

ENDEMIC REPRESENTATIONS OF SECURITY CULTURE IN THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC SPHERE

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Abstract: *In Romania - and not only - security studies and its related disciplines are going through a significant crisis. They tend to be dominated by certain discrepancies between conceptual and theoretical advancements on one hand, and empirical research on the other one. The act of measuring security and security culture has usually generated academic debate much more than actual empirically-tested models. Notwithstanding, security culture must be analysed beyond its normative regulatory value. Theoretically, experts already know how the Romanians' security culture should look like, but have little information on how it actually is. Unfortunately, both the scholars and the security professionals have little substantial sociological studies regarding security culture, security perception and other adjacent themes. Our presentation refers to a sociological description of security culture, starting with a general horizon and continuing with formulating a proposal regarding scientifically sustainable public typologies. The research was conducted in February 2018 by a consortium between LARICS - Romanian Academy, the University of Bucharest and INSCOP Research.*

Keywords: *security studies; public security culture; public opinion; methodology; survey analysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper features results from the Romanian Security Culture Barometer, a nationally representative sociological survey issued in April 2018 by LARICS-Romanian Academy. Field data was collected in February 2018 by Inscop Research. Data analysis (statistical and theoretical) was performed by a joint team from LARICS, Inscop and the University of Bucharest. The two co-authors of this material took part in all the stages of the research, from the project to the public presentation of the results. Our paper refers to a descriptive approach of the seven dimensions of the security culture and also outlines a typology that tries to identify two opposite forms of security culture: security culture vs. insecurity culture. Our present work is based on two previous materials published on Larics' web platform within the efforts to communicate the Barometer's various results (Cristea, 2018a), (Cristea, 2018b). A list of works that helped the team substantiate the security culture research model can be found in the *Bibliography* section.

2. DIMENSIONS OF SECURITY CULTURE

Our project proposes not only a theoretical and strategic discussion on the idea of *security culture*,

but an operational structure based on the first empirical study on the Romanian security culture. A simple Google search is sufficient to show that the „security culture” concept is an extremely popular one, in areas such as security studies, international relations and public policy. Unfortunately, these certified academic interests have yet to produce anything beyond theoretical debates, although the above mentioned concept has an increasing popularity and many practical applications. As *security culture* transforms into a sociologically measurable concept, its empirical aspects and understandings can bring obvious advantages to understanding how the public perceives the idea of security.

The model we propose describes security culture parameters in the Romanian context. We wanted to understand if what we have is a majority-type security culture, or, instead, we have several specific security cultures, each dependent or not on sociodemographic, geographic, political or any other kind of relevant variables.

Methodologically, our instrument is functionally designed as an intermediary approach between an opinion survey and a scale; this was decided in order to avoid starting from a hypothetical typology - whose substantiation is more often than not a problem -, and also because

this area has not been studied (empirically) enough for us to weight items into a possible Romanian security culture index.

As such, we describe security culture by using seven compact dimensions, each theoretically substantiated and linked with the Romanian context. Each dimension has five indicators, formulated as questions. The 35-item questionnaire was applied on a *nationally representative sample* of 1000 individuals. The seven dimensions were defined as seven graphic polarities:

- Trust – Distrust (D1)*
- Localism – Globalism (D2)*
- Realism – Liberalism (D3)*
- Optimism – Pessimism (D4)*
- Security – Rights (D5)*
- Implication – Apathy (D6)*
- Conspiracy – Reason (D7).*

Each dimension is presented within five-question sets that channel the public towards the most relevant and current situations regarding attitudes the dimension refers to. Each question has two possible responses, each referring to one of the elements dichotomized in the dimension label.

To exemplify: the five questions describing the Trust – Distrust dimension each propose two possible answers, one showcasing *trust*, and the other one, *distrust*. We computed the scores obtained by each dimension polarity from the percentage means of answers given by respondents to the five questions describing each dimension, consequently securing a quantitative description of security culture – seen through seven different perspectives. A description of indicators formulating the seven dimensions and scores obtained by each of them following the application of the questioner can be found below:

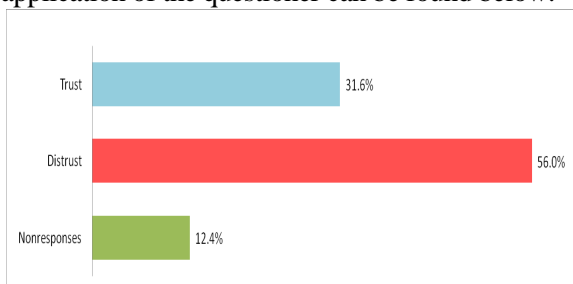


Fig. 1 Trust - Distrust (D1)

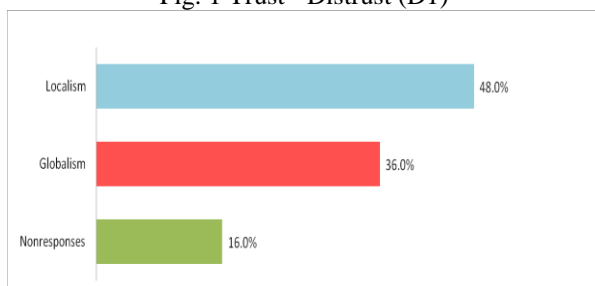


Fig. 2 Localism-Globalism (D2)

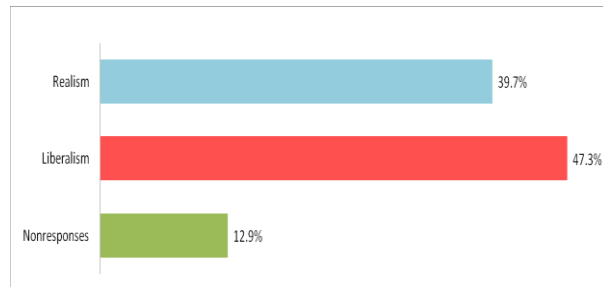


Fig. 3 Realism-Liberalism (D3)

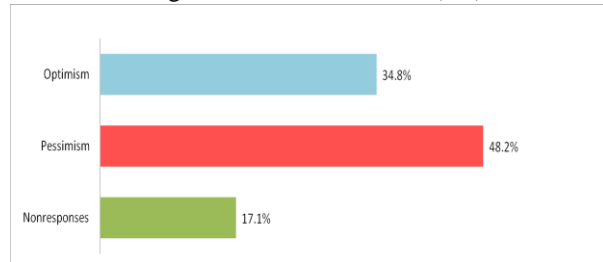


Fig. 4 Optimism-Pessimism (D4)

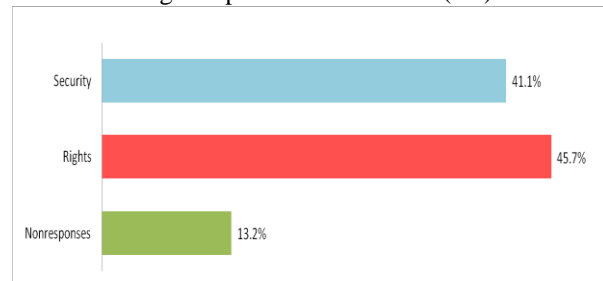


Fig.5 Security-Rights (D5)

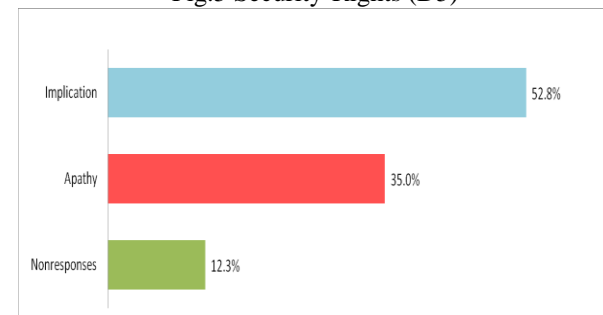


Fig.6 Implication-Apathy (D6)

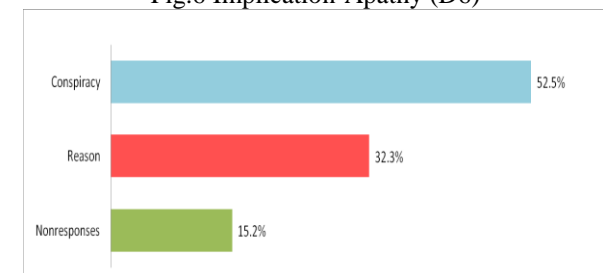


Fig.7 Conspiracy-Reason (D7)

Trust – Distrust: (1) disbelief in state institutions, (2) evaluation of the degree of professionalism of state institutions, (3) evaluation of the activity of public order institutions in connection to legislation directing their activity, (4) evaluation of stipends received by public order system employees in connection to their activity, (5) trust in Romanian

politicians, compared to politicians connected to European institutions.

Localism – Globalism: (1) Romanian identity vs. European identity, (2) goodwill of Romanian political institutions vs. that of European institutions, (3) the European Union as federal state vs. union of national states, (4) chances for self-sufficiency and good quality of living in Romania vs. elsewhere, (5) trust in NATO.

Realism – Liberalism: (1) importance of military power vs. importance of economic power, (2) ONU efficiency, (3) reconciliation of all national interests, (4) growth of budget for defence vs. growth of budget for social areas, (5) defending Romanian interests by appealing to international support vs. by using national resources.

Optimism – Pessimism: (1) chances for Romania to be able to self-defend in the case of a security threat, (2) chances for a military conflict in the area, (3) the amplitude of the terrorist threat in Europe, (4) EU and NATO integration impact on neighbouring tensions/conflicts, (5) malice preposse of neighbouring countries.

Security – Rights: (1) restricting certain rights in order to increase security, (2) the importance of respecting individual privacy, (3) verifying the manner in which intercepted information is used, (4) collection of personal information by commercial entities – banks, corporations, hypermarkets, (5) evaluation of the idea that criminals have too many rights.

Implication – Apathy: (1) personal availability when it comes to responding to a call from the army or other such state institutions in case of emergency, (2) need of more implication in the political and social national life vs. leaving the country in order to have a better life, (3) level of knowledge regarding international politics, (4) need for activities on a voluntary basis in order to solve some social issues, (5) facilitation of taxes payment by introducing new payment methods.

Conspiracy – Reason: (1) way of selecting information/news, (2) evaluation of mass-media-based information credibility, (3) press tendency to manipulate vs. objective representation of information, (4) existence of a hidden global government, (5) the chance for smaller states to be taken seriously and affirm their interests on a global scale.

A base-level way to analyse these data is a general description of Romanian security culture. Which are the general characteristics of this particular type of security, in the context of chosen dimensions? Let's see.

- Disbelief, rather than belief, in institutions;

- Localist, rather than globalist orientation – here, as in the case above, statistical differences between the two are not significant enough to suggest an irreconcilable attitude towards institutions or globalization;

- Pessimism, rather than optimism;
- Liberalism, rather than realism – in regard to ideological and paradigmatic classifications relating to the field of international relations (this is not to be mistaken with usual political doctrines);

- A certain balance between focus of rights and focus on security – this could also reflect an ideological misapprehension of the Romanian public;

- At a theoretical-ideological level, Romanians tend to showcase values associated to implication, rather than apathy;

Romanians tend to show a penchant for conspiracy theories on politics, mass-media and international relations – let us remember that both possible answers in the questionnaire were defined by exaggerated indicators, as to better display the corresponding attitudinal disposition.

3. SECURITY CULTURE VS. INSECURITY CULTURE

Beyond a general description of Romanians security culture, the study *Security Culture Barometer* can also lead to other approaches. One of these refers to segmenting security perceptions so as to identify, if needed, the existence of a larger number of *security cultures* – in other words, if beneath the general description of security culture, Romanians actually configure a larger number of structured references to the problematic of security.

We have various ways to formulate these typologies – focusing on index totals, dimension indexes, most statistically compelling dimensions from the seven proposed initially, focusing on the technique to weight non-responses, etc. We will now advance one of these methods, a particular characteristic this approach being the attempt to both identify and estimate the attitudinal extremes present. However, our interest here is *to map the population segment dominated by an “insecurity culture” vs. the segment dominated by a “security culture”*.

The first variant is that where we take dimension scores as reference point, as presented in the first part of this paper. As such, we define *security culture* as being characterized by trust, globalism, liberalism, optimism, rights, implication, rationalism, and the *insecurity culture*

by distrust, localism, realism, apathy and conspiracy-tendencies. We continue by computing the average between variant scores for each of the seven dimensions. This will lead to the following statistic: security culture score 40%, insecurity culture score 46%, 14% non-responses.

This typology systematizes dimension scores (which themselves are averages resulted from the answers given to the questions in the questionnaire) and helps produce a panorama of what we have defined as “security culture”, in contrast with the “insecurity culture”. We must stress that such operations, based on work with averages, lead to a particular drawback: the placement of those dominated by insecurity, security and those who gravitate along the average together (the former, as resulting from our research, being the biggest percentage).

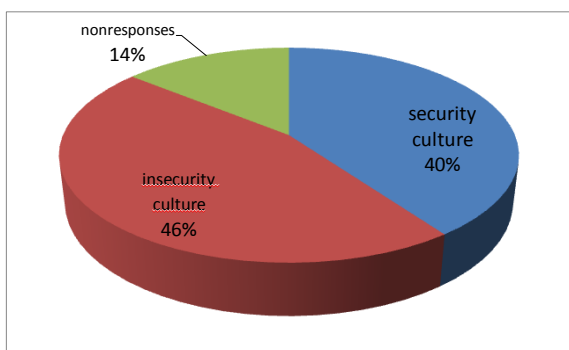


Fig.8 Security culture vs. insecurity culture

In order to try identify the population sector strongly dominated by insecurity, that dominated by security attitudes and separate the two from the rest of the public, we will ascribe the score 0 to each answer variant expressing insecurity (disbelief, pessimism, etc.), 1 for indecision, non-response, lack of interest and 2 for variants referring to the idea of security (trust, optimism, etc.). As each dimension has five indicators, each respondent can receive 1-to-10 scores for each dimension and 0-to-70 scores for the complete index.

We now isolate those with the weakest scores, as well as those with the biggest ones, as to see how big the vulnerable, dominated by insecurity, segment is, compared with the one clearly characterized by an attitude of trust, security, etc. (see Fig.9).

From left to right, we have scores of 0 and 1, 2 and 3, 4 and 5 and so on, each segment showing bars representing the seven dimensions, from the “Trust – Distrust” one (first dimension-bar on the left) to the “Conspiracy – Reason” one (last dimension bar on the right). The first two segments, 0-1 and 2-3, illustrate the certain

insecurity culture, while the last two, 7-8, 9-10, present the firm *security culture*. As we can see, the insecurity culture describes a much more significant population segment than that of the security culture, is fundamentally distrustful and presents statistically significant scores on most dimensions – this is fairly striking, as the most powerful scores identified for security culture are within the “Implication – Apathy” dimension, showing a high “implication” that could speak to a desiderate of values as much – or rather than – true implication.

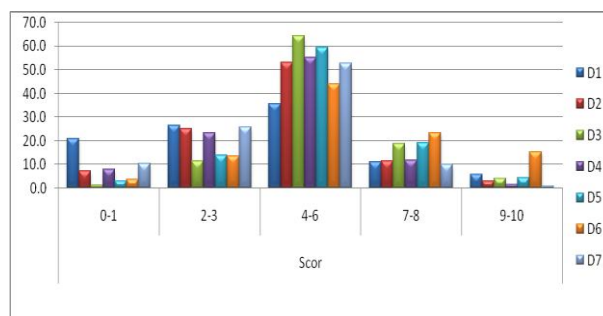


Fig.9 From insecurity culture to security culture

Below, a table showing population percentages inside each score category, on dimensions. We can see how 47,5% of the public has a 0 to 3 score on the “Trust – Distrust” (D1) dimension, 32,5% have an 0 to 3 on “Globalism – Localism” (D2), 31,4% in “Optimism – Pessimism” (D4) and 36,3% in “Conspiracy – Reason” (D7). We can thus conclude that distrust, localism, pessimism and conspiracy tendencies are the most present characteristics of the population segment dominated by an *insecurity culture*.

Table 1 Scores/ dimensions

%	Scores				
	0-1	2-3	4-6	7-8	9-10
D1	20.9	26.6	35.7	11.0	5.8
D2	7.4	25.1	53.0	11.5	3.0
D3	1.3	11.3	64.3	18.9	4.2
D4	8.1	23.3	55.3	11.8	1.5
D5	3.2	13.8	59.5	19.2	4.3
D6	3.6	13.7	44.1	23.2	15.4
D7	10.4	25.9	52.9	10.0	0.8

23,1% of the population shows a 7 to 10 score on “Realism – Liberalism” (D3), 23,5% a 7 to 10 on “Security – Rights” (D5) and 38,6% in “Implication – Apathy” (D6). Therefore, the most present characteristics in the segment dominated

by a firm *culture of security* are liberalism, focus on rights and, even if only in theory, implication.

In the Romanian context, the insecurity culture is more solidly grounded than the security culture.

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