

CHALLENGES AND LIMITS IN FORMING AND PROMOTING THE SECURITY CULTURE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL OF ROMANIA

Corneliu Mugurel COZMANCIUC*, Adrian LESENCIUC**

*'Mihai Viteazul' National Intelligence Academy, Bucharest, Romania, ** Department of Fundamental Sciences, Faculty of Air Security Systems, 'Henri Coandă' Air Force Academy, Braşov, Romania

Abstract: *The contemporary security environment is in a continuous transformation, being complex and dynamic. The changes that take place in this environment, due to the interests and relevance of the political actors, have societal implications. In order to defend and promote our interests in a process of accelerated globalization, cooperation is the key word. If the emphasis has always been on the cooperation between the different security and intelligence structures, the need for cooperation is also felt between institutions and the citizen by creating connections based on trust and civic spirit. The hypothesis of the article is to identify the challenges and limitations in constructing a security culture project at the level of civil society, as the natural responsibilities of each citizen, to which both entities, authorized institutions and the citizen, must contribute: the authorized institutions - by creating an 'instruction manual', programs, trainings, round tables, specific conferences; the citizen - by creating a set of rules, patriotic and civic, created on his own initiative. Building a solid culture of security becomes a sine qua non condition for the challenges of the 21st century. In other words, the responsibility of the citizen, through their education in the field of security, seen as civic responsibility, must be a constant concern of the state. The security of a state should no longer be the responsibility of the military and civilian institutions, but also of the citizen. We need a culture of security strongly anchored in the realities of society, promoted responsibly, both at the level of the decision-makers and at the level of the ordinary citizen, but also for the creation of communication channels through which to transfer the know-how from the institutions to society*

Keywords: *security; security culture; intelligence; cooperation; know-how*

1. INTRODUCTION

The general security environment is nowadays described by non-conventional threats gaining more and more ground, where the lines between peace and war are blurred, where the frontline moves from the classic trenches to inside the homes of each citizens.

The concept of security itself went through a series of reforms over time, depending on the global trends. Back in the 90s, the Copenhagen School contributed to the conceptual widening by introducing the idea of societal security as such. Therefore,

Societal security concerns the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats (Weaver, 1993: 23).

In *People, States and Fear*, Barry Buzan (1991a) speaks of five aspects of security – military, political, economic, societal and

ecological. Although the narrow vision on security defines it in relation to the military, material capabilities and the state as the main actor, the changes in the security climate have led to conceptual redefinitions. Thus, visions were articulated according to which shades and contrasts of security proliferate in relation to elements not only military, but also political, economic, social and environmental. The actors involved in this dynamic are not only states but also non-state actors (Kolodziej, 1992:422-423; Buzan, 1991b:432-433). This comprehensive approach, though relatively recent, has been around before. The political, social and economic life was considered intrinsic to the survival of the state, but the Cold War period narrowed the vision (Katzenstein, 1996). Nations share vulnerabilities, especially with the emerging challenges coming from a new generation of threats developed by both state and non-state actors. Although it is the responsibility of the government to educate the general public in order to reduce vulnerabilities, it is the responsibility of the citizen to prepare, be

vigilant and eventually respond. In hence, to develop a security culture.

2. SECURITY CULTURE

Security culture

must be understood as a set of widely resonating ideas that have evolved out of a long historical experience and that are deeply rooted in the shared consciousness or «common sense» (Latham, 1998:132).

According to Colin S. Gray,

culture refers to the socially transmitted habits of mind, traditions, and preferred methods of operations that are more or less specific to a particular geographically based security community (Gray, 1990:45)

and Kai Roer defines security culture as

the ideas, customs and social behaviors of a particular people or group that helps them be free from threat and danger (Kai, 2015:14).

According to those definitions, security culture can be analyzed by taking into consideration multiple aspects: cognitive, affective or emotional, evaluative, historical and emotional. It

is adaptable, it develops with the societal evolution and it is passed through generations by oral and written means of communication, as well as by supporting security values practices (Lungu *et al.*, 2018:66).

Security culture comprises three fundamental elements: technology, policies and competence. Technology is not limited only to tangible elements, but also includes mental models, standards and know-how; policies include written and non-written rules, laws and moral codes; competence is about the people who have the understanding and knowledge, who use technology who form and inform the policies (Kay, 2015:19). Every aspect of the security culture impacts the other two and their synergy can give us perspective:

The more we understand their formation and their continued interaction, the easier it is to understand how we can use them to build and maintain security culture (Kay, 2015:19).

Security culture can be divided into four distinct elements: a resonating set of beliefs about the nature of the international system, a set of perceptions regarding the external and internal threats faced by

the state, the beliefs about the role of the state in the international context and the ideas about the proper conduct of diplomats representing the state. All those elements are believed to be “highly resistant to externally directed efforts to affect change” (Latham, 1998:134).

Based on the *National Security Strategy* of the United States of America (NSS, 2017), which lays the groundwork of a ‘culture of preparedness’¹, Alexander Siedschlag (2018:1-40) proposes four dimensions of the security culture², included into the *Security Culture Model* (SCM). This model is illustrative in relationship with two coordinate axes: constitutive → regulative norms and cognitive → evaluative standards, meaning culture “seen as a factor in the perceptive definition of threat or in a response to threat, respectively culture as a concept to study the emergence or study the evolution of security domains” (Siedschlag, 2018:17) (*secularization* factor) or as a concept to study the governance perspective (*operationalization* factor). From this perspective, *security culture* can be understood as follows:

¹ This new term, ‘culture of preparedness’ (in relationship with *civic culture*, first defined by Almond & Verba (1963), with *strategic culture*, first defined in the context of Cold War by Jack Snyder (1990), or with *security culture*, as defined before) was introduced from very beginning – *Pillar I. Protect the American People, the Homeland, and the American Way of Life*: “We must build a culture of preparedness and resilience across our governmental functions, critical infrastructure, and economic and political systems” (NSS, 2017:7). As a priority action of promoting American resilience, to build a culture of preparedness means “This Administration will take steps to build a culture of preparedness, informing and empowering communities and individuals to obtain the skills and take the preparatory actions necessary to become more resilient against the threats and hazards that Americans face” (NSS, 2017:14).

² Alexander Siedschlag (2018:1-2) proposes, for better understanding of security culture, a very complex, systematic and comprehensive constructivist definition of culture, as follows: “The analytical concept of culture refers not to a certain end state but to peoples’ assumption about the world. Culture can be understood as a sum of cognitive forms by which members of social communities make sense of reality, attribute meanings of facts, as well as save and reproduce knowledge and their interpretation of the world. Culture thus describes ‘the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another’. In addition, culture reduces complexity not only in perception but also in decision-making, constraining the factual choice of options based on norms and values guiding assessment and expectations”.

Table 1. The meaning of security culture based on the *Security Culture Model* (SCM), retrieved from Siedschlag (2018:18-19)

	<i>Culture as a factor in the perceptual definition of threat/ Constitutive norms</i>	<i>Culture as a factor in the response to threat/ Regulative norms</i>
<i>Culture as a security domain/ Securization factor Cognitive standards</i>	Security culture as a cognitive form by which members of social communities make sense of reality, attribute meanings to facts, as well as save and reproduce practical competencies (e.g., resilient communities debates).	Security culture as sets of individual (or proprietary) experience-based strategies associated to individual attributors of meaning and normative convictions; this concept is strong in explaining how existing strategies and courses of action may determine which policy goals are developed or met, rather than strategies and courses of action being allotted to defined goals
<i>Culture as a security governance/ Organization factor Evaluative standards</i>	Security culture as shared symbols on which citizens orient their action and which are a kind of software for operating interfaces between actors and overarching structures (i.e. federal, state, local, tribal and territorial agencies), flexible enough to reflect and adapt to new threats and challenges.	Security culture as the ideational representation of foundational decisions about basic normative values (e.g., the security versus liberty and freedom debate), which shape the normative arena in which homeland security takes place.

In general terms, including these four perspectives, security culture depends on the public assumptions about the world and about the threats to national security. There is a particular interpretation of risks and threats, despite the fact that security culture is seen as software of the mind, a set of ‘publicly available cultural practices’, a set of meanings, symbols, and discourses, or decision-making acts. From this perspective (a constructivist one), there is a direct connection between security culture and national security strategies, as Peter J. Katzenstein observed in 1996. Katzenstein “drew attention to the domestic societal prerequisites for the formation of national security strategies”, as long as the perspective from the 1990s has not changed substantially:

In the 1990s, based on a larger cultural turn of which the cultural theory of risk was one of the forerunners, the field of security culture studies became driven by constructivist approaches to international politics. The best example is Peter J. Katzenstein’s *The Culture of National Security* (1996), demonstrating how national security interests do not exist per se but a variety of actors are exposed to a variety of cultural factors in their threat response. The founding assumption of this approach was that “security interests are defined by actors who respond to cultural factors” (Siedschlag, 2018:14).

The relationship cultural factors → security interests defines the relationship security culture → national security strategy, that is specific to each country. There are several examples of nations that have been subject to threats such as asymmetric campaigns, such as Israel, Spain or the United Kingdom, examples which prove the importance of

a well-informed public in tackling threats and withstand attacks of any kind.

The resilience of a nation is the result of an interinstitutional and social effort. Citizens and the civil society are contributing to the general effort of promoting and consolidating the security environment by sharing awareness, acknowledging threats and creating a vision that would ultimately transform the vision to policy.

The security culture, therefore, makes room among the individual concerns: the interest for the own security and of the close family, the interest for the security of the restricted community (religious, neighborhood, sexual orientation, ethnic, etc.), concern for the attribute of national security and sovereignty, understanding of the complex phenomena of globalization, concern for global security (equality of nations, cooperation between them, exclusion of terrorism or wars between conflict resolution solutions, climate balance and environmental protection etc.) and for the problems of humanity.

3. COOPERATION. LIMITS AND CHALLENGES

Cooperation is essential. The specialized institutions of the state should also concern the formation of the culture of security of the citizens, because understanding the mechanisms of preserving the security of the nation up to the individual level would greatly facilitate their mission; it is notorious that in the face of a security risk, the initiator/ initiators are one step ahead (the initiative belongs to them, they are the active factor)

of the authorities, who can anticipate to prevent, but cannot really take over the initiative and control the situation without having public support.

The institutions with responsibilities in national security have made some efforts for boosting security culture among citizens, as seen in the issue of preventing corruption or terrorist threats. In order to create adequate responses among citizens, to perceive that they are part of a consolidated social system with responsibilities. Among actions that can be undertaken on this topic we can include strategic communication activities, influence communication and various information events meant to raise awareness and aim to create and consolidate security culture (Mantea, 2019).

An effort to develop a security culture is stated in the Romanian National Defense Strategy. According to this programmatic document, security culture is to be built by a process of

continuous education, in order to promote values, norms, attitudes or actions meant to facilitate the assimilation of the national security concept (SNAp, 2015:21).

Although initiated by the state and its institutions, the civil society is also called to “openly debate security programs” (SNAp, 2015:23).

The institutions with responsibilities in national security and defence created internal structures with the sole objectives of communicating and educating the public, the public relations offices having the role of providing relevant information and updates on their respective activities. Such examples are the Public Relations and Information Direction of the Ministry of Defence (DIRP, 2020), the Communication Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Furthermore, contributing to the security culture, we find academic institutions that offer security programs for all levels of education, such as the programs of the National Defence Academy that are not only available for the military personnel, but also for civilians (CNAp, 2020) or the program of Global Security Studies within the West University of Timișoara (UVT, 2020). An important role in bringing all the interested parties at the same table is also attributed to non-governmental organizations that are bridging the gap between public and institutions or think-tanks that are providing independent analysis and perspective. Such relevant organizations include Informational Warfare and Strategic Communication Laboratory (LARICS), New Strategy Center, Center for Security Studies (Mantea, 2019), Center for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning (CPCEW, 2020).

When it comes to the challenges such cooperation might face, we should also have in mind the importance of developing a common threat assessment and educational objectives, while implementing a coordinated effort to educate and empower the public regarding its fundamental role in consolidating security.

The challenges might include denouncing acts of corruption without the risk of later transforming the honest citizen into a victim of the criminal group he denounced, and the antiterrorist vigilance that would not lead him to a behavioral background, in which he suspects that behind any bearded individual with a backpack is a suicidal jihadist.

In addition, security risks multiply and amplify at a sometimes dizzying rate and include phenomena typical of asymmetric conflicts, which can be fake news campaigns coordinated by a state entity or a non-state actor, human-trafficking, cyber-risks, manipulation of securities and commodity markets, financing and control of political parties, non-governmental and media outlets, etc., which are extremely difficult not only to be understood by the simple citizen, but also difficult to be avoided. Therefore, an educated public is a resilient one. Further than just denouncing fake-news that are spreading rapidly, encouraging critical thinking should be one of the aims of education at all levels.

One main challenge might be represented by the strategic communication efforts that are not matched by appropriate communication vectors, by the lack of adapted language, and by poor information management, and without proper measurements to assess impact might render useless.

A first attempt at measuring aspects of the security culture was made, in 2018, by ProSCOP NGO. The report, called “The Promotion of Security Culture”, publishes the results and the analysis of a survey from November-December 2017 which questioned 152 people working or interested in security issues. It revealed that about a third of the respondents are only occasionally spending time reading about security issues, most of them from online newspapers and magazines (62.5%), but also a whole 49.3% from the websites of the security institutions. Also, 53.9% of the respondents got their information from social media. 52% of them are considering social culture to be defined by its cognitive side, 50% added the immaterial heritage side and 47.7% the regulatory side. Asked which institution should have the main role in promoting security culture, 71.1% of the respondents said that defense and security institutions are to be tasked with this, while 2.1%

considered that this should be a task for every educational institution. The main barriers against promoting the security culture are considered to be the lack of interest (65.1%) and the security issues lingo (57.9%) (Lungu *et al.*, 2018:9-29).

LARICS, another NGO interested in security issues, published the results of a poll conducted by INSCOP Research in February 2018. This poll, based on the responses of 1000 people representative for all the population of Romania, measured key indicators of the security culture. Prone to a culture of insecurity, inclined to pessimism, localism and conspiracy. Romanians are vulnerable to new security phenomena, such as fake news. Although distrustful towards institutions, Romanians are not unsympathetic towards European Union or NATO (LARICS, 2018:18).

One of the opportunities underlined by the most recent crisis Romania has faced, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, has put tremendous pressure on the security culture of Romanians. Facing an extensive health crisis, Romanian society directs its hopes towards professional leaders of institutions, such as dr. Raed Arafat, secretary of state and head of the Emergency Situations Department, as it is revealed in a poll conducted by IRES between 7th and 8th of April, 2020 (IRES, 2020:5).

Although the Army was always trusted by Romanians, the afore mentioned poll reveals that a series of law enforcement and emergency situations institutions, surprisingly, are (re)gaining Romanians trust. The top is as follows: The Army (84%), General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (75%), National Committee for Special Emergency Situations (68%), Romanian Gendarmerie (65%), Romanian Police (61%). At the opposite end, Romanians are very distrustful when it comes to the Government, trust level being only at 26% (IRES, 2020:11).

A follow-up would be interesting, in order to see the evolution of Romanians trust in law enforcement institutions during the COVID-19 crisis and if the levels will be maintained after the crisis would have been finished and the lockdown measures, lifted.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Cooperation is key and it is high time for citizens to understand that the proliferation of new generation threats is aiming their intimacy, their communities and homes directly. The trenches are now in front of each device connected to the internet, in each breaking news that might alter

economic behavior and, in each decision, to support institutions in their efforts to consolidate security.

Taking note of the increasing number of initiatives aimed to promote and consolidate a security culture in Romania, we acknowledge a positive trend of all these efforts, even though the topic is still associated with law enforcement and national security institutions, a coordinated effort across the whole government through the comprehensive understanding of security might contribute to the awareness and the responsibility of the citizens.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Almond, Gabriel A. & Verba, Sidney. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
2. Buzan, Barry. (1991a). *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. Second Edition. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
3. Buzan, Barry. (1991b). New Patterns of Global Security. *International Affairs*. Vol.67, no.3. 431-451.
4. Gray, Colin S. (1990). *War, Peace and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for the Next Century*. New York: Touchstone.
5. IRES (2020, 7-8 April). *România în pandemie. Sondaj național aprilie 2020*. Part I. Bucharest: IRES.
6. Katzenstein, Peter J. (1996). *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.
7. Kolodziej, Edward A. (1992). Renaissance in Security Studies? Caveat Lector! *International Studies*. Vol.36, no.4. 421-438.
8. LARICS (2018). *Barometrul culturii de Securitate – februarie 2018*. Part I. Bucharest: LARICS.
9. Latham, Andrew (1998). Constructing National Security: Culture and Identity in Indian Arms Control and Disarmament Practice. *Contemporary Security Policy*. Vol. 19, no. 1.
10. Lungu, Ciprian; Deac, Ioan & Buluc, Ruxandra (2018). *Promovarea culturii de securitate*. București: Top Form.
11. Mantea, Paula-Diana, (2019). Security Awareness In Romania – Security Culture And Social Responsibility Development Pillar. *Revista Academiei Forțelor Terestre* No. 3 (95).
12. Roer, Kai. (2015). *Build a Security Culture*. Cambridgeshire: ITGP.

13. Siedschlag, Alexander. (2018). Security Cultures in Action: Introduction and Overview of Chapters. In Alexander Siedschlag & Andrea Jerković, *Homeland Security Cultures: Enhancing Values while Fostering Resilience*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd. 1-40.
14. Snyder, Jack. (1990). The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor. In C.G. Jacobsen (ed.), *Strategic Power: USA/ USSR*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 3-9.
15. The President of Romania. (2015). Strategia națională de apărare a țării pentru perioada 2015-2019. O Românie puternică în Europa și în lume (SNAp). Approved by the common Decision of the Senate and the Deputy Chamber, June 23, 2015. *The Official Gazette*, First Part. No. 450/ June, 23.
16. The President of the United States of America. (2017, December). *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (NSS). Washington, DC: The White House.
17. Weaver, O. (1993). *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*. London: Pinter.
18. ***. (2020). *Colegiul Național de Apărare/ National Defence College (CNAp)* [online]. URL: <https://cnap.unap.ro>. [Accessed on March, 2020].
19. ***. (2020). *Center for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning (CPCEW)* [online]. URL: <http://www.cpcew.ro>. [Accessed on March, 2020].
20. ***. (2020). *Direcția Relații Publice/ Public Relations Direction (DIRP)* [online]. URL: <https://dirp.mapn.ro>. [Accessed on March, 2020].
21. ***. (2020). *Universitatea de Vest Timișoara/ West University of Timișoara (UVT)* [online]. URL: West University of Timișoara. [Accessed on March, 2020].