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A short analysis of security culture from the perspective of postmodern society

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Abstract

This article explores new dimensions of security in the context of postmodernity. The article highlights the influence of postmodernism and postmodernity on security culture and presents necessary measures to mitigate the risks associated with this paradigm. In a society characterized by plurality, relativism, and diversity, security culture must evolve to address new digital challenges. It presents how the concept of the relativization of truth from the perspective of postmodernism can affect the approach to security, highlighting both benefits and challenges. It also examines the impact of globalization and digitization on security, highlighting the need for international cooperation and interdisciplinary strategies. The article emphasizes that promoting digital education, raising awareness, developing collaboration, and implementing technology are crucial in building an adaptable and effective security culture in the face of the challenges of postmodernity.

Keywords:

security culture; postmodernism; postmodernity; relativization of truth; diversity; international cooperation; digital education; strategic cultures.

Current studies and research regarding the analysis of security culture, from the perspective of postmodern society, highlight new dimensions, focusing mainly on the identity dimension, on the dimensions of the discourse and the narrative, accepting, at the same time, alongside older studies and analyses, the prevalence of the importance of non-state actors “from individuals, ethnic and/or religious groups to regional blocks, non-governmental organizations, including multinational corporations, the security of individuals being considered clearly superior in importance to that of the state.” (Sarcinschi 2005, 11).

It is also obvious that postmodern society faces a number of complex and fluctuating challenges, one of the most important being the phenomenon of disinformation and virtual threats. In this context, the *security culture* (Presidential Administration 2020) plays a crucial role in protecting the individual and the community against information manipulation and digital risks. From a sociological perspective, analyzing the security culture within postmodern society becomes essential for understanding how individuals and communities adapt and relate to the new digital challenges.

Digital technologies and social media platforms have changed the communication paradigm, offering immense opportunities for connection and access to information. However, technological evolution has also brought significant risks, such as the proliferation of misinformation and fake news.

One of the defining aspects of the *security culture*¹ in postmodern society is the increased awareness of virtual threats and of the importance of protecting personal data. People are increasingly aware of their vulnerability online and of the negative impact that misinformation and information manipulation can have on their choices and behaviours. Thus, security culture encourages the development of strategies and skills to critically evaluate information and identify unsafe sources. Recent studies and research² have highlighted the fact that postmodern society is characterized by increased diversity and a variety of perspectives on reality. This pluralism brings with it an additional challenge in managing information and trusted sources. Security culture, in this context, aims to promote digital and media literacy, providing the individual with the necessary tools to navigate responsibly through the sea of information available on the Internet.

At the same time, the security culture in postmodern society is closely related to the notion of collective responsibility. In an interconnected world, individual actions and choices can have a significant impact on others. Thus, promoting a security culture also involves a call for involvement and solidarity from all members of society, in order to protect and support the community as a whole.

¹ “A component of the organizational culture, the security culture represents the values, norms, attitudes, knowledge and actions assumed and shared by the members of the organization regarding the safety of the internal and external environment.” <http://www.arecs.ro/despre-organizatia-arecs/cultura-de-securitate/>

² The studies provide theoretical insights and a complex analysis on the societal and cultural changes produced in the postmodern era and on how they affect the way individuals and communities perceive and manage information security.

Thus, in a first and partial conclusion, the development of the security culture in the postmodern society is an essential component for facing the increasingly complex digital challenges. Becoming aware of the risks and developing the skills for responsibly navigating online are fundamental for protecting the individual and the community, and adapting and strengthening the security culture is an ongoing and necessary process for a society resilient to misinformation and virtual threats. By promoting the values of responsibility, solidarity, and digital literacy, postmodern society can build a solid foundation for information security and for protecting its fundamental interests and values.

³ Postmodernism is an intellectual current that rejects modern premises of objective certainty, universality, and metanarratives, instead advocating for relativism, fragmentation, intertextuality, and cultural diversity. Postmodernism explores the critique of large power structures and conventional norms, often taking an ironic stance and playfulness in the way it relates to knowledge, reality, and artistic expression. It is important to understand that postmodernism is not a unitary theory or paradigm, but rather a collection of perspectives, concepts, and attitudes that may vary depending on the cultural or intellectual domain in which they are applied. The definition and interpretation of postmodernism may differ depending on the author or researcher who approaches it, but at its core, it is a critical exploration of the modern framework and conventional concepts of truth, identity, and knowledge.

⁴ Postmodernity is a complex and often controversial concept in the field of philosophy, culture and sociology. The exact definition may vary depending on the perspectives and theories of each researcher. In a general definition, postmodernity refers to a cultural and philosophical period or stage that follows modernity. This term is used to describe the profound changes in thought, values, and social structures that occurred after the modern period.

1. Delimitations of a conceptual nature

One can observe, both in common and in academic environments, the erroneous use of the notions of postmodernism and postmodernity. I specify that these are two concepts that refer to distinct aspects of culture, philosophy, and society. Here below I will try to define and analyze these two notions:

Postmodernism³ (Harvey 1991, 182-184) is an intellectual and cultural movement that emerged in the 20th century and continues to influence contemporary thought and art. It represents a rejection of the values and principles of modernity and linear and rational thinking. Characteristics of postmodernism include:

- *Plurality and relativism*: Postmodernism rejects the idea of a single grand narrative or an absolute and stable reality. Instead, it promotes the plurality of perspectives and recognizes that truth and knowledge can be relative, and dependent on context and interpretation.
- *Fragmentation and eclecticism*: Postmodernism is characterized by borrowing and combining different artistic, philosophical and cultural styles, genres and techniques. There is no defined set of norms or values, but an eclectic and open approach.
- *Irony and self-reflexivity*: Postmodernism often uses irony and self-reflexivity to critique and dismantle cultural and social discourses and conventions.

Postmodernity⁴ is a historic state or period characterized by the predominance of values, culture and way of life specific to postmodernism. This term refers to postmodern society and culture, which are influenced by the principles and characteristics of postmodernism (Giddens 2000). Characteristics of a postmodern society include:

- *Openness to diversity*: In postmodern society, cultural, ethnic, religious, and sexual diversity is recognized and valued.

- *Globalization and digitalization*: It is marked by globalization, facilitated by digital technology, which enables rapid communication and worldwide accessibility to information and culture.
- *Fragmentation of identities*: In postmodern society, individual and collective identities are more fluid and complex. People construct their identity from a variety of cultural and social aspects.
- *Excessive propensity for novelty and consumption*: Postmodernity is characterized by excessive consumption and a search for novelty, often at the expense of traditional or established values.

In conclusion, *postmodernism* represents the intellectual and cultural movement, while postmodernity refers to the specific historical state or period influenced by the principles and characteristics of postmodernism. Also, postmodernity is characterized by plurality, relativism, openness to diversity, and globalization, with implications in various fields, including security culture and the way individuals perceive and approach the phenomenon of disinformation through social media ([Jameson 2021](#)).

The security culture has experienced a continuous evolution, but, in principle, its elements have stayed the same. Thus, the security culture would represent “*the set of collective norms, values, and practices that frame the perceptions and actions of actors in the security sphere. It determines what is considered a threat, how risks should be assessed, and how responses to those threats should be designed and implemented.*” ([Buzan, Waever and De Wilde 1998](#)). For most researchers and specialists in the field, security culture refers to “*the set of values, shared by everyone in an organization, that determine how people should think and address security. Getting the right security culture will help develop a security-aware workforce and promote desired security behaviors.*” ([National Protective Security Authority 2023](#)).

In this context, an analysis of the concept of **strategic security** becomes relevant and necessary; about this concept, Colin Gray claimed that it “*represents the set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and understandings that guide the decisions and actions of leaders and decision-makers in terms of national security. It influences how strategic objectives are identified, strategic options are evaluated and resources are managed to achieve these objectives.*” ([Gray 1999](#)).

All of the above emphasizes the importance of non-technical aspects in security and strategy, such as the perceptions, values, understanding, and norms that influence decision-making and security policy formulation. A strong security culture and a coherent strategic culture can have a significant impact on how a state or organization approaches security threats and challenges. The definitions I have provided above are summaries of the concepts of security culture and strategic culture as understood in the academic literature and in the field of security and strategy studies.

Security culture and strategic culture are fundamental concepts in the field of security and strategy studies. They are ways of understanding the attitudes, behaviours,

knowledge, and values that underlie individual and collective approaches to national and international security.

2. The influences of postmodernism and postmodernity on security culture

Both postmodernism and postmodernity can and do influence security culture, but in different ways.

A. *The influence of postmodernism*

Postmodernism promotes plurality and relativism, which can lead to a more open and diversified approach to security. Thus, different views and interpretations can be taken into account when developing security strategies.

The excessive relativization of truth is a concept associated with postmodernism, which brings into question the subjective and context-dependent nature of knowledge and truth. Essentially, this means that in the postmodern perspective, truth is not considered an absolute and objective concept, but rather is influenced by each person's perspective, experience, and individual or cultural context.

This concept gained ground in a context where critical and deconstructionist theories began to analyze how social discourses and representations influence knowledge and truth. In this perspective, the idea of a *meta-narrative* or *universal truth* is questioned, and the diversity of perspectives is recognized and accepted. (Baudrillard 2008, 57-59). Therefore, the excessive relativization of truth from the perspective of postmodernism may have some implications and challenges:

- Postmodernism can lead to an *undermining of certainty* and trust in absolute truth. This can lead to confusion and uncertainty about fundamental aspects of knowledge and communication.
- The postmodern perspective recognizes the existence of *multiple and subjective interpretations* of truth. This can bring a more diverse perspective and pave the way for a deeper understanding of human complexity and cultural contexts.
- Excessive relativization of truth can be exploited to *manipulate* information and *propagate disinformation*. The fact that any perspective or interpretation can be supported under the guise of subjectivity can facilitate the propagation of false narratives.
- Too much relativization can *fragment public discourse* and lead to situations where no consensus or common point of view can be reached. This can affect society's ability to respond to complex and global issues.
- However, the relativization of truth can emphasize the importance of *openness to dialogue and constructive criticism*. Addressing subjectivity and multiple perspectives can contribute to a better understanding of human diversity and the search for more complete and just solutions.

In conclusion, the concept of *excessive relativization of truth* from the perspective of postmodernism is a complex and controversial one. Although it can bring challenges and risks, it can also contribute to the development of critical thinking and a more empathetic approach to human diversity and social complexity.

We should also emphasize that postmodernism brings into focus the subject of *self-reflexivity*, which can encourage a critical approach to existing security culture and current practices. This can lead to greater attention towards the implications and effects of security decisions.

B. The influence of postmodern societies

As mentioned, postmodernity is marked by globalization and digitalization, and this can lead to an increase in transnational threats and to the need for a global approach to security. Based on this premise, the security culture strategy must become more oriented towards international cooperation and information sharing.

By the circular causality relationship between postmodernism (cause) and postmodern society (effect), we can state that at the social level too, the relationship between society and truth becomes more fluid and contextual, with an emphasis on subjectivity and diversity of perspectives. What must be emphasized, beyond the relativization, fragmentation, and diversity of the discourses, is the *Criticism of the dominant discourses*, as in postmodern societies there is an amplification of the critical attitude towards them or the institutional ones. The truths that are imposed or considered *official* are often subject to critical analysis and deconstruction in order to understand how they are constructed and to expose their potential limits. At the same time, postmodernity brings cultural and ethnic diversity to the fore. This influences how the security culture approaches internal threats, such as those related to terrorism or inter-ethnic conflicts.

From here, it can be concluded that there are a variety of factors and theories (Lyotard 2003, 11) that influence security culture and that postmodernism and postmodernity can play different roles depending on the context and specifics of each society. Also, the intersection with digital media and social networks has amplified the diversity of perspectives and allowed the free expression of opinion, leading to a complex mix of *truths, misinformation, and subjective interpretations*.

3. The need to develop security culture and strategic cultures

Knowledge of the security culture and strategic subcultures in a state is essential for students and researchers in security studies for several reasons:

Understanding the basis of security decisions: Knowledge of security culture allows understanding the depth and nature of a state's security decisions. The attitudes,

values, and norms that underlie security culture influence national priorities, identify threats, and formulate responses. This helps researchers develop more informed insights into a state's motivations and actions in the field of security.

Designing security policies: Knowledge of security culture and strategic subcultures can help develop and adapt security policies in a way that corresponds to a country's specific values and mentality. Identifying strategic subcultures allows for understanding the diversity of opinions and approaches among decision-makers and finding a balance between diverse perspectives.

Preventing internal conflicts: Understanding strategic subcultures can help identify internal dissensions within a state related to strategic and security approaches. By understanding the differences in opinions and values, strategies can be developed to manage these tensions, thereby helping to maintain stability and prevent internal conflicts. Knowledge of security culture provides an essential context for analyzing and interpreting security events. Without understanding the specific values and perceptions of a state, it is difficult to make a comprehensive and accurate analysis of how it reacts to security challenges.

Diplomacy and international relations: Knowledge of strategic subcultures can support diplomacy and international relations-building efforts. Understanding how different states perceive security and formulate their strategies can facilitate dialogue and collaboration between countries.

Overall, the knowledge of security culture and strategic subcultures significantly contributes to the development of a comprehensive and informed approach to security studies and ensures the preparation of future leaders and security experts for addressing the complex challenges of the contemporary world.

In order to achieve its purpose and objectives, the security culture can adopt the following approaches:

The pluralist approach can be supported by the influences of postmodernism through promoting the diversity of perspectives and opinions. In this direction, the security culture can be open to including the multiple voices and interests of different groups and communities. This involves consulting and involving the public in the process of defining security threats and strategies.

Security culture can adopt a *reflexive approach* influenced by postmodernism, whereby it constantly and critically self-assesses. This involves periodically analysing and reviewing security policies and practices in order to identify potential deficiencies and make improvements.

Since postmodernity brings with it global interconnectedness and an increased degree of complexity of problems, an *interdisciplinary approach* is imperative,

involving collaboration between different fields and experts to address threats in a comprehensive and holistic way.

Security culture can promote *trust and transparency in dealing with the public* and with other institutions. This can help increase the level of cooperation and support from the community in order to implement security measures. Postmodernity also brings a high degree of uncertainty and change, which implies an *adaptive approach* on the part of the security culture, that is an increased ability to respond quickly to new threats and to adapt security strategies according to the context and evolution of the situation.

And, last but not least, security culture can invest in education and awareness to develop a responsible and informed citizenry. This involves promoting education about online risks and threats and developing digital skills and critical skills to evaluate information and news.

All of these above-mentioned approaches can contribute to a more effective and adaptable security culture, in order to achieve society's protection and safety objectives.

4. Measures to reduce the risks of postmodernity in the construction of a security culture

In order to reduce the growing risks in the construction of a security culture, which manifests at the level of postmodern societies, it is important to consider the following measures and/or strategies:

Promoting digital education and literacy: People should be educated about the risks and threats associated with postmodernity, such as disinformation, the spread of false information, and media manipulation. Developing digital competencies and critical skills can help assess and manage information in a responsible and informed way.

Raising awareness: The public and the security institutions should be aware of the challenges of postmodernity and understand their impact on security culture. This involves organizing information and awareness campaigns to emphasize the importance of adopting responsible and adaptive approaches to new threats.

Development of collaboration and cooperation: In the complex context of postmodernity, cooperation between different institutions and security agencies is essential. Communication and information sharing can help develop integrated security strategies and identify threats more effectively.

Implementing technology and security solutions: Using advanced technology and security solutions can help more effectively identify and counter disinformation and

online threats. For example, artificial intelligence algorithms can be developed for filtering fake content and identifying manipulation schemes.

Supporting research and innovation: As postmodernity brings with it rapid and unpredictable changes, research and innovation are essential to stay abreast of new threats. Governments, academic institutions and the private sector should support security research and the development of innovative technologies.

Promoting ethics and democratic values: Security culture should be guided by ethical principles and democratic values. Transparency, accountability, and respect for individual rights are essential to counter the risks of postmodernity and build a sustainable security culture.

Community and citizen involvement: Communities and citizens should be involved in the process of security culture building. Public participation can increase awareness and support for security measures and help identify and address specific problems in local communities.

In conclusion, reducing the risks of postmodernity in the construction of the security culture involves a comprehensive and integrated approach, which includes both theoretical aspects and practical measures adapted to the specifics of the social and political context of each society.

5. The research strategy for carrying out an analysis of the security culture

In order to carry out an analysis of the security culture, I believe that, in principle, the following objectives and work steps should be pursued:

Objectives of the Research:

- *Understanding the attitudes and values that underlie a state's security policies.*
- *Identifying the main perceived threats and setting security priorities.*
- *Analyzing how security culture influences security-related decisions and public discourse.*

Research Methods:

- a) Document analysis:
 - *Studying national security strategies, official documents, and speeches of political leaders to identify security priorities and keywords used.*
 - *Reviewing past policies and the evolution of security priorities in order to identify significant changes.*

b) In-depth interviews:

- *Conducting interviews with government security officials, security experts and academics to gain inside insights on attitudes, values, and priorities.*

c) Speech analysis:

- *Monitoring the official speech of political leaders, press releases, and public statements to identify keywords and arguments related to security.*
- *Rhetorical analysis of how security is presented in the media and public discourse.*

d) Case studies:

- *Analyzing past security decisions, such as reactions to major events or specific threats, in order to highlight the influence of security culture on state responses.*

e) Questionnaires and surveys:

- *Conducting anonymous surveys to collect citizen opinions and perceptions related to security threats and government priorities.*

f) Analysis of the social environment:

- *Monitoring security-related discussions on social media platforms to observe how citizens discuss and perceive the topic.*

Stages of the research:

Data collection: Data will be collected from official documents, speeches, articles, public statements and other relevant resources.

Interviews and surveys: Planned interviews and surveys are conducted to gain diverse perspectives.

Data analysis: The collected data will be analysed by identifying patterns, keywords, and trends in the discourses and documents studied.

Interpretation: The collected data are interpreted in the context of the state's security culture, highlighting the links between attitudes, values, and security policies.

Concluding: Conclusions are drawn based on data analysis and interpretation, highlighting key findings related to security culture.

Report writing: A detailed report is written, which presents the methods used, key findings, and implications for the security policies of the respective state.

Presentation of results: this report, as well as other relevant documents, are presented at conferences, and seminars, and/or are published in academic journals to share the knowledge gained.

This research strategy combines multiple methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of a state's security culture. The entire process involves a multidisciplinary approach and attention to detail to capture the subtleties and dynamics of this field.

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