization presents the European Union with several chances and answers, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, it also exposes the business and society to cyber attacks. Around the world, cyber attacks and computer crime are becoming more frequent and sophisticated, and it is anticipated that this trend will continue to develop in the future" (Mihai, et al. 2022).

Social media has fundamentally altered how people interact by providing free access to "unlimited" knowledge and, at the same time, allowing some groups of people to exert influence over others in specific locations and on particular themes, which can quickly lead to polarization and radicalization. "The first requirement is to produce a comprehensive national policy for cyberspace and social networks," stressed Harlan Ullman, referring to US strategy and policy on the two topics, emphasizing the sanitization of cyberspace through government action and corporate and citizen accountability (Ullman 2021). This is precisely why a high degree of security culture can help reduce societal vulnerability by educating citizens to understand the nature of threats, learn to differentiate and verify the information before sharing or accessing malicious or disruptive IT content, resulting in thus a decrease in the degree or pace of influence actions.

1.8. Security culture and human security
Human security is extremely important, having in the foreground, the citizen and his safety, with a growing emphasis on the involvement of civil society in the process, starting from the assumption that a precarious security culture is a societal vulnerability. Understanding the role of each element contributing to social action from the state, public institutions, non-governmental organizations or corporations is important for understanding the role of the individual (citizen) in ensuring national and international security. Social security is represented by legal regulations designed to ensure the state of social security at the level of a person, social group or

total population, as well as to protect disadvantaged or marginalized people. Human security believes that "the health of the population is of paramount importance for the state's ability to survive within the international system" (Curos 2021, 40-47). Kay Roer emphasized the idea that people are different, with different needs and with a certain level of understanding, knowledge and the key to success in building, maintaining and growing a very good security culture is understanding these differences and the need to adapt the effort to their needs, to the context and their level of understanding and knowledge (Roer 2015). Emerging technologies, cyber threats, and information war are factors with disruptive potential in our activity, on a social or institutional level, but the common denominator and the most important factor in this equation remains the human factor. "In managing security and threats to it, the most problematic are individuals. Despite the existence of various forms of hardware and software, people are the ones who generate security breaches" (Brânda 2018). Precisely because of this, the security culture is the one that puts the individual in the center of attention and becomes a tool through which the citizen/ the human/ the individual reduces his risks and maintains a high level of societal integration and functional social relations.

1.9. Security culture and the multi-domain approach

The society's or organization's security culture is correlated with the areas in which it is applied or manifested. Techniques and strategies of action that are unique to the information war, which at first was mostly in the military or broad field, are also to be found in fields with no direct relationship to security, in the sense of the restricted definition of the term with application to the sphere of defense. Although international organizations (NATO, EU, OSCE) and states started to develop strategies and plans to implement resilience after the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, the concept of security culture remained in the strategic planning documents because there were few elements of its concrete application, with the emphasis being on applicability in the economic, social, energy, educational, cyber, or nuclear fields.

The activities of some entities, whether state actors or non-state players, can have ramifications and reverberations in many other domains and even cause large-scale effects that may result in crises of a social, socio-political, economic, or cultural-religious nature. The low level of security culture can be a risk factor or a catalyst for destabilizing events at the socio-political or security level. One example of this is societal resistance to disinformation.

2. Romanian security culture's outward manifestations

The security culture is expressed through social norms, beliefs, and attitudes that represent the society in which it exists and is projected in accordance with how those social norms are used in that particular society. During the communist era, Romanian values changed; the state assumed ownership of all property, and the

society was thought to be egalitarian, devoid of social class distinctions. At the same time, however, freedom of expression was constrained, and access to information was under the control of the state. The security culture was restricted to safeguarding the state and the values it imposed as well as the physical safety of the citizen, which depended heavily on a high level of adherence to the social norms the state imposed.

The security culture was restricted to safeguarding the state and the values it imposed as well as the physical safety of the citizen, which depended heavily on a high level of adherence to the social norms imposed by the state. After the system changed in 1989, there was a paradigm shift that resulted in a chaotic immersion in the concept of democracy, spurred on by an enthusiasm for the "abolition" of restrictions on free speech, the restoration of property rights, and unfettered freedom of choice. Romania's security culture aspired to follow a similar path to that of security and defense processes, with an effort to specifically adapt to the national transition for integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic course.

2.1. Evolution, manifestation and normative framework of the security culture in Romania

Analyzing the period before 1990, Cristian Felea (2018) presents Romania's security culture as "a value imposed by the communist leaders, only that it was defined differently, namely as revolutionary vigilance and as socialist ethics, through which "awakened social consciousness was formed " of every citizen of the communist state. Faced with such a perspective, which was inoculated to citizens from the earliest age (let us remember, the institutionalization of education implied the existence of civic-political education organizations, including at the level of preschool education, through the "falcons of the homeland"), it was expected from the active individual not to make any concessions from the prescriptions of the ethics which was called revolutionary consciousness" (Felea 2018). The adherence of Romania to European and Euro-Atlantic principles led to an adoption of the concepts of security, democracy, and the rule of law. This was followed by actual state changes in the majority of areas, including economics, politics, the military, and the legislative branch.

A first attempt to shift the national security issue's center of gravity to the level of the citizen, abandoning worries about state security, may be seen in Romania's National Security Strategy from 1999. This document presents a novel interpretation of the idea of national security from at least two angles. First of all, for the first time, the idea of national security is based on the citizen, on his fundamental interests and rights, rather than the state. According to Constantinescu, "In place of the old, centralized vision, a new idea has been placed, that according to which national security starts from guaranteeing a proper future for every human being." This new way of thinking helped to pave our country's path to the European Union, from the revision of the Constitution to accession and integration (Constantinescu 1999).

The National Defense Strategy for the period of 2015–2020 included a direction of action that aimed to incorporate security culture into the concept of national security: "The development of the security culture, including through continuous education, which promotes the values, norms, attitudes, or actions that allow the assimilation of the concept of national security." (presidency.ro 2015b).

The National Strategy for the Defense of the Country for the period 2020-2024 (Strategy) proposes an integrated management of risks and threats by the Romanian state, both nationally and internationally, with the fulfillment of Romania's responsibilities, as a member of the EU, NATO, OSCE, UN. "From the perspective of Romania's security, we must have a tailored and effective response to the risks, threats, and vulnerabilities we confront, based on continuity, adaptation, flexibility, resilience, and predictability" (presidency.ro 2020, 5).

Summarizing what has been presented, it can be said about the concept of security culture that, diachronically, it supports the idea that the central element, in Romanian society, is the citizen - integrated in the "state-society-citizen triad"– and we also find in the programmatic documents the recommendation to protect and promotion of national security values, emphasizing, at the same time, the necessity and importance of society's involvement in the process, being aware of the interdependence between the level of citizens' security culture and the stability, strength and resilience of a state.

2.2. Domains and directions of action specific to security culture
Analyzing the concept of security culture through the prism of the fields of manifestation: political, military, economic, social, information, an overlap can be achieved on the directions of action established for the implementation of the strategy, being correlative, according to the concept of extended national security and aimed at: "defense, diplomatic, information, counter-intelligence and security dimensions, public order, crisis management, economic and energy, societal dimensions" (presidency.ro 2020, 37).

Taking into account the significance of the goals, the directions of action for each aspect of achieving national security will be implemented with the following goals: "consolidating the national defense capacity; improving the effectiveness of national crisis prevention and management systems; strengthening the security of critical infrastructures; sustainable development of large public systems (health, education, social protection); the promotion of national identity (presidency.ro 2020). Regardless of whether we are discussing asymmetric or hybrid threats, emergencies or crisis circumstances, all of these orientations, aims, and methods are intended to defend the state and the citizen by assuring the state's resilience.

The social domain is where security culture has the biggest impact on security, and destabilizing variables can be produced by asymmetrical demographic change, the rise of individualism and isolation in cyberspace, and the susceptibility of online

social media to information warfare tactics. The crisis at the nation's borders, which was brought on by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, also brought to attention the implications of migration and refugee issues on regional and national security. The institutional approach to managing Ukrainian migrants has greatly decreased the security risk, but changes in the region's condition could make the issue worse.

The citizen is the subject on which action is taken in the cognitive-behavioral dimension in order to determine an appropriate response, either to accept situations, or to determine a contrary answer. The online environment and social networks must be approached separately, the social impact analyzed on all levels, interrelated with the other fields.

2.3. *The perspective of security culture in Romania: studies, evaluations, and recommendations*

To be able to adapt and correctly apply policies, measures, and actions at the level of institutions and the state, at the same time, they build and streamline a two-way communication and citizen involvement in the process of strengthening the security culture; it is crucial to understand how the security culture is perceived at the citizen and society level.

We analyzed the reports and studies on the security culture in Romania and, in 2018, three studies were highlighted that we will mention below, other studies that separately treat the field of security culture were not repeated and updated. In order to have a broader understanding of the phenomenon, we expanded the analysis and included studies and surveys that measured the level of security and specific parameters, studies carried out by Strategic Thinking (2022), the Romania 2050 Agenda project and the Laboratory for the Analysis of Information War and Strategic Communication, Security Barometer of Romania (LARICS 2022).

The Security Culture Barometer, the first sociological study to measure the idea of security culture in relation to the culture of insecurity, in antagonistic parameters, was introduced by the Laboratory for the Analysis of Information Warfare and Strategic Communication (LARICS) in 2018. It has seven dimensions with significant polarities for the survey topic: trust/distrust, localism/globalism, realism/liberalism, optimism/pessimism, security/rights, involvement/apathy, and many more. protection in Romania (LARICS 2018a).

Lungu, Buluc, and Deac have published a report on the perception of the promotion of the security culture, evaluating the approaches and strategies for doing so, as well as methods for piqueing the interest of citizens in this area. They also mention institutions that have a role to play or have the potential to do so. Although the PROSCOP survey, sociologically speaking, is not representative because the achievement sample is small (152 people), made up of students and pupils (73 %), from the urban environment (90%), the combined findings present a number of

recommendations for the actors responsible for the management of areas involved in the promotion of security culture, applicable at least to respondents who fit into the categories examined (Lungu, Buluc and Deac 2018).

On the other hand, Strategic Thinking carried out, in 2022, through the *Agenda Romania 2050 Project*, a series of sociological studies on six major areas of interest for the future of Romania, from infrastructure, health, education, climate change, to taxation, energy, digitization, security, etc. and the results indirectly confirm the results of the LARICS (2018b) survey on security culture, but also those of 2022 from the Security Barometer of Romania (LARICS 2022).

In this sense, from the analysis of the data of the LARICS barometer, the conclusion is that "Romanians are rather distrustful (56.6%) of institutions than confident (31.6%), they are oriented towards localism (48%) rather than globalism (36%), with a relative balance between focusing on rights (45.7%) and focusing on security (41.1%), more involved (52%) than apathetic (35%), but also a rather conspiratorial perspective (52.5%) on politics, the media and international relations than a rationalist one (32.3%)" (LARICS, Barometrul culturii de securitate partea 1 2018).

The Strategic Thinking study (2022) emphasizes a very important element that emerges from the socio-demographic analysis related to young people up to 30 years of age who believe, in higher percentages than the rest of the population, that NATO will remain Romania's main security guarantee. This highlight confirms the results of the PROSCOP study which pointed out that more than two thirds of respondents (69.7%) are aware of security risks, threats and vulnerabilities as the main objective in promoting security culture. About a third of the respondents believe that the promotion of the security culture should lead to the application by citizens of the norms, rules, standard procedures of action in the field of security (35.5%) or to the adaptation of individual and group behavior, as well as of the entire company to the specific conditions regarding security (30.9%).

"Although mistrust in institutions is dominant, there are no significant socio-demographic faults in the Romanian population from the point of view of the security culture, and the security-rights dimension is not as important for the structuring of security cultures as it seems to be in the public debate Romanian society; the three types of security cultures are dominated by conspiracy and vulnerable to fake-news". An extremely important positive element resulting from this study is that localist tendencies are not, for now, in contradiction with sympathy towards the EU/NATO (LARICS 2018a), elements also confirmed by the Strategic Thinking survey (2022) where in the opinion of 83.5% of Romanians, the WEST (i.e. EU, USA, NATO) is the direction Romania should go in terms of political and military alliances. In contrast, 8% believe that Romania should move towards the CEST (i.e. Russia, China), and 65.8% of Romanians believe that NATO will remain Romania's main security guarantee (StrategicThinking, 2022); the same element of certainty that "Romania's

population remains pro-Western and pro-European" is also emphasized in October 2022 by the LARICS study: 68% of respondents are optimistic about the future of the European Union in the short term, 78% are optimistic regarding American support for Eastern Europe and only 10% of Romanians believe that the EU should disappear in the future (LARICS 2022). Although the young public, educated in security (PROSCOP) believes that state institutions with attributions in the field of security and defense should have the main role in promoting security culture (71.1%), in the framework of the socio-demographic analysis (Strategic Thinking) it turned out that there are no significant differences according to the socio-demographic categories analyzed between those who believe that Romania should move towards the WEST from the point of view of political and military alliances, and from the point of view of security, 70.9% of Romanians believe that in the future the Romanian Army should increase, while 23.2% are of the opinion that the Romanian Army should remain as it is now and only 3.5% that it should reduce its numbers.

To sum up, the effective promotion of the security culture is closely related to the setting of priorities regarding the conceptual components of security, from dimensions to components, risks, threats, and vulnerabilities, against which particular courses of action and responses are designed, on the dimensions of security and defense, educational, health, social, and economic.

Conclusions

The risks and threats to the safety of the citizen and the state have, for some time now, transcended geographical boundaries, and security is no longer confined to the military. Instead, it now necessitates a multidisciplinary, interinstitutional approach, collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations, and a shift from the action of a few institutions and small groups to the entire society, with the preservation of personal safety as the main objective.

The paradigm shift brought about by Russia's aggression against Ukraine also influenced how the European Union would respond and how NATO would adjust its defensive and deterrence posture there. Although it is mentioned in the planning documents, the concept of security culture has not benefited from and does not appear to profit from a pragmatic approach of application, which was highlighted by the concept reset. The security culture needs more time to solidify as a distinct notion after the terms have been defined and the distinguishing aspects have been described. Although Romania has a national strategy (SNAT 2024) that places the citizen and his well-being at its center, the perception of the citizen does not align with this stated intention, so it must be understood, transposed, and integrated into a concrete way of action in strategies and plans. This requires expanding from the field of security and defense to other fields: from economic to social and educational.

In a consolidated democracy, safeguarding citizens must be at least as vital as protecting the state because state security is a fundamental component of society. Even though this is more difficult to accomplish in Romania due to the country's relatively high levels of institutional mistrust (56.6%) and conspiratorial views on politics, the media, and international affairs (52.5%), the effort needs to be refocused on the individual citizen in order to foster the growth of his security culture.

Since the Internet and television are viewed as conspiratorially, irrationally, emotionally, and without serious consideration of the sources, it is crucial that the state institutions learn to minimize risks and vulnerabilities and ensure prevention in order to be able to narrow the perception gap of the Romanian citizen. Another factor that raises the level of security culture is education, institutional cooperation, and civil society participation in the educational process. The development of a security culture and the ability of citizens to understand the risks, challenges, and threats to security both contribute to the widest possible public having a minimum level of knowledge about the concept of security. These two factors also directly influence actions to recognize and combat the effects caused by the phenomenon of disinformation. Along with strategy and resources, the main component in promoting security culture is the utilization of professionals in the sector. Institutions in charge of education can use training techniques and practical actions, such as conferences, debates, partnerships with academic or research institutions, meetings with pupils and students from educational institutions of all levels, introduction to school-level courses on the development of security culture, and meetings with representatives of the civil society.

At the national level, the security goals must be linked to the directions of action, the institutions must coordinate their work processes, act simultaneously and with coherence, support the updating of the law, ensure institutional transparency, and keep the citizen in mind as the primary stakeholder in maintaining the state's functionality. The security culture is presented as a way to be aware of risks, threats, and vulnerabilities and eventually to learn management techniques, not to prevent their occurrence. To change the attitude from the passive mode of response and countermeasures to the proactive mode of prevention, an institutional approach is required. Vulnerabilities can be prevented from becoming security threats by educating the public and fostering a strong security culture.

The state can protect society by enforcing its security policy, but by enhancing the security culture at the societal level, it can significantly lower risks and vulnerabilities in almost all areas because the effort will be collaborative rather than the result of the state acting alone and expecting a passive response from its citizens. To safeguard the government and its inhabitants, it is important to prioritize the security culture that education has helped to create.
A brief introduction to a PhD study with the title „Strengthening security culture through institutional strategic communication" is provided in this article.

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