

STRENGTHENING AND DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY TO ANALYSE INFORMATION AND TRANSFORM ROMANIA'S SECURITY PARADIGM IN THE CONTEXT OF ASYMMETRIC CHALLENGES IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

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Developing the national intelligence system and strengthening the response capacity in conflict and crises is both a theoretical branch and a strategy within the framework offered by the International Relations studies. As the scope of regional threats continues to grow, Romania and the actors in the region need to develop programmes to strengthen the national security assessment system and the capabilities to gather intelligence to discourage and counteract elements of security destabilisation.

Because of the changes in the regional security environment, the intelligence system is in high demand, requiring a new cultural design and pragmatic capabilities. Thus, the purpose of this article is to briefly assess the national elements of information analysis in a regional context and to propose, against the background of the current security environment, a model of transformative paradigm for strengthening the capacity to respond to threats.

Keywords: regional security; intelligence; threats; pragmatic capabilities; Black Sea region;

INTRODUCTION

The management of the national security and defence system has become a vital pillar for the international relations of the 21st century, especially in the context of various threats to the state's critical infrastructure. Revisionism, flagrant violations of the rules of international law, armed attacks, financing and support of organised crime groups, media propaganda, the promotion of illiberal policies that threaten the democratic nature of the free world, terrorism and the cultural avant-garde whose purpose is social destabilisation are the elements defining factors of the global society. In this context, the continued development of national security and threat-counteracting capabilities is becoming inherent, especially as institutional (regional and global) security environments seek to define programmes to strengthen intelligence assessment in the fight against the asymmetric dynamics of threats to national security.

Security developments in the Black Sea region are highly volatile and unpredictable, although NATO and EU structures are trying to impose a climate of stability, thus ensuring coherence in the states' efforts to counter any threat. As a member state of both organisations, Romania is at the forefront of developing a sustainable strategy capable of ensuring the balance of power at the regional level and a high degree of defence against threats. The geographical position and the Euro-Atlantic orientation define our country's actions in terms of security and foreign policy, the Romanian authorities being obliged to resort to all political, social, economic, defence, and strategic innovations to ensure the modernisation of its defence policy, the *extended national security* for the benefit of the citizen.

The main purpose of this article is to define the strategic concepts in the field of security and defence intelligence and to evaluate the national elements of information analysis in the context of multi-level factors threatening Romania's security. At the same time, we will highlight the main changes needed to improve the design of the threat response paradigm model, in complete agreement with the *National Defence Strategy 2020-2024*. The practice of developing the national intelligence system applies not only to the political decision-makers

but also to the branch of intelligence studies, as well as to all institutions involved in the national defence process, and this article can be used as a critical tool for evaluating security programmes and policies in Romania.

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE AND THE NATIONAL DEFENCE SYSTEM – AN APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION

Given the specifics of the structures responsible for ensuring the security and defence of the country, the first part of the paper will provide an overview of the critical elements of the information-gathering activity, realising that *“global problems require global solutions”* (Whitman, 2009, p. 1). Thus, we will clarify some concepts regarding the intelligence activity and the development of Romania’s security and defence policies’ evaluation and evaluation capacity.

Then, we will rigorously address the issue of the relationship between the beneficiary of security intelligence and its provider in the context of institutionalising the process of assessing the threat response framework, highlighting the geostrategic paradigm addressed by Romania in the Wider Black Sea Region. This is extremely important, especially since we aim to offer a prospective approach to the cultural design of Romanian intelligence in addressing the offensive and defensive filters of national security.

Last but not least, we will focus on proposing a dimensional model of Romania’s strategic actions to strengthen resources and capacities to counteract destabilising factors based on regional geopolitical and geostrategic developments. This is necessary in order to be able to distinguish the evolutions of the planned information analysis programmes and the impact they have on the institutional and organisational framework in the field of defence. Thus, we will notice that the standard model of *and/or* binary evaluation influences all aspects related to our country’s capacity and defensive culture, the over-manipulation of security intelligence activity being used in favour of the development of national culture in this field.

NATIONAL SECURITY INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY – ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

The intelligence activity involves multidimensional approaches of a secret nature, whose primary purpose is to ensure a stable national security environment while promoting the state’s legitimate interests based on its own culture. In this context, a comprehensive definition of the elements that make up the national

intelligence community is required and an explanation of the formulation of the strategic vision in terms of the various factors of the mass of the field of information collection.

The question often arises as to whether gathering information, interpreting and developing analyses and proposals for public policies in security and defence can be seen as an institution per se or only as a tool for operationalising adaptability in the international environment. Contemporary analyses often fail to clarify the dichotomy of defining this activity, its unique character being part of the continuous study.

Secondly, intelligence is formalised in the national and international space through a series of documents with legal and strategic value, imposing its institutional dimension. In the context of gathering information and structural reform of the institutions in charge of defending the country, the development of intelligence as an institution has been intrinsically achieved to strengthen the administrative capacity of security and defence. From this point of view, the argumentation becomes a variable of the agent-institution structure, the evaluation itself implying the deepening of the study of the field itself. Defining the institution as a structure that includes *“regulatory, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with the associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life”* (Scott, 2014, p. 56), intelligence cannot represent an independent institution. However, regarding the approach of Anthony Giddens (1984, p. 24), we can perceive the institution as a feature *“that provides solidity in time and space”*. Thus, we could extend this perspective to gathering information, especially since intelligence also includes the central element of resources – the human resource engaged in the intelligence cycle and that gives consistency to the activity itself.

Taking into account the organisational specifics of Romania, as well as the strategic and security culture of our country, the institutionalisation of the information analysis capacity and its transformation into coherent policies meant to *“ensure the state of balance and social, economic and political stability necessary for and the development of the Romanian national state as a sovereign, unitary, independent and indivisible state”*, while *“maintaining the rule of law”* (Law 51/1991 in Zulean, 2015, p. 18) is achieved both at the instrumental level – strategies, tactics, procedures, as well as at a symbolic level – ideologies, principles, values (Toderas, 2017, p. 19).

The National Intelligence Community (NIC) consists largely of services and departments empowered to obtain, verify and capitalise on information on risk factors for Romania's security, ensuring stability in a multipolar and unpredictable world.

From an instrumental point of view, the NIC operates based on the provisions of some normative-supporting acts and following the national strategies in the field of defence and security. The general activity of the community is subject to the control of legality and proportionality.

The NIC must be understood as a multidimensional exercise in the context of implementing the national defence strategy, its multi-institutionalism favouring efforts to maintain state security and sovereignty, projecting Romania's interests at the regional and international level. From this point of view, the NIC activity can be considered a global strategy (see Luttwak & Koehl, 1998), even if the Romanian security and defence culture have acquired this concept only at a theoretical level (Zulean, 2015, p. 19).

In line with the organisation of the NIC, the Supreme Council of National Defence adopted a decision (CSAT Decision no. 146/18.11.2005) to ensure the complementarity of the activity of collecting and analysing information between the following units:

- Romanian Intelligence Service;
- Foreign Intelligence Service;
- General Directorate of Defence Intelligence;
- General Directorate of Intelligence and Internal Protection within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

At the same time, the current legislative framework is another essential instrumental element in understanding and analysing the cultural design in the field of intelligence, allowing us to correctly assess the degree of pragmatism of the actions undertaken by the NIC. In this regard, we can list the following relevant normative acts:

- Romanian Constitution;
- Law no. 51/1991 on the national security of Romania;
- Law no. 14/1992 regarding the organisation and functioning of the Romanian Intelligence Service;
- Law no. 1/1998 on the organisation and operation of the Foreign Intelligence Service;

- Law no. 346/2006 on the organisation and functioning of the Ministry of National Defence;
- Law no. 121/2011 on the participation of the armed forces in missions and operations outside the territory of the Romanian State;
- Law no. 535/2004 on preventing and combating terrorism;
- Law no. 182/2002 on the protection of classified information;
- The Decision of the Romanian Parliament no. 44/1998 on the establishment, organisation and functioning of the Special Parliamentary Commission for the control of the activity of the Foreign Intelligence Service;
- National Defence Strategy;
- White Paper on Defense;
- Romania's Military Strategy;
- Intelligence Strategy of the Romanian Intelligence Service.

Symbolically, the reference structures of the NIC share the same set of values, implementing the ideals of a joint mission – ensuring Romania's national security. All the structures involved in the intelligence act carry out their activity under the patronage of the honour, patriotism, and professionalism of the human resource involved in collecting, processing, and delivering information. Moreover, between the NIC structures and the direct beneficiaries of the intelligence activity, the symbolic link of democracy, independence and national indivisibility persists, elements that impose the consensus on national security interests.

INTELLIGENCE OF SECURITY AND DEFENCE IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

With the accession to Euro-Atlantic organisations, Romania has become a provider of security and stability in the Black Sea region. The unpredictability of the security agenda and the aggressive behaviour of the Russian Federation have forced our country to rebuild its defensive system and develop a culture of self-defence designed to ensure the achievement of national strategic objectives.

The insecurity and threats to regional security result from hostile and ostentatious actions by state and non-state actors in hybrid, asymmetric, unconventional warfare

or avant-garde (including cultural and religious)¹ diplomacy operations, depending on the state of peace or war within the regional system (Theohary, 2018).

The entry of the European continent into a spiral of insecurity and regional hegemony, especially after the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the war in Eastern Ukraine, redefining and reconfiguring the role that our country plays at the systemic level, has materialised through foreign policy actions and the defence that policymakers have assumed for the next decade. This can be seen through the successes of military diplomacy that Romania registered at the NATO summit in Warsaw, constituting a new stage in strengthening the capacity to respond to threats through the Tailored Forward Presence programme (Cioculescu, 2019). Today, *“Romania ensures a significant contribution to Euro-Atlantic security, being a net contributor to the fight against terrorism, against the destructuring of insecurity networks, and a key point for ballistic missile defence capabilities, elements defined as country objectives within NATO”* (Olteanu, 2020, p. 21). In this regard, the NIC units have adapted their action strategies to neutralise the nuclei of destabilising actions to national security, with cyber threats, terrorism, intelligence and counter-intelligence being at the heart of developing support points for the country’s defence.

Moreover, the result pursued within the regional cooperation formats aims at eliminating any interferences in the act of internal legislation by protecting classified information (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015), as well as by applying measures to discourage and counteract risks to military national security. Thus, the cooperation of NIC units and their cooperation with regional partners’ structures in collecting data and information relevant to Romania’s defence becomes the essential element of security and defence intelligence, the professional excellence of combatant structures being recognised internationally². In addition, military cooperation with regional state actors contributes to strengthening the increased degree of national security. At the same time, establishing the National Cyber Security Directorate

¹ See Done, C.-G., & Şamşudean, D.-I. (2021). About religious diplomacy or religion as politics. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuigJElX984&t=145s>.

² See the NATO mission entrusted to Romania for ensuring the cyber security of Ukraine, the NATO HUMINT Center in Oradea, as well as strengthening the resilience of Romania’s critical infrastructure through cooperation within the Coordinating Committee for the National Intelligence Community and implicitly within the Integrated Intelligence Office within the Community.

is a natural partnership between society and the state by ensuring the secure operation of cyber activities.

Thus, we see that a distinct approach between security and military intelligence is outlined at the level of the national security and defence system. Security intelligence focuses, in particular, on preventing and combating threats to national security, acting in specific areas and domains, going beyond national territory as an area of operations. For example, the Romanian Intelligence Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, or the General Directorate of Intelligence and Internal Protection have acquired defensive and offensive responsibilities based on identification, conceptualisation, accurate analysis, and combating disruptive elements.

The units within the military intelligence activities, in the same way, being known that the armed forces need *“vital information, such as capabilities, number, specialisations, morale, troop disposition, strategies, command centres etc. of the opposing forces”* (Badiu, 2020, p. 103). In addition, the military intelligence combat units aim to identify the vulnerabilities of their own and allied military systems and capabilities, as well as *“discourage and counter any risks or threats that may affect Romania’s national security in the military”* (Romanian Parliament, 2006).

In other words, Romania’s NIC strengthens the defensive position of our country within the alliances it belongs to, contributing significantly to the security of the Black Sea region through actions to ensure its security and defence. The geostrategic position in the Pontic security complex and the double ideological, social and cultural identity make Romania an exporter of security and an essential link of the dialogue on the East-West axis.

ASPECTS OF THE EVALUATION AND POLICY CAPACITY IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY AND DEFENCE INTELLIGENCE

Traditionally, the evaluation of the activity of the units within the NIC and of the public policies in the field of defence and national security is based on the pragmatism paradigm because the field of applicability of the evaluation is composed of several complex competing realities, on which multiple interpretations and perceptions are expressed (Mertens, 2010, Stăvaru, 2015, pp. 50-51). This approach is eloquent, especially as strengthening inter-institutional partnerships and ensuring the smooth flow of information and actions help evaluators and stakeholders propose

mechanisms to promote good practice and plan and direct specific activities to achieve strategic objectives.

Thus, the evaluation is an instrument to improve the implementation of the stages of the intelligence cycle process and ensure the coherence of public defence strategies. To this end, each unit of the NIC, together with the central public institutions empowered by law to ensure defence, public order and security, is based on a culture of self-assessment, lifelong learning and systematic development to improve their intervention methods in specific activities.

Another important aspect in carrying out the evaluation process is the internal capacity of the staff, as well as the officials in charge of evaluating the NIC's activity. First of all, there is a need for assimilation of organisational culture and an "ideology" of defence and security that generates coherence in the assessment itself, consistency in implementing structural reforms (when required) and proactivity in the process of institutionalising evaluation.

Of contrast, Romania has exciting experience in building and designing its evaluation strategy in security and defence. With a clear expression of the path of democratisation and Euro-Atlantic integration, evaluation planning, based mainly on the achievement of the objectives set out in security and defence strategies, has been achieved through the establishment of binding legal rules, and less based on a process of knowledge and awareness of the need for evaluation.

For this purpose, the support of the evaluation is performed on the three stages of the intelligence cycle – information collection, information analysis and its dissemination, extending to the implementation of combat techniques of the NIC structures. The data subject to evaluation are collected periodically, which allows the analysis of the progress and regresses registered at the level of each unit and the measurement of the degree of satisfaction of the objectives assumed at the national level. In addition, the elements of progressive evaluation finally provide the foreign policy and security decision-maker with in-depth evidence on the act of implementing public policies, the fulfilment of the strategic missions of the NIC units or the degree of interoperability between the various combat structures involved in the process ensuring national security and defence. Also, the activity reports accompanied by the internal analyses offer longitudinal perspectives on the NIC activity, their instrumentalisation favouring the pragmatic and flexible promotion of the evaluation and self-evaluation.

Therefore, it is extremely important that the human resource that implements the strategic evaluation of the activity of the NIC units should be able to understand the combat mechanisms, identify the failures of the process of coordination and implementation of security and defence strategies objectively and propose improvements of the operational framework and public intervention and regulation in the activity of the NIC structures.

In general, Romania approaches the evaluation system of the NIC structures from the perspective of democratic governance and of the systemic legal, political, institutional and social processes for the surveillance of security intelligence. The evaluation ultimately involves the supervision and control of intelligence units, all in order to guide public policies and legal interventions towards the net gain of the final beneficiary – the citizen.

The evaluation process involves three levels of participatory analysis and observation:

- a. obtaining information on the activity of each unit of the NIC, based on internal or external control;
- b. the actual analysis based on the organisational audit, bilateral and multilateral dialogue between the unit subject to evaluation and the evaluator;
- c. issuing the point of view regarding the activity of the evaluated unit, together with the recommendations for implementing the development/ reform process.

As a result, the evaluation processes encourage the monitoring and amendment of the comprehensive intelligence framework and public debates and reflections on the work of the NIC.

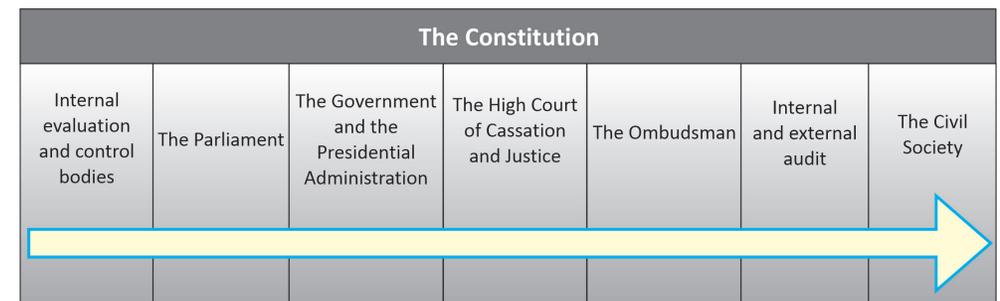


Figure no. 1: Evaluation of the activity of the NIC units and the public policies in the field of national security and defence

In summary, evaluation is a dual process that serves the public policymaker to support the coordination, responsibility for implementing and developing a coherent, cohesive and comprehensive security and defence agenda. Thus, the dynamics of the security environment and the institutional evaluation framework are in line with a stable process, bearing the responsibility for the NIC action's legality, consistency, and promptness. However, there is a need to develop specific programmes at the level of each structure involved in the evaluation activity to ensure the implementation of the NIC's responsibility towards the adopted strategies, towards the legal and constitutional order.

CHALLENGES OF THE NIC-BENEFICIARY RELATIONSHIP. NATIONAL GEOSTRATEGY IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

Recently, the public space has been polarised in emphasising the demand for transparency of the activity of the NIC and its units, especially because of speculative factors in politics, media and even academia. This is often justified as a need to regain confidence in the NIC-citizen bilateral relationship, leading to a misperception of the meaning and specificity of security and defence intelligence.

We must understand that the intelligence units dedicate their efforts to developing mechanisms to react quickly to threats and counter any aggression on Romania's legitimate interests, all under the existing legislative framework and based on the results of global interconnectivity. The divergent positions towards the activity of the NIC units have become a doctrine per se, relying on the limited response capacity in the public space of the institutions involved in ensuring security and defence, the tactical, operational and strategic levels being state secret.

The dominant current of thought in our country on the NIC-beneficiary relationship is that promoted by Sherman Kent's school of thought, which separates political interest from the result of intelligence analysis, giving total confidence to the independence of opinion on risk factors. In this context, a clear distinction must be made between the gross beneficiary and the net beneficiary of the intelligence activity, especially since, in both cases, we speak of the existence of a thinking ideology, as well as a degree of understanding of significant security and defence issues (Mocanu, 2012, pp. 15-16).

The *gross beneficiary* of the dissemination of the results of the NIC activity is the political decision-maker (gathered in the evaluation, supervision and control

bodies of the NIC structures, as well as in the institutions for the development and implementation of public policies at the central level). It is the one that, fully exercising the function and independent of personal interests, establishes the combativeness strategy, as well as the priorities of action of the NIC, ensuring an optimal legal framework, sufficient budgets to carry out the security intelligence act, and authorising mechanisms to combat attacks on the security and defence system. The political decision-maker is responsible for the actions or inactions necessary for the implementation of the defence act, the decision-making structures of public policies, and includes intelligence analysis in the implementation of public policies and in developing a stable framework of security and defence and legislative and executive institutions.

The citizen is the *net beneficiary* of the NIC's activity, the measures adopted by the political decision-maker and the public agenda having a direct impact on his daily life. There is a direct, trust-based relationship between the citizen, the political decision-maker and the NIC, the latter being responsible for ensuring a climate of social security and defending the legitimate interests (economic, political, social and constitutional) of the citizen (bearing the economic burden of the NIC activity). In this case we are faced with a doctrine of dual responsibility towards the citizen:

- each structure of the NIC is accountable to the institutions empowered with the control and supervision of its activity and of the political decision-maker;
- the institutions empowered with the control and supervision of the NIC, as well as the political decision-maker, are politically and socially accountable to the citizen.

Consequently, the level of control and evaluation of the NIC activity varies depending on two variables: the competence and security culture of the evaluator and the importance of security and defence on the public agenda. The first becomes volatile given that the level of training of the evaluator in the institution designated to exercise control and supervision is questionable. The second remains stable, especially since the citizen perceives first the endogenous threat (degree of corruption at the social level, precarious development, economic instability) and the exogenous one (the level of alliances to which Romania is a party, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, centrifugation regional).

A culture of collaborative framework has developed between the NIC structures and the beneficiaries of the security intelligence activity, in different forms,

covering the security and information needs by diversifying the sources and by tacit partnerships between different levels of counteracting national vulnerabilities. It is also recognised by the National Defence Strategy, which nuances *“the need to ensure a natural balance between national security and other vital areas, such as the economy, health or education”* (p. 6). Thus, the NIC-beneficiary relationship acquires double significance: *strategic-applicative* through the actions of the national security and *national-cohesive* system structures by establishing a flexible platform that ensures transparency in security and defence, honest cooperation based on meeting national strategic objectives.

An extremely important thing in the case of this relationship is the fact that the beneficiary takes over, in varying degrees, the function of replicating the activity by reference to the international environment and their expectations. Relating to one’s truth makes the gross beneficiary of intelligence a subjective observer, the informative support between the two parties being achieved through direct contacts and through the functionality that defines the dichotomy between the epistemic environment – intelligence structure and the deontic environment – the political decision-maker (Mocanu, 2012).

This situation emphasises the place and role of each party in the relationship process. The intelligence structure will provide the public policymaker with analysis and information based on the data collected from the field of action without interfering with the decision-making capacity of the beneficiary. During all this time, the beneficiary will evaluate, from the perspective of subjectivity and political and ideological aspect, the activity of the intelligence unit. Moreover, there is a relationship between the NIC and the net beneficiary of its activity with *zero contact*, *“the case of products with a wide enough destination to not involve any immediate feedback or clarifications necessary to the beneficiary”* (Mocanu, 2012, p. 19).

The harmonisation of the position offered by the NIC through intelligence products and the ideological preference or perception of reality by the beneficiary is achieved through the identity partisanship generated by the specific interests of a given moment and the field of reference. In the case of identity, the optimal particularities between the NIC and the beneficiaries are manifested, i.e. the elements that the parties consider to be the defining factors of constructing the surrounding reality.

Thus, the Euro-Atlantic option remains defining for the identity of the two parties, the firm commitment to promoting values and a security space focused

on prevention and protection being the main feature of Romania’s social and political behaviour. The foreign policy and security decision-maker understands the irreversible course of our country so that democracy, the rule of law and respect for rights and freedoms are inviolable areas of the national strategic approach.

The strategic integration of the politico-social option in the NIC and foreign policy actions are done through an original approach of the internal environment in the regional one, multilateral cooperation in the Wider Black Sea Region through a spectrum of mutual dependencies (energy, economic, and defence) being an output of the security intelligence activity.

We should underline that the Romanian society, as a whole, has shown open support for the rapid resolution, peacefully, of disputes likely to destabilise the country’s national security, and our membership in the EU and NATO has counted on the logic of defending and promoting strategic interests. Thus, *“the interests of the member states of the European Union or other intergovernmental organisations, such as NATO or the OSCE, have been transformed under the pressure of political or economic interests”* (Grămadă, 2021, p. 4), and Romania has played the card of mediation and intensifying cooperation, all with the aim of *“giving substance to Romania’s strategic position on the Black Sea”* (Ciucă, 2021, p. 2).

In particular, Romania has relied on regional strategic relations with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, a situation primarily explained by security issues, namely *“Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, the need to actively maintain the interest of partners, to inform and shape international public opinion and use all communication channels for it”* (Grămadă, 2020, p. 1). Of course, this strategy has been doubled by efforts to maintain a pragmatic approach with allies in the region, especially since NATO has remained responsible for Europe’s security. At the same time, the militarisation of Transnistria, Kaliningrad and Crimea poses a real threat to Eastern Europe (Xhacka, 2020).

In terms of regional dynamics, Romania and the NIC structures attach increasing importance to the Russian factor in unbalancing power relations, and maintaining glacial political relations with the Kremlin authorities has not automatically meant minimising risks, but intensifying efforts to counter destabilising attacks – cyber attacks, fake news, misinformation, cultural propaganda and diplomatic avant-garde in the fields of education and research.

NEW DIMENSIONS OF THE NIC INTELLIGENCE STRATEGY – A PROSPECTIVE APPROACH

National security and defence are significant concerns for the political decision-maker and critical topics on the public agenda. The public debates regarding the segmentation, reorganisation and modernisation of our country's geopolitical strategies occupy an essential place in the economy of international relations studies, the development of new directions of action being requested both by society and by the units in charge of defending the country.

The tradition and culture of ensuring the Romanian national security is part of the logic of the guidelines of the schools of thought in the field, involving multiple hypostases – realistic, institutionalist, progressive, positivist and transformative, common systemic characteristics involving the defence of territorial integrity, population, cultural and ideological values and identity, as well as institutions (Andrei, 2021).

In addition, in the analysis of new approaches specific to national security and defence, it is mandatory to consider some defining elements of the nature specific to the types of threats. The essential reference areas for intelligence strategies are political, social, civil and military, economic. In the construction of combat strategies, the intensities of threats to strategic areas are taken into account. The danger perceived by the NIC and the beneficiary of security and defence policies and actions within them influence the combat environment ante and post factum.

Analysing this perspective, we can see the following:

- The *political* field remains extremely important for the NIC, providing the central public policies in the field of security and defence, as well as the guidelines of the NIC units. Thus, political security and counteracting any vulnerabilities in this field become vital for the functioning of state mechanisms. Political security has direct implications for all branches of social life, including the sovereignty and independence of the state, the intelligence activity ensuring the correct information of the political decision-maker and counteracting external interferences in domestic politics;
- From a *social* point of view, the security and defence intelligence approach involves complex analyses of the character of identity and ideological manifestations of individuals and groups that may threaten national security. In particular, the NIC's analysis and combative structures focus

on eliminating the risks of religious or ethnic radicalisation, contributing significantly to the assimilation of national identity;

- The *civilian and military* fields remain at the heart of security and defence intelligence strategies. In this regard, the central objective is to ensure a stable social climate, to combat any form of threat to the integrity of persons (including corruption, misinformation, trafficking in human beings), and to ensure the operability of the armed forces and military equipment;
- The state's *economic interests* are also part of the mission of the intelligence structures, the NIC contributing to their replication in the international security environment. In addition, the economy is the engine of social life.

Developments on the international stage force state to take new measures to help strengthen their defence capacity against any vulnerabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic, the arms race, religious diplomacy, or the technological vanguard promotion are just a few elements of the new reality in the global security environment.

From this perspective, specialised bodies in the field of intelligence must continuously adapt to the particularities of information development today, ensuring the integration of the power elements of the state: military, social, economic, informational and technological.

As new information technologies have a significant impact on the security environment, the NIC must invest heavily in training human resources to recognise technological threats and properly equip combat formations for the destruction of smart weapons. This is welcome in the context of the digitalisation process of the administration in our country or the massive increase in data traffic in society's daily activities.

At the same time, regional conditions force Romania to focus on smart power capabilities, imposing its foreign policy objectives in a way that ensures the integrity of its defence and security system. Thus, the dimension of intelligence must extend to the diplomatic, cultural and religious spheres, investigating the risks to the functions and areas in question. Even if they seem to provide residual risks in the sphere of competence of the NIC, the path of regional policy demonstrates the need to understand the risk factors resulting from the area of community and spiritual entities. In addition, competition in the soft power sphere leads to the blurring of binary setbacks and/or requiring the development of a strategic action plan and intelligence policies adapted to new realities.

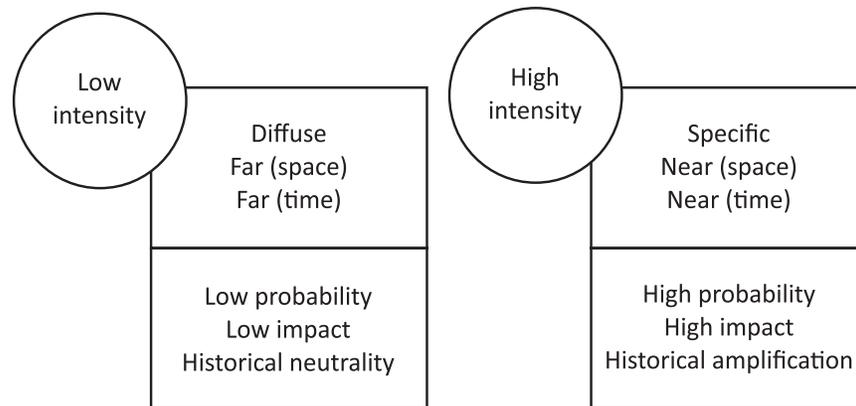


Figure no. 2: Intensity of threats felt at the NIC and beneficiary level³

Moreover, the new dimensions of security and defence intelligence must represent a pivot of Romania's foreign policy, the analyses and information provided to the political decision-maker nuancing the country's position in the regional/international system. The justification for this is the current need for openness to the region and interconnectivity with relevant state and non-state actors.

CONCLUSIONS

Security and national defence are the fundamental elements of the state's functionality, the conglomerate of institutions in this field providing the legitimacy of decisions within the relevant public policies. The development of the national intelligence system represents a particular strategic dimension of the Romanian society, the collection and analysis of the data of major relevance directly influencing the social decisions and the political behaviour of the state.

Romania is firmly committed to combating the negative effects on national security coming from internal and external agents, the regulation of security and defence intelligence being a constant of social life. Thus, the organisational design in this field reveals the degree of institutional integration of the NIC units in the security culture of Romania. In-depth assessments of the intelligence community's activity remain the basis for the organisation and functioning of combat structures and foreign policy.

³ Adapted from Dolghin et al., 2004, p. 7, after Buzan, B. (2000). *Popoarele, statele și teama. O agendă pentru studii de securitate internațională în epoca de după Războiul Rece*. Editura Cartier, p. 147.

Being in a period of effervescence and turbulence, we must be aware of the continuing need for reform, implementation of strategic programmes to increase the level of warning, analysis and control, as well as to show a growing interest in deepening lessons of good practice in ensuring the fulfilment of strategic objectives.

Despite attempts at social destabilisation through information attacks, the NIC units have managed to establish themselves as an essential link in the defence, taking responsibility for operational activities, especially in carrying out operations to counter the "guerrilla war" in the digital computer environment. Moreover, democratic governance has also left its mark on the responsibility of the NIC, the institutions in charge of defence and security fulfilling their duties correctly, legally and efficiently.

At the same time, the security evolutions in the Black Sea region impose new particularities of the human resource engaged in combat operations and high training and qualification of the decision-maker of public security and defence policies. This is necessary given that preventive rules and mechanisms are closely linked to good knowledge and awareness of threats and challenges in all respects. The policymaker must correctly analyse both the information received and the security and defence rigours imposed by global unpredictability. The allocation of integrated financial, human and technical resources is rigorous to reach the necessary security.

It is challenging to understand the mechanisms of action of the NIC fully. However, we must focus our efforts on strengthening the tools for evaluating the institutions in charge of security and defence and continue the processes of transformation and modernisation of in-depth security strategies. Whether we are defending the constitutional order, combating vulnerabilities caused by corruption or identifying the dysfunction of vital services, Romania's security paradigm must be adapted, developed and modernised accordingly to allow the NIC to provide adequate responses to threats, risks and vulnerabilities.

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