The third edition of the Romanian Military Thinking Conference has proved that the exchanges of ideas advanced in such an institutional framework add value to the process of development and promotion of the security culture, necessary for the Romanian society, especially in the increasingly complicated context of current risks and challenges to security.

From the title of the conference – Consolidation of Romania’s Profile as a Proactive Security Provider in the Black Sea Region – and considering the institutional partners that agreed to support the organisation of the event – New Strategy Center, Center for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning, the Romanian Diplomatic Institute and the “Integrated Intelligence, Defence and Security Solutions” Association, it can be deduced that the intention is to create an intellectual bridge between the institutions with responsibilities in the field of national defence and security, as well as between the mentioned institutions and international organisations, non-governmental organisations, academia, experts across various domains, in relation to the security environment in the Black Sea Region, where the dynamics have been extremely fluid lately.

Increasingly complex risks and challenges require complex solutions. As part of ensuring national preparedness, it is important to assess the extent to which our understanding of resilience is realistic or in need of adjustment. Moreover, it is useful to clearly identify the actors included in this process. The current pandemic has shown us that, in order to manage a crisis situation at national level and not only, a comprehensive approach is needed, materialised in the interconnection of several actors – governments, civil society, public sector, private sector, institutions within the national defence, public order and national security system, and, last but not least, citizens in their communities.

Considering all these aspects, it is necessary to emphasise that the current pandemic has not eliminated any of the challenges to the security environment in the classical sense, but it has increased the number of questions we will have to address. NATO’s eastern flank states continue to face the most complex security context that can be encountered across an entire generation.
In the mentioned context, the recent, chronologically, history of the Defence Staff is marked by sustained efforts to increase combat capability, based on the principles of NATO defence planning process, actualised in the force structure development and the decision-making process enhancement in compliance with the programme of transformation, development and procurement of the Romanian Armed Forces until 2026.

NATO’s enlargement eastwards, by including Romania and Bulgaria, has placed, for the first time in history, the six Black Sea littoral states (Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria) in a position of numerical parity 3/3, in terms of membership of the Alliance.

However, the security situation in the Wider Black Sea Region continues to be characterised by instability, mainly due to the Russian Federation’s assertive approach in its relations with NATO, based on a strengthened regional military posture as part of a comprehensive vision aimed at maintaining Russia’s pressure on the entire NATO’s eastern flank. The climax of the mentioned posture was the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. The recent diplomatic conflict based on accusations of espionage by Russia only confirms the lack of mutual trust between the two major international actors.

In this context, the perpetuation of phenomena subsumed under hybrid threats in the Black Sea region remains a constant concern for Romania. The security and stability of the region continues to be a strategic priority, both for our country and for the North Atlantic Alliance.

Moreover, the low degree of predictability related to the evolution of regional crises as well as the non-compliance with the rule of law by some state and non-state actors have added to the already complicated regional security situation, resulting in increasingly complex security risks and challenges.

As a NATO and EU member state, our country continues, through the joint efforts of the Ministry of National Defence and other institutions with responsibilities in the field, to intensify the defence and security measures, in line with other allies and partners, respecting international commitments, to increase credibility and regional profile, thus strengthening its status as a security provider.

In conclusion, the security culture development requires an interagency approach. It is necessary to explain the new types of threats, risks and vulnerabilities that may have an impact at the individual, group, societal, national, regional or global level. There are dangers the civil society must be aware of in order to be able to contribute, together with the responsible institutions, to identifying, preventing and combating them. An important role in educating citizens is played by the institutions responsible for knowing, preventing and counteracting. The construction of a modern society is based on ensuring individual and collective security, which is the point of convergence for national and international institutions, professional associations and non-governmental organisations.

The Romanian Military Thinking Conference can be a useful approach to start some articulated security education policies. The security of a nation is a value that, only when one is about to lose it, does one come to truly cherish it. We are all obliged to be proactive, to develop our own security culture, to cultivate our critical thinking and, last but not least, to promote this type of culture!