SECURITY CULTURE AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

SECURITY CULTURE – FROM COMMUNISM TO DEMOCRACY

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Abstract:
Security culture represents an extremely important concept nowadays, as a consequence of the security issues that were characteristic for the last decade and which rose, even close to Romania's borders. Security culture has been and continues to be a powerful tool in the process of ensuring state security. In brief, security culture is a combination of knowledge and attitudes toward the security issues of the state.

Since 2010, the concept has been emphasized in the Romanian national defence strategies, which support the need to consolidate such a culture. Due to these strategic documents, authorities in the field of national security have pointed their efforts in the direction of strengthening security culture among citizens. In order to carry out optimally these efforts, it is important to know the evolution of the security culture concept, which elements of the past could hinder the current process of consolidating security culture and what are the issues on which authorities should pay more attention.

The way security culture has been shaped during the communist regime is extremely relevant for today's efforts. Also, it is important that the process of consolidating security culture starts from a good knowledge of the Romanian national culture. Therefore, the main objective of this is to present relevant information about the characteristics of Romanian culture and data about how security culture has changed over time, from the communist period to the democratic actual regime. The research method used was "literature review" by integrating multiple data from different findings and perspectives.

Keywords: *security culture, communism, democracy, change, Romanian culture.*

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Introduction

Once the communist regime has been installed in Romania, our country went through a difficult period that brought major changes in the collective mentality. The ruling class pursued its own interests without any regards to the negative effects of their actions/decisions on the life of the citizens. Fear was the main tool used by leaders of the time in order to impose their vision as the right one. They relied on the lack of reaction coming from people. Restricted rights to freedom of expression and information were pillars of the communist governance. Leaders relied on obedience to carry out their plans, so they sought to indoctrinate people from an early age. The communist leadership used to dictate the way one should live, act and get informed. The lack of a comparative perspective determined many individuals to live accordingly to the communist rules, without complains. The values, norms and beliefs of the people were imposed by the ruling political class, so it is important to emphasize the fact that culture was shaped in accordance with the communist vision, not with the reality of that moment.

As for the security culture, it was also imposed by the state authorities. The former state security has imposed strict control on all individuals, so freedom of choice did not exist.

But how the Romanian culture is characterized today and how security culture has been transformed from the communist period up until now? Finding an answer to these questions represents the main objectives of the article. As a research method, it was used "literature review".

What is security culture?

Security culture can be defined as a set of ideas and knowledge about the values of a nation, but also about the risks and threats to national security, which determine specific behaviours that are indispensable for the individual and state defence. Clausewitz (Ustun, 2010) was the first one who advanced the idea of security culture, emphasizing the importance of people and the mobilization of the masses in winning the war. Gray (Ustun, 2010) considered security culture a way of thinking and acting, influenced by perceptions of

national history and the concept of responsible behaviour in terms of security. So, the security culture involves a series of actions in accordance with the perceptions formed. The process of consolidating security culture at a societal level has a special importance, because it dictates, to a certain extent, the possibilities of influencing desirable attitudes, behaviours and actions. In a similar way to Gray, Booth (Ustun, 2010) defines security culture as a set of values, symbols, traditions, attitudes, behaviours and particular methods of adapting to the environment and solving problems in order to eliminate the threat.

Over the time, in Romania have been identified four pillars that underlie the concept of security culture: wisdom, active adaptation, realism and experience (Malița, 2012). The first pattern of security culture was the one made by "Mica Brad" Society, an anonymous mining society in Romania. The pattern focused on a strategic vision, a social system and action oriented towards the following directions: culture of mind, health, work and spiritual culture (Beldea, 2018). The essence of this pattern was rational action, motivated by certain knowledge and substantial research. Creating a security culture among people was one of the main objectives of the system for better prevention and management of crisis.

Security culture in the ruling process

The concept of security culture represents a powerful tool of the ruling class in the process of ensuring national security, fact which led to the concept being included in several strategic documents of the Romanian state. For example, the guide of National Defence Strategy for 2015-2019 approaches in a prior manner the concept of security culture, which is defined as a set of values, attitudes, actions and norms that determines the understanding and assimilation of security concept and other derivatives (national security, international security, collective security, insecurity, security policy etc.) (Presidential Administration, 2015). The values and the actions of people can be oriented in various directions, but this depends significantly on different factors such as: the level of development of the countries, the level of education of each individual, the main image of the institutions responsible for ensuring security and, last but not least, the current social context. Therefore, the

consolidation of security culture at a societal level is a difficult goal to achieve, considering that it depends on many factors, but it is absolutely necessary for the ruling process.

The importance of security culture is also included in the National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024. According to this Strategy, the security culture "must follow an upward trend of development and inclusion of as many society and generation segments as possible" (Presidential Administration, 2020, p. 10).

Consolidating security culture among people has always represented an important goal, not only in the strategic documents of nowadays, but especially (also) in the communist period (when the state stability used to be threatened by many factors, as the government did not have people's support). Even though the importance of security culture did not change during time, the essence of it suffered major updates. Before showing how security culture has changed over time, it is important to briefly present the concept of national culture, for a better understanding of how Romania individualizes itself when it comes to culture.

The main characteristics of Romanian national culture

The Dutch scientist Geert Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (1980, p. 86). Geert Hofstede, along with professors Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov and their research teams, developed the model of national culture by capturing six dimensions. These dimensions refer to a series of citizens' preferences and can represent the starting point in comparing different national cultures. Country scores are relative, each individual is unique, but they largely encompass the cultural characteristics of a state.

The cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede are the following (Hofstede et al., 2010):

    a) Power Distance. This measure refers to the way individuals expect and accept the unequal distribution of power inside the state. The biggest struggle is how a state deals with human inequalities. In societies with a high score at this index, citizens respect a hierarchical order and accept their place. By

contrast, in societies with a low power distance, people try to standardize the distribution of power and force the state to justify inequalities. According to Hofstede research, Romania has a score of 90 in terms of power distance. The high score indicates that Romanians accept a hierarchical order, as well as the place they occupy in society. They claim no other justification for the unequal distribution of power. This high score can be influenced by the period of Roman occupation and, also, by the authoritarian rulers of the time (Ciupercă, 2011). Achieving a high score for this dimension is an advantage for the ruling class. Also, this dimension was a key factor for the implementation of communism in Romania.

b) **Individualism / Collectivism.** The dimension refers to the individual approach in terms of "I" or "us" of each member of society. In societies with a high level of individualism, people care about personal and family well-being, while in collective countries people belong to groups and show interest in common good.

In individualistic states people focus on their own gain. In such a society, the values are represented by: power, personal achievement, hedonism (Ciupercă, 2011). On the other hand, the collective countries place more value on respect, mutual aid and cohesion.

With a score of 30 (Hofstede et al., 2010) for the "individualism" dimension, Romania is considered a collectivist country, whose individuals are less oriented towards competition and gain. Loyalty is a central value and citizens show a strong commitment to other members of the community. The emphasis is placed on strong social relations, rather than on the desire to obtain high performance indices. This side of Romanian culture could be explained by the inherited values promoted during the communist period.

c) **Masculinity/ femininity.** This dimension refers to the values of a society. A masculine society is characterized by competition, assertiveness and the desire to achieve rewards. The opposite of these societies are feminine societies that are

stimulated by values such as cooperation, goodwill, solidarity, modesty. In feminine societies, success is defined by the quality of life. According to Hofstede research, Romania is a rather feminine country (with a score of 42 for masculinity), with values focused on equality, negotiation, sobriety, compromise. Conflicts are resolved peacefully, as a result of open discussions and a collaborative environment (Ciupercă, 2011). Romanian citizens value more the free time and flexibility, rather than material gains.

d) **Uncertainty avoidance.** This index describes how society relates to the uncertainty of the future. This captures the extent to which uncertainty causes anxiety among citizens in their attempt to avoid such situations. Countries with a high score for this dimension are rigid countries, strongly influenced by rules and intolerant of new ideas. By contrast, countries with a low score for this dimension have a better attitude and are oriented towards practice and change rather than adherence to principles.

With a score of 90 (Hofstede et al., 2010) for this dimension, Romania is a country guided by rigid codes and behaviours. There is a need for rules and people are characterized by the desire to be constantly busy and to work diligently. Moreover, Romanians show high anxiety about future, uncertain actions and prefer to focus on the security of the near future (Ciupercă, 2011).

e) **Long / short term orientation.** This dimension refers to the decision of a society to focus on obtaining present or future gains. Societies pay more attention to the present/future in different ways. Countries with a long-term approach are characterized by ambition and adaptability, constantly pursuing future rewards. On the other hand, short-term oriented societies are more influenced by tradition and past. Regarding the long-term orientation, Romania has a score of 52. Romanians' options are more influenced by the past, which is why they do not foresee very distant perspectives. This

approach restricts change, development of the country and perspectives on the future.

f) **Indulgence / Coercion.** This measure describes how a society constrains/allows a person to satisfy its own impulses. An indulgent society allows the gratification of pleasure, while a coercive society suppresses the satisfaction of certain needs by imposing extremely rigid social norms. According to Hofstede research, Romania has a low level of indulgence (20) regarding pleasure and entertainment of life. Romanians do not accept opposing views, reject minority voices and advocate for consensus.

Security culture – from communism to democracy

The intelligence services have always been responsible for an in-depth study of society's state, which is extremely important to be aware of, in order to monitor evolution of the national, regional and international security environment. During the communist regime, monitoring population mentality was considered of vital importance. The security services paid attention to those attitudes that could lead to serious premeditated acts. Hostile actions, such as conspiracies, sabotage, manifestations of hatred and revenge, could derive from these attitudes (Bejenaru, 2008). They also monitored mass emotions that arose through transfer, contamination or suggestion.

Mass emotions were an important factor in the process of ensuring security, so the security authorities not only sought to know the mood of the population, but also tried to change it when the direction was not in line with the communist vision. They were afraid that mass emotions developed within society were spreading rapidly from community to community, unifying opinions and attitudes. The focus was to discover the source of these emotions and to stop their spread throughout the population in order to prevent internal crisis.

To identify the mood of the population, the security apparatus used numerous means such as censoring correspondence or infiltrating in the communities they wanted to control. Extensive summaries were often made around public events to describe the mood of the population and to anticipate their intentions. Moreover, there was established an

office that was dealing with people who were considered to have different political views than those of the Communist Party (Bejenaru, 2008). The communists wanted a construction of the individual who obeys and never challenges the values, norms and directions of the state.

So, before 1990, the Romanian security culture was imposed by the state, by the Communist Party, being defined as revolutionary vigilance and socialist ethics, which lead to social conscience (Felea, 2018). The communists wanted to instil the individual with their own values from an early age, realizing the hurdle of imposing an influence on the characters already formed. "Şoimii patriei" was the organization of pre-schoolers and schoolchildren between 4 and 7 years old, under total leadership of the Communist Party. This organization aimed to educate children in the spirit of homeland, love of country and respect for the Communist Party.

According to the Regulations of "Şoimii Patriei" (1977), the main objectives of this education institution included the following:

- assimilation of knowledge about the major problems faced by the Romanian people, the Romanian Communist Party etc.;
- knowledge of the greatest achievements of the time and of the greatest producers, as well as knowledge of the most beautiful parts of the homeland;
- educating children in the spirit of respect for work, for the work of others and for the collective good;
- educating children in the spirit of love for parents, respect for teachers and help for the elderly;
- cultivating "diligence, honour, courage, modesty etc.";
- identifying and supporting talent, as well as developing a taste for beauty.

These objectives were meant to outline the culture of children in communist Romania, but in a way that promotes the image of the Communist Party and its actions. The ruling party realised that culture was a strong tool for imposing its objectives without being challenged, without creating riots and without offering to the opposing powers the possibility to show their influence on the Romanian people. Consolidating culture at an individual level would make foreign manipulation more difficult to manifest.

As for the consolidation of security culture, it was also outlined in accordance with the vision of the Communist Party. In order to prevent the emergence of harmful attitudes among the population, the security apparatus obliged every citizen to report any irregularities and disobedience from the policy of Communist Party. Providing relevant information about those who were not supporting the Communist Party was mandatory, even vital. This was known by every individual from an early age; children were taught to obey, to cooperate and to help the security representatives and the ruling party to fulfil their mission (Felea, 2018). The support provided was a duty for every Romanian citizen.

This duty of taking part into the process of ensuring national security was more or less respected, depending on the exposure of propaganda materials developed by the Communist Party. Those who "benefited" from an education in a communist spirit from an early age had a better understanding of the role they played in the process of ensuring state security and acted accordingly. However, those who received an education in a communist spirit later hardly accepted the demands imposed by the Party. Depending on the level of understanding of this role, the individual could act differently: he/she could collaborate from his/her own initiative with the representatives of the Romanian Communist Party and the security representatives, he/she could collaborate, but without his/her own initiative or could refuse to cooperate, thus placing himself/herself and his/her family on extremely dangerous grounds.

Those who were members of the Communist Party, who had a privileged status compared to the rest of the population, were often the ones who imposed terror among the citizens. Studies have shown that the party's executive apparatus (whose members were secretly decided) represented a political police body, accused of serious violations of civil rights and freedoms. In addition, the first secretaries of the Romanian Communist Party were responsible for all these violations (Ursachi, 2007). In a public opinion poll conducted in 2010 by The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER, 2010), at the question "In your opinion, was the communist regime in Romania a criminal regime?" 41% of respondents answered "No", which is absolutely surprising given the multitude of

documents proving the opposite, as well as the public debates regarding the conviction of communist torturers. Similarly, the answers to the question "In your opinion, before December 1989, was Romania better or worse than now?", the percentage of those who answered "yes" was 49%. These beliefs about the collective welfare during the communist regime were explained by most respondents through job stability (62%) (IICCMER, 2010). It is also possible that people tend to see things in a more optimistic way, because of the cultural values they were exposed to and which they assimilated over time.

It is important to mention that the process of shaping the security culture at that time was influenced not only by the communists' efforts to settle knowledge about their views, but also by the activities of the security apparatus, which were meant to spread terror among common citizens. The impossibility to express their points of view made most of them rally and support the steps pursued by the Romanian Communist Party, although their convictions were different most of the time. There was no right to free speech, no right to choose what to read, what to listen to, what to learn, so there was no way to create a security culture through own experience and choices.

Even though the security culture was practically imposed by the ruling regime during the communist period, afterwards, the individual gradually gained the freedom to choose to be informed, as well as to choose what to believe in. After the Revolution of 1989 and the gradual establishment of a democratic regime, the country was in a continuous process of modernization, especially in the political field. Romania had begun to take small steps towards the European Union and NATO, which was an important move towards democracy and freedom of choice. Thus, after 1990 security culture was shaped differently, through own perceptions and beliefs, because people were free to choose what topic was of interest to them or not.

In order to have a better understanding on how security culture has changed over time, it is necessary to highlight the transition from communism to democracy. The first step towards democracy was a new Constitution, as well as the transition to free elections and alternating state governance. Another element that led to democracy was the diversification of the political scene and the emergence of several

Romanian parties. The 1996 elections produced a first alternation of the government, which significantly influenced the level of trust among population (Pippidi, 2002). In September 1995 the trust in Government and the Parliament was 31%, respectively 24%. Only one year later, the percentages increased to 62% and 57%, an unexpected high increase, considering previous experiences and the scepticism created during the communist regime (Pippidi, 2002).

So, the country was not only going through a broad process of change towards a democratic regime, but the Romanian citizens were also taking quick steps towards new mentalities and attitudes regarding the leading factor. It is clear that such a change requires a great deal of time, as well as continuous effort to implement new governance strategies. People's trust in the ruling class is extremely important when it comes to the stability of a country and its development prospects. Moreover, this trust is fairly relevant in building the security culture, because the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards the security problems of a state are, undoubtedly, influenced by the credibility given to the messages, approaches and decisions of those in power.

Another important step towards democracy was represented by the protocol between the social-democratic government and the Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania, because it was promoted for the first time the idea of multiculturalism and protection of minority groups in our country. Therefore, Romania was moving further and further away from its past and closer to the values promoted by the West: openness, tolerance, peace.

The most important step towards a democratic country was the accession to NATO and the EU, as this led to a higher level of credibility on the international stage. The conditions for integration were quite challenging, and the time necessary for their fulfilment required very rapid progress. For our country, the major objectives were related to national security, as well as to economic development. Strictly speaking on the level of national security, Romania's accession to NATO and the EU involved, on the one hand, a lot of new responsibilities, and on the other hand, a great knowledge support for the responsible national authorities and for the Romanian citizens. So, once in NATO and EU, the security culture was definitely reshaped.

In order to talk about security culture at a societal level, we must constantly refer to the events that marked the past of our country and especially the collective mentalities. Probably, at the mere utterance of the word "security", those who lived during the communist regime will relate their thoughts to the State Security Department, as this instrument of maintaining terror had a significant psychological impact on citizens. Today, 33 years after the fall of the communist regime, the mass mentality is largely redesigned, although it permanently overshadows the painful memory of an intelligence service manipulated by the political class. Such memories cannot be erased from people's memory, but it is the duty of the Romanian security authorities to constantly promote their vision and missions, so as not to be shuffled with the old institutions on which they were founded. This step is absolutely necessary for the consolidation process of security culture among people in Romania. Greater transparency in the objectives/activities of national security authorities would increase citizens' awareness and, as a result, motivate them to support and even get involved in pursuing national security interests.

Recent research on Romanian security culture

The first research regarding Romanian security culture was published in April 2018. It was conducted by the Institute of Political Science and International Relations of the Romanian Academy along with LARICS – Informational Warfare and Strategic Communication Laboratory. They launched a security culture barometer that focused: on the level of trust in institutions with responsibilities in the field of national security; on the fears of Romanians and on Romanians views concerning NATO and EU.

The architecture of the barometer consists of seven dimensions that should be extensively analysed (LARICS, 2018):

- trust / distrust – this dimension refers to the level of trust of the citizens in institutions that have responsibilities in the sphere of national security and, also, in the political class of Romania; 56% of respondents opted in 2018 for distrust, concluding that at that time politicians and authorities should pay more attention to this dimension and develop better communication channels with people, especially with young ones;

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- localism / globalism – this dimension refers to European identity vs. Romanian identity, defence budget vs. budget for certain social fields, protection of the Romanian interests vs. defence through international aid; only 36% of the respondents have been situated on the globalism dimension, which means that many people do not understand the security opportunities given by international organizations;
- realism / liberalism – this dimension wants to describe/assess the importance given by people to military power/economic power; most of the respondents (47%) situated themselves on the liberalist dimension, comparing to 39% – the percentage of those on the realist dimension; the results indicate that Romanians tend to give more credit to economic issues than to the military ones;
- optimism / pessimism – this dimension describes Romanians' ability to deal with a threat to national security, as well as the perception of an eventual armed conflict near national borders; unfortunately, only 38% of the respondents expressed optimism; this dimension in extremely relevant in the context of Russia – Ukraine 2022 conflict, because it can anticipate the masses mood and attitudes towards such a threat; having a pessimistic attitude on security context can determine desperate decisions, which is why authorities should take more responsibility in correctly informing the population;
- security / rights – this dimension refers to the reluctance of citizens to accept restriction of certain civil rights and freedoms in exchange for increased national security; the results for this dimension were quite similar: 41% would choose security, while 45% would opt for rights;
- involvement / apathy – this dimension shows people's availability to authorities calls, but also their desire to get involved in the process of ensuring national security; this dimension also refers to the desire of Romanian citizens to leave the country for a better living standard abroad; surprisingly, most of the respondents (52%) were placed on

the involvement dimension, which means they would answer "Yes" to authorities calls (only 35% were on the apathy dimension); in this situation, Romanian authorities should take into account to create more opportunities to involve people in such activities, because it would bring not only knowledge, but also trust in the leading act;

- conspirativism / rationalism – this dimension describes the way people choose to get informed, the degree of awareness of media manipulation, as well as their views on the existence of a hidden global government; 52% have been situated on the conspirative dimension, while 32% on the rationalist one, concluding that authorities should work harder to inform in a correct manner their people.

Conclusions

In the process of consolidating security culture in Romania, the ruling political class should consider the fact that Romanian culture is characterized by a high score of distance power, which means that people respect a hierarchical order and accept their role in society without question marks. Also, the ruling class should actually take advantage of the fact that Romania is a country characterized by collective values, which means that people value more the relationships with the others than their own material gains. This is relevant because the national security interests can be achieved only through a common human effort, not through self-interest attitudes. Considering that Romania is a country with rather feminine values, the political factor should adopt measures that promote cooperation, equality and free discussions.

Leaders need to pay attention to the fact that Romania has a high score in terms of avoiding uncertainty, which means that people are anxious about the future. Calming messages would be very useful in the public communication process of authorities. In addition, the ruling class should consider the fact that Romanians do not have a long-term orientation, which is why they need to make more visible the issues that take longer time to be achieved. There should be given concrete data about possible current threats, but especially about future threats, as

well as clear information/rules on the way people can get involved in the process of countering national security threats. Unclear data may confuse the common citizen.

The communist period was a turning point in Romanian culture, as communist representatives tried to impose a certain type of culture on people. Individuals were taught how to think, behave and act in the society. As for the security culture, it has also been imposed by the state. People were taught about the biggest risks to the state security (people who opposed the communist vision or foreigners), but also about the proper way to get involved in solving security issues (collaborating with intelligence services and adopting a "no comment" attitude day by day). People were aware of the fact that they could get tortured in case of no response to the needs of the authorities. Basically, the security culture was determined by terror, fear and the struggle for survival.

Once with the Revolution of 1989, Romania's path to democracy was largely open. It was the time for changes, even in the security field. Newly formed intelligence services were built in accordance with democratic principles, so people were given the right to choose how to get informed about national security issues and to decide individually whether or not to get involved in solving them. Accession to NATO and EU has brought knowledge and awareness among population about the security threats that Romania had to counter in a greater geopolitical context.

The security culture has undergone a lot of changes over the last 33 years and, fortunately, most of them have been positive. However, the changes that have taken place in Romania were not enough to permanently erase the cultural values imposed by the communist regime. The most affected people are those who had a direct experience with the communist period, especially those who were raised in the communist spirit from an early age. Their culture, and implicitly their security culture, are still heavily influenced by the old habits of the Department of State Security. Many of them even consider that the current intelligence services are just an extension of the Department of State Security. Therefore, we believe that in order to strengthen the security culture among the Romanian population, it is imperative for the intelligence services to focus their efforts on eliminating the

misperception about the Department of State Security which still exists. As we mentioned in this article, trust in institutions is extremely relevant for the process of consolidating security culture, which is why we consider that this may be the first step: removing from the collective mind the shuffle between former security apparatus and current intelligence services.

The second important step would be to ensure good information processes/channels for the population, because people tend to give more credit to the conspiratorial dimension, as we showed in the last chapter. The third important step in strengthening the security culture would be involving citizens in concrete actions to ensure national security, since, as we have shown, people are largely eager to get involved (for instance, teaching people how to identify signs of a possible terrorist, of a cyber attack or of an espionage act).

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