



ROMANIA AND POLAND UNDER THE INTERSECTIONALITY LENS – A CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES –

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The present study explores the role of intersectionality in defining the national security strategies of Romania and Poland through a constructivist lens. The study utilizes document analysis to identify the degree to which intersectionality is incorporated into the national security approach. Although both countries recognize the importance of intersectionality in national security, their strategies differ in terms of implementation and effectiveness. The study highlights the need for a more inclusive and diverse approach to national security, one that recognizes the complex nature of security threats. Through this scientific article, the importance of critical understanding of national security is emphasized, one that transcends traditional state-centric approaches and recognizes the role of non-state actors and transnational challenges in shaping security dynamics. The study can provide a valuable insight for policymakers and practitioners seeking to promote inclusive and effective security policies and practices in a changing global landscape.

Keywords: intersectionality; national security; Poland; constructivism; Romania;



INTRODUCTION

The current international society faces multiple threats to European security that can destabilize the region and have global effects. The political, economic, and social changes in recent decades have brought to the fore the importance of national security and security policies, which must be adapted to new challenges and reflect new trends in the evolution of the security situation. In this context, studying intersectionality in national strategic documents such as security strategies represents an innovative and relevant approach to developing and adapting security policies promoted internationally.

This article analyses the national security strategies of Romania and Poland, concerning the role of intersectionality in preventing risks and threats to European security, in relation to relevant European strategic documents. Therefore, the article aims to provide a transnational comparative analysis of these two states, under the lens of intersectionality, viewed as a dual cultural-feminist perspective, which can contribute to promoting a mindset change at the strategic level with regard to the implementation of measures and directions of action adapted to the geopolitical context in an efficient and inclusive manner.

The study is based on the constructivist perspective of security, according to which security threats are social constructions based on identities and power relationships. In this context, studying intersectionality in national security strategies can provide a more complex perspective on the factors contributing to instability and insecurity in the region, in terms of manipulating the masses by promoting discriminatory and socially unfair elements by hostile state and non-state actors, under the auspices of subversive influence on the public opinion in European society.

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THE CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that recognizes how different identities and social categories interact to generate unique and intersecting forms of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139; McCall, 2005, p. 1772). The concept of intersectionality first emerged in studies related to feminist movements in the United States of America during the 1980s and the 1990s, as a way to approach multi-axial limitations of identity politics and recognize the complexity and diversity of social identities (Collins, 2000, p. 222; Hankivsky, 2014, p. 13). The term was brought to the attention of the academic community by researcher Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to describe the unique challenges faced by women of colour in the legal system in the United States of America, where discrimination based on race or gender was often considered separately, without recognizing the combined effects of both.

Intersectionality argues that social identities are not additive or separate, but they mutually influence each other in complex and context-specific ways (McCall, 2005, p. 1775). According to Cho (2019), “intersectionality acknowledges that social identities are interconnected and mutually influence how individuals navigate the world” (Cho, 2019, p. 45). This perspective emphasizes that discrimination and marginalization do not occur based on a single identity, but can manifest as a result of the combination and recombination of different identities perceived at the social level. For example, the discriminatory experience of a person based on the sexual orientation may be different depending on race, class, or other identities (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1268).

Intersectionality has been applied in a wide range of academic fields, including sociology, political science, anthropology, and public health, among others (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 3). In the context of national security, an intersectional approach would seek to address the unique and intersecting security challenges facing diverse communities and promote more inclusive and effective security policies and practices (Wibben, 2014, p. 10). This approach reiterates that national security is not just about protecting the state from external threats, but also about addressing the underlying causes of insecurity and conflicts within societies (Tickner, 2013, p. 9). By examining the intersection of cultural

diversity and gender equality, more nuanced and effective approaches to national security can be developed, where the intersecting nature of security challenges is recognized and social justice and human rights can be promoted (Shepherd, 2016, p. 41).

Recent research has shown an increasing interest in applying intersectionality in the context of national security. In his book, MacLeod (2018) explores the intersectional approach and the extent to which it can help to better understand the causes of insecurity in countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as to find more effective and inclusive solutions to these problems. MacLeod also emphasizes the importance of an intersectional approach to security in the context of global migration policies (MacLeod, 2018). The author includes in his research explanations of the causes of sexual violence in the context of inter-ethnic conflicts and establishes the importance of more detailed government-level studies on possible measures to protect minority communities.

Another example of an intersectional approach applied to the field of national security is the research conducted by Hagen (2019), in which the role of mixed gender identities in creating a climate of domestic insecurity at the state and international security alliance levels is analysed. Hagen argues that an intersectional approach can help identify vulnerabilities generated by communities such as LGBTQ+ and determine their needs in order to eliminate and prevent them from evolving into national security threats or risks. The author suggests that these “internal sensitivities” of the state can only be managed through the implementation of inclusive measures to integrate members of these communities into society, as ignoring social realities generates inevitable developments of existing vulnerabilities. Additionally, Hagen argues that an intersectional perspective can help develop more comprehensive and effective security policies for refugees in developed countries such as Norway.

Another relevant work in the field is the study by Nyhagen and Dawes (2020) on how intersectional and decolonial perspectives can be integrated into the study of human security and state development. The authors argue that integrating the two concepts into national policies can contribute to addressing threats generated by the inequity



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Cohn advocates for a feminist and intersectional approach to security that takes the form of a harmonious product of interconnected conjugation of different forms of oppression against minority or socially unacceptable communities and proposes a series of measures to eliminate the discrepancy between the expected state of security and the state of security that develops in social reality.

of power relations at the inter-state level and developing more inclusive security policies and practices.

Other recent studies have examined how intersectional and decolonial perspectives can be applied to specific areas of national security, such as cybersecurity (Zhang, 2020) or counterterrorism (Pyszczynski, Neumann, Clemens, 2020). For example, Zhang (2020) argues that such an approach can help develop more effective policies and practices in the field of cybersecurity that address the intersection of gender, race, class, and other social identities. At the same time, Pyszczynski et al. (2020) argue that intersectional and decolonial perspectives can completely eliminate vulnerabilities associated with the discrimination and marginalization of Muslim communities in states that have declared themselves part of the fight against terrorism. According to researcher Taneja (2020), an intersectional approach to counterterrorism would lead to acceptance and legitimization of the hypothesis that different groups are vulnerable to different forms of terrorism, depending on the social identities they assume and that policies must be adapted to address these social security vulnerabilities (Taneja, p. 183).

Another area of research has examined the intersections between gender, race, and security. In her book, Cohn (2018) argues that the traditional, realist vision associated with security has largely ignored gender and race aspects in reference to human security, leading to the formation of national security policies that perpetuate violence and oppression against minority communities (Cohn, p. 7). Cohn advocates for a feminist and intersectional approach to security that takes the form of a harmonious product of interconnected conjugation of different forms of oppression against minority or socially unacceptable communities and proposes a series of measures to eliminate the discrepancy between the expected state of security and the state of security that develops in social reality.

Researchers have also explored the relationship between disability and the concept of security. In their article, Shah and Embrick (2020) argue that disability is often ignored in discussions of human security, even though people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by insecurity and violence (Shah, Embrick, 2020, p. 60). They offer

an intersectional perspective on disability, linking the physical and mental impairments of individuals in society to the measures and directions of action proposed by national security strategies regarding human security. According to them, these vulnerabilities take the form of unique but similar challenges, so that arranging measures to eliminate social hazards for people with disabilities will not require expertise, but only involvement in the concrete problems of individuals.

Scientific articles have also been identified that analyse in parallel the extent to which race and gender have become vulnerabilities of human security in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In her study, Allen (2020) argues that the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated existing racial and gender-based inequalities, leading to a disproportionate impact of the threat posed by the SARS-CoV-2 virus on marginalized communities (Allen, p. 81). Allen highlights the need for an intersectional approach to public health and social security, which can identify the causes of intensifying inequalities felt by different social communities and categorize them as vulnerabilities or risks to national security, on the social dimension.

In addition to academic research, there are also examples of the application of the intersectional approach in institutional practice. In 2019, the US Department of Defense announced that it would examine more closely how identities intersect and affect national security, to implement measures of integration and social acceptance for marginalized communities (Cho, 2019). This decision was influenced, in part, by research in the field, which demonstrated the degree to which identities can influence how individuals perceive threats to national security and how they can be distinctly affected by security policies related to social dimensions.

Therefore, intersectionality is a crucial concept in understanding the complexity of identities and social experiences, as well as how they intersect and influence each other in different contexts. Applying an intersectional perspective to national security can help address the unique and complex security challenges faced by multi-ethnic communities and promote more effective security policies and practices.



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THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research revolves around the idea that a theoretical framework based on intersectionality can bring a new and relevant perspective on how states approach national security. Thus, the present research postulates the following thesis: an intersectional approach to national security could bring added value in understanding the complexity and diversity of threats, risks, and vulnerabilities related to the social dimension of national security, and thus optimal ways of addressing dysfunctions can be established.

Starting from the interest shown in the last decade in Identity-Based Security (IBS) approach, the concept of intersectionality has become increasingly used in the discourses and security policies promoted by European states. This research aims to explore the impact of this approach on national security.

In this regard, the general objective of the research is to analyse how the intersectional approach to national security can be useful in eliminating European social vulnerabilities.

The secondary objectives are as follows:

- To identify the degree of implementation of the intersectional approach in the national security documents of Romania and Poland;
- To evaluate the similarities and differences of the identified vulnerabilities, in accordance with the social reality signalled by large-scale social movements.

Based on these objectives, the research will formulate and test the following specific hypotheses:

- The intersectional approach to national security in Romania and Poland is effective in managing and limiting the manifestation of specific social risks related to European security;
- Romania's national security strategy is not sufficiently developed to optimally implement the intersectional approach;
- There are limitations in implementing a broader intersectional approach in Romania's national security strategy.

To test these hypotheses, according to the established research directions, qualitative research methods will be used: document analysis and content analysis, followed by a comparative analysis.

Document analysis will be conducted to identify and analyse key aspects of the intersectional approach in the national security strategies of Romania and Poland, while content analysis will examine the degree of implementation of this approach at both declarative and practical levels, identifying its effectiveness in addressing relevant social vulnerabilities.

Document analysis is a non-reactive research method used after social events have taken place, so that their development is not influenced by the researcher or their presence in social life (Chelcea, Mărginean, Cauc, 1998, p. 333). Recent studies define document analysis as “a research method that is based on collecting and analysing documents that have been intentionally or unintentionally produced in the past and that are relevant to the research subject” (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 10). Other authors describe document analysis as involving “a careful examination of written, printed, or electronic documents to identify relevant patterns, themes, or trends for the research subject” (Bazeley, 2018, p. 137). This approach involves analysing the information available regarding possible biases of the source (Somekh, Lewin, 2005, p. 1). In this study, document analysis will be used to extract information in relation to key elements of the intersectional approach in the national security strategies of Romania and Poland.

Content analysis is a qualitative research method used to examine the content of text or other communication materials, such as images, sounds or videos. This method involves identifying and coding relevant units of content, followed by analysing them to identify patterns, themes and trends. This method can be applied at different levels of analysis, from individual to organizational or societal levels (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, 2019, p. 278). According to Krippendorff (2019), content analysis is “a research method that can be used to make reliable and valid inferences about the meanings communicated through messages. It is a systematic and rigorous process of identifying, coding, and validating patterns and themes in communication data, regardless of the type of media in which they appear, including texts, images, and sounds” (Krippendorff, p. 21). Using content analysis can help researchers understand the meaning of messages conveyed through different forms of communication, as well as identify cultural and social



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Charles Ragin states that the division between qualitative and quantitative research in social sciences is essential, especially when it comes to comparative research. Comparative analysis is an alternative to multivariate statistical analysis, which can be used in both causal-analytic and holistic or interpretive-historical approaches, treating each case as a separate entity, thus allowing for generalization.

representations within them (Krippendorff, 2019, p.12). This method can be used in various research fields, such as psychology, sociology, political science or communication studies (Bazeley, 2018, p. 142).

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The limitations of this research include subjective factors such as cognitive bias regarding the Romanian social reality (in this sense, citizens’ initiatives and actions are evaluated to provide non-subjective research results), the lack of knowledge of the Polish language (however, Poland’s national security strategy is written in English), as well as a limited understanding of the social contexts that underpinned the establishment of national security threats, risks, and vulnerabilities in the social domain in the two states in question. Additionally, there is a possibility that some countries may not adopt a formal intersectional approach to national security but may apply informal practices that reflect this approach.

NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES OF ROMANIA AND POLAND: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS FROM AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Given that the research analyses how the intersectional approach to national security can be useful in addressing social vulnerabilities identified at the European level, comparing the national security strategies of Romania and Poland from an intersectional perspective is crucial for testing the specific hypotheses.

Based on the National Defence Strategy for the Period 2020-2024 (2020, pp. 30-40), Romania aims to respond to threats, risks, and vulnerabilities to national security through the following directions for action:

- ❖ The political dimension:
 - Strengthening institutional capacity and the national security system;
 - Developing a coherent legal framework for national security;
 - Increasing the involvement of civil society in the decision-making process and the implementation of national security policies.
- ❖ The military dimension:
 - Improving defence and rapid response capabilities to possible aggressions;
 - Developing cooperation and interoperability with international partners in the field of security and defence;
 - Improving the capacity to protect land, sea and air borders.
- ❖ The social dimension:
 - Combating and preventing radicalization and violent extremism, as well as promoting diversity and social inclusion;
 - Protecting citizens’ fundamental rights and freedoms;
 - Improving cybersecurity and personal data protection.
- ❖ The cultural dimension:
 - Promoting and protecting national cultural values and heritage;
 - Improving the capacity to monitor and prevent threats to cultural heritage.
- ❖ The ecological dimension:
 - Protecting and conserving natural resources and the environment;



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Romania places great importance on developing defence and security capabilities, cooperating with international partners, as well as on combating and preventing violent extremism and cyber threats. At the same time, attention is given to protecting the environment and promoting cultural values and national heritage.

- Preventing and managing natural and technological disasters;
- Developing sustainable critical infrastructure and energy resources.
- ❖ The economic dimension:
 - Protecting critical infrastructure and economic resources;
 - Developing a secure and competitive business environment;
 - Protecting against economic threats and economic espionage.

Overall, it can be observed that Romania places great importance on developing defence and security capabilities, cooperating with international partners, as well as on combating and preventing violent extremism and cyber threats. At the same time, attention is given to protecting the environment and promoting cultural values and national heritage.

In the National Defence Strategy for the Period 2020-2024, the term “intersectionality” is not mentioned or recognized as a concept that can explain vulnerabilities at the social dimension level. In terms of directions for action, vulnerabilities associated with the intersectional perspective are addressed generically, through formulations such as “the strict and non-discriminatory application of the law [...] and the cultivation of tolerance at the civil society level” (Ib., p. 16), “the simultaneous promotion of democratic values, such as pluralism, civic participation, tolerance and non-discrimination, and cooperation in a multicultural context” (Ib., p. 37).

This general approach to the intersectional perspective can be explained by the risk of weakening the image of public institutions in front of the society, since, as a social practice, movements opposing cultural openness have been observed, with a focus on social acceptance of certain legal actions by deviant genders (see the impact of the discussion about marriage between people with different sexual orientations in the public domain). Thus, in relation to social reality, there are limitations in implementing a broader intersectional approach in Romania’s National Defence Strategy even from the perspective of avoiding the manifestation of the risk of perpetuating existing cultural identity divisions and tensions.



The National Security Strategy of Poland reveals the following main directions for action: political, military, social, cultural, ecological, economic.

The analysis of the second proposed strategic document, the National Security Strategy of Poland (President of the Republic of Poland, 2020, pp. 13-36), reveals the following main directions for action:

- ❖ The political dimension:
 - Consolidation of Poland’s dignity and sovereignty;
 - Promotion of civil liberties and human rights;
 - Promotion of democracy and the rule of law within Poland and globally;
 - Strengthening regional and international cooperation to enhance Poland’s security.
- ❖ The military dimension:
 - Consolidation of Poland’s defence and military capabilities;
 - Promotion of cooperation and solidarity within NATO and with other military partners;
 - Strengthening the capacity to counter aggressive actions and military threats.
- ❖ The social dimension:
 - Strengthening social cohesion and socio-economic integration;
 - Promotion of gender equality and women’s rights;
 - Combating discrimination and extremism.
- ❖ The cultural dimension:
 - Promotion of Polish culture and national identity;
 - Protection of Poland’s cultural and historical heritage.
- ❖ The ecological dimension:
 - Consolidation of energy security and reducing dependence on energy imports;
 - Protection of Poland’s environment and natural resources;
 - Promotion of sustainable development and addressing climate change.
- ❖ The economic dimension:
 - Promotion of economic growth and competitiveness of Poland;
 - Consolidation of economic security through diversification of markets and products;
 - Protection of critical infrastructure and important economic data for Poland’s security.



Overall, Poland places great importance on consolidating sovereignty, dignity, and military capabilities, as well as on protecting energy and economic security. There is also a significant concern for promoting human rights, gender equality, and social cohesion. Poland wants to strengthen regional and international cooperation to enhance the country's security, as well as protect the country's cultural and historical heritage.

Similar to Romania's security strategy, the term "intersectionality" is not mentioned or contextualized in terms of social or other vulnerabilities or risks in the Polish strategic reference document, and the directions for action do not clearly and specifically involve this approach. Poland's position regarding the intersectional approach to security is highlighted in the following objectives: "Formation and development of patriotic attitudes as indispensable factors in building a national community and identity grounded in Christian heritage and universal values [...] promoting the development and protection of traditional values of the family, Polish national identity, culture, and tradition" (President of the Republic of Poland, 2020, p. 28). Thus, it can be concluded that the Polish state does not intend to implement such a social approach to security, despite movements and protests against the government. In 2019, the Polish government issued the "Law against homosexual propaganda", which prohibited public expression of sexual orientation if it did not conform to the traditional Christian view. As a result of massive protests by the LGBTQ+ community in several cities in Poland, in October 2020, the Polish Constitutional Court issued a decision invalidating this law. Additionally, following the banning of abortions in April 2021, massive protests by female citizens were organized, which are currently being manifested online through the #StrajkKobiet movement, which translates as "Women's Strike".

RESEARCH RESULTS

For a clearer view of the implementation of the intersectional perspective in national security documents by the Romanian and Polish states, a table has been compiled, including the research results (Table no. 1).

Table no. 1: Research results

Criteria for comparative analysis	Reference document National Security Strategy of Romania	National Security Strategy of Poland
Implementation of the intersectional security approach	YES (Partially)	NO
Existence of social vulnerabilities/risks associated with an intersectional perspective	YES	YES
Existence of discrepancies between proposed measures and vulnerabilities/risks associated with social reality	NO	YES
Existence of discrepancies in the implementation of the intersectional security vision	Cannot be determined	

The first hypothesis states that the intersectional approach to national security in Romania and Poland is effective in managing and limiting the manifestation of specific social risks related to European security. To that end, the two strategic documents are comparatively analysed.

Specific hypothesis number 1 is partially confirmed, as it is found that after the implementation of the intersectional approach to security in Romania's National Defence Strategy for the period 2020-2024, public discussions regarding the rights of communities with different sexual orientations do not have the same level of intensity as before. In the case of Poland's National Security Strategy, it clearly establishes the promoted social and cultural values, traditionally Christian, alongside a non-negotiation policy towards deviations.



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The implementation of the intersectional approach within the national security strategies of Romania and Poland is limited in both countries, and the social vulnerabilities identified are similar in terms of gender issues, migration, cultural-religious diversity, and discrimination.

Specific hypothesis number 2 asserts that Romania's national security strategy is not sufficiently developed to optimally implement the intersectional approach. Following the document analysis conducted, a partial implementation of the intersectional approach is found, with deficiencies being observed in terms of the generality of proposed measures and the lack of concrete identification of social risks indicated by the European perspective of intersectionality.

Specific hypothesis number 3 asserts that there are limitations in implementing a broader intersectional approach in Romania's national security strategy. To test this hypothesis, the causes of limitations are examined and compared with Poland's non-negotiation policy. In the case of Romania, limitations in implementing an open approach to intersectional security are due to the avoidance of perpetuating divisions and cultural identity tensions, as well as the risk of weakening public institutions' image in front of the society, given the social movements opposing cultural openness in Romania.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the conducted research, the specific hypotheses have been partially and fully confirmed, and the objectives of the research have been achieved. It has been confirmed that the implementation of the intersectional approach within the national security strategies of Romania and Poland is limited in both countries, and the social vulnerabilities identified are similar in terms of gender issues, migration, cultural-religious diversity, and discrimination.

Furthermore, it should be noted that during the research, it has become evident that Romania's national security strategy is not sufficiently developed to optimally implement the intersectional approach. Additionally, this strategy does not identify all social vulnerabilities, which can lead to significant risks for Romanian society. Although the implementation of an intersectional approach can be useful in addressing these vulnerabilities, there is a clear need for the development and improvement of the reference document to ensure the capability to effectively respond to the social needs of the Romanian state.

On the other hand, Poland's non-negotiation policy regarding the intersectional perspective of security and traditional Christian values

of the family generates significant risks. Ignoring the identified social vulnerabilities and refusing to address and manage them can lead to the emergence of violent manifestations against the government and can create the conditions for the manifestation of risks with major impact and low probability at a state and regional level.

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated the usefulness of the intersectional approach in eliminating European social vulnerabilities. However, there needs to be a more robust and developed approach to the national security strategies of the analysed states from a social perspective, to avoid strategic surprises as a result of sudden developments in existing social vulnerabilities, elements that can take the form of regional social chaos, combined with the existing instability in European society. Therefore, there is a need for continuous debate and permanent attention to the way European states can effectively address social vulnerabilities within national security strategies and other reference documents.

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