SECURITIZING TOOLS AND THEIR SOCIETAL EFFECTS: PERCEPTIONS OF RISKS AND THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

This article investigates the acceptance of securitizing narratives by different professional and age-based audiences in Romania. Through analysing the results of a q-sort questionnaire created and administered by the National Institute for Intelligence Studies, the article argues that different audiences relate very diversely to narratives of risk. The article begins by outlining the development of the theory of securitization and its transition to include a focus on audience acceptance. Further, the article describes the Romanian 2015 Strategy for Homeland Defense as a key "tool" of securitization. Finally, the article looks into the differential acceptance by distinct audiences of different risk narratives outlined by the Strategy, as discovered through q-sorting. Results show that older people fear Russian expansionism and that governmental employees reject the idea that bad governance is a risk to security.

Keywords
Audience, narratives, risk perception, securitization

1.INTRODUCTION

Securitization theory has constantly gained ground in international security studies, as constructivism became one of the quintessential paradigms in social science research. The concept of securitization aims to explain how speech acts,

representations, or practices lift a problem from the sphere of the political and bring it into the space of „security", justifying the use of exceptional means in order to solve it. From its initial development, the theory has been subject to a considerable level of criticism and has been consistently expanded. Conversely, different attempts at expansion have been resisted or critiqued. Case studies have focused on speech acts and practices, but also on actions of non-state actors such as honor killings. According to Balzacq, Leonard and Ruzicka (2015), one of the weakest points of the theory is that it lacks or completely underspecifies what represents a successful securitization, especially if audience acceptance is required. Additionally, a normative dilemma of applying securitization theory has been proposed by Huysmans (2002): he argues that an academic that addresses an issue through the lens of securitization is complicit in the very process that he attempts to describe and claims that the only morally legitimate strategy is a deconstructive theorization of the "power-knowledge nexus" (Huysmans 2002, 57).

This paper analyses, based on data collected through a research project conducted by the National Institute for Intelligence studies, the reception of diverse narratives of risk to national security by different audiences in Romania. The paper first looks at Romania's main securitizing tool, the National Strategy for Homeland Defense of 2015 and places it in the context of geopolitical developments and broader securitizing practices. It treats the Strategy, together with the 2015 Speech by president Klaus Iohannis as a securitizing tool, understood as a "routinized set of procedures and rules that structure the interactions among individuals and organizations […] which define who is involved in the operation of public programs, what their roles are and how they relate to each other and […] reconfigure what is to be called public action, the aim of which is to address issues identified as threats" (Balzacq 2008, 80; 2011, 16). Then, through a Q-sort questionnaire, the article establishes which narratives of risk to national security can be identified. Further, it tests to what extent the reception of different narratives of risk to national security varies with age, gender or belonging to a different professional group.

In the first section, the paper discusses the theoretical background and delves into the controversies concerning the theory of securitization, especially those

focusing on audience acceptance. In the second section, the article focuses on Romania's main securitizing tool: the 2015 National Strategy for Homeland Defense. This represents the strategic document which contains the central tenets of Romanian security thinking and policy. In doing so, the paper analyses the way the document creates the tri-partite distinction between risks, threats and vulnerabilities and how it includes issues previously left outside the sphere of security by the previous strategy.

The next two sections detail data collection and methodology and present the survey's results. The third section outlines the narratives identified by the Q-sort questionnaire, while the fourth presents their differential reception by different audiences. In order to assess the different risk narratives prevalent in Romania, an online Q-sort questionnaire based on a set of statements defining risks and threats to national security was administered. These were extracted from the National Strategy for Homeland Defense as well as from mass-media. The questionnaire was applied to eighty members of four professional groups: academics, security practitioners, NGOs and representatives of the for-profit sector.

On the basis of the data, the paper concludes that four narratives of risk to national security exist in Romania. Its main contribution to the literature is that it establishes a direct link between a securitizing document and audience perception, as it employs statements taken directly from the National Strategy for Homeland Defense.

2.SECURITIZATION THEORY FROM SPEECH TO ACCEPTANCE

In its original formulation, securitization theory argued that "security is a speech act" (Waever 2011 [1995]). By defining something as a "security" problem, a political actor took it outside the sphere of normal politics: closed debate, subjected it to technocratic management and allowed the use of extraordinary means (such the state's security apparatus) to solve it. However, critics rejected

this simple reading of securitization and argued that the context in which such a speech act takes place and the reaction of the audience should also be taken into consideration. By 1998, with the publishing of *Security: a new framework for analysis*, speech acts *per se*t urned, from acts of securitization to *securitizing moves*. The central idea of securitization theory is that a certain speech act permits the use of exceptional means for its solution. These involve the repressive apparatus of the state, including militarized police, extensive involvement of several law enforcement agencies, surveillance by intelligence service or even non-state security providers such as vigilante groups. Moreover, once a problem is successfully „securitized", the normal guarantees of liberal democratic politics can be reduced, suspended or even eliminated. Thus, after the 9/11 attacks, international terrorism was seen as such a grave threat, that "war" had to be declared on it, leading to the uncritical acceptance of wide-scale military action by the political opposition or by the press (Gadarian 2010, 470). Even before the Arab Spring, the immigration issue had become heavily securitized in many Western nations, as it was discussed in the terms of a need to defend identity or jobs or even physical security from criminal immigrants.

One of the main criticisms of this initial view can be found in the early work of Thierry Balzacq Initially, Balzacq criticized the simple model of securitization and required audience acceptance be the criterion by which to judge a successful securitization (Balzacq 2005, 179; 2011, 4-5; Ghincea 2017, 2). Thus, according to him, "effective securitization is audience-centered" (2005, 179), which is taken to mean that the securitizing act must gain the acceptance of the audience it is addressed to. He employs the work of language philosopher, John Austin to argue that a speech act is not only an illocution, but also has a perlocutionary effect - *which is the 'consequential effects' or 'sequels' that are aimed at evoking the feelings, beliefs, thoughts or actions of the target audience* (Austin apud Balzacq 2005, 175; 2011, 4-7). Given the crucial importance of acceptance to a successful securitization, Balzacq argues that "success of securitization is highly contingent upon the securitizing actor's ability to identify with the audience's feelings, needs and interests" (Balzacq 2005, 184). Further, Balzacq (2008, 2011) also diversifies the panoply of "tools" of securitization. According to him, certain

public policies represent "substitutes for the discursive logic of securitization" (Balzacq 2007, 79) and securitize despite the lack of audience acceptance.

Another strand of criticism is represented by Stritzel (2007), who argues that that an analysis of a successful act of securitization need to take into account the act's external context (facilitating conditions).Stritzel claims that there are two possible ways to understand the concept of securitization: an internalist and an externalist one. The internalist view of securitization appeals to the deconstructionist idea that there is no objective reality and that speech is supposed to generate meaning rather than appeal to any particular common understanding of the topic. Alternatively, the externalist reading of securitization claims that for any speech act to be successful, it has to benefit from particularly favorable enabling conditions (wider contexts in which the securitizing act is performed).

The literature on the definition of securitization audience(s) and on measuring acceptance has come to the widespread conclusion that neither concept has been clearly and unambiguously defined. According to Leonard and Kaunert (2011), there is an inherent tension between the self-referential understanding of securitization initially proposed by the Copenhagen school theorists and the intersubjective character they attribute to the process. Moreover, the authors quote a number of works and argue that one should not speak about a single audience, but about several. They propose to use Kingdon's "three stream model", derived from public policy studies, as a way of conceptualizing the different audiences of securitization. The same argument is made also in Balzacq, Leonard, and Ruzicka's (2015) article, presenting further developments in the notion of audience.

The idea that there are multiple audiences to which the process of securitization can be addressed naturally leads, as the authors observe, to the notion that, measuring acceptance differs considerably. Balzacq, Leonard, and Ruzicka (2015) quote Paul Roe's (2008) article on the different roles different audiences play in accepting securitization. The latter argued that the British Prime-Minister had, in regard to portraying Iraq as a threat, managed to obtain the agreement of one audience (the Parliament) while failing to do so in case of the general public. The former's agreement can be observed from the formal mandate received to prosecute the Iraq war. Leonard and Kaunert appeal to Kingdon's framework

and distinguish between the community of policy experts and the community of politicians when studying the securitization of asylum seekers in Britain.

A meta-synthesis of thirty-two studies on securitization carried out by Cote (2016) showed that there is a distinction between the treatment of the audience in theoretical works on securitization and in empirical applications of the concept. While in theoretical work, the audience is seen as an *agent without agency*, empirical studies treat the audiences as performing acts such as "actively challenging, questioning and/or supporting" claims made by security actors (Cote: 2016, 10). He argues in favor of a more deliberative (in line with the CS' original self-definition as Arendtian) understanding of securitization, seeing audiences as active participants in a "social interaction" with securitizing actors. Only through this process, Cote argues (2016, 11), that "intersubjective meanings are produced" and security actions are "authorized". Consequently, he defines the audience of the process of securitization as "the individual(s) or group(s) that has the capability to authorize the view of the issue presented by the securitizing actor and legitimize the treatment of the issue through security practice" (Cote 2016, 8)

While this article accepts that audience acceptance of securitizing moves might be difficult to grasp, it relies on the premise that classical sociological means of investigation can be employed. One of the reasons of using Q-sort (as detailed in the methodology section) is that narratives are to be assessed. The investigation did not aim for a representative sample, but looked at how different statements connect to each other in people's perception.

3. ROMANIA'S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR HOMELAND DEFENSE – A KEY SECURITIZING TOOL

 As Miroiu and Soare (2007) show, Romanian strategic thinking evolved from a state-centered, realist – inspired worldview, determined by the prolongation of Cold War thinking into the 1990s to a modern, European-wide expanded concept of security. The key expression of this evolution were the successive strategies

issued by the Romanian Presidency. According law 473/2004, the Romanian president is compelled to present the national security strategy within six months from the assumption of office. Elected in late 2004, Traian Băsescu (Romanian president between 2004 and 2014) delayed the presentation of his national security strategy until 2006. This document was in force between 2007 and 2015, when, after the assumption of office, Klaus Iohannis, presented his own version.

The paper treats the Strategy, as well as the associated speech in Parliament as a securitizing tool, understood as a "routinized set of procedures and rules that structure the interactions among individuals and organizations […] which define who is involved in the operation of public programs, what their roles are and how they relate to each other and […] reconfigures what is to be called public action, the aim of which is to address issues identified as threats" (Balzacq 2008, 80; 2011, 16). The paper argues that the Strategy and the speech do not represent a securitizing move, in the sense that they claim authorization from an audience (such as the Parliament), but a proper securitizing tool, which does not aim to gain a formal acceptance but transcribes practices and establishes roles. Given that the Strategy was subject to a Parliamentary vote, the opposing view, that the Strategy is a securitizing move might be supported. This view would also claim that the actual securitization took place in Parliament, as the president obtained the acceptance of the MPs. However, in the view of this paper, given the paucity of debate in Parliament, the aim of the Strategy and of the speech was not to convince parliamentarians but to publicly announce a set of practices already inscribed in the document. Thus, in the view the article takes, the Strategy does not aim to convince but to proclaim, thus constituting a tool of securitization which does not require an actual audience acceptance.

When presenting the National Strategy for Homeland Defense before Parliament, in May 2015, president Iohannis argued that an expanded concept of security is needed, which is in "agreement with European principles". In addition to defense and public order, president Iohannis claimed that, according to the Romanian presidency, security also entails economic objectives such as "a competitive economic environment, financial stability", objectives relating to state capacity such as "functioning public education, health and pension

systems", or "the protection of critical infrastructures" and the "ability to respond to environmental challenges". Moreover, the protection of cultural values and identity, as well as the protection of democracy and freedom are also, according to the Romanian presidency, crucial elements included in the concept of security (Klaus Iohannis speech, 22.05.2015).

Terrorism, "recent events in the region" (the Russian annexation of Crimea) and cyber-attacks are mentioned by Iohannis as the main future security threats to the Romanian state. His view proposes the strengthening of collective security and re-iterates his previous "three pillar doctrine" as the solution to Romania's security problems. According to this view, Romania's security policy must rely on the "strengthening of the country's profile in NATO [including reaching the recommended 2% defense budget spending], and the European Union and the Strategic Partnership[1] with the United States" (Klaus Iohannis speech, 22.05.2015, 21.12.2014). A later speech saw President Iohannis affirming Romania's commitment to implementing the EU's Global Strategy, as part of the European dimension of Romania's three pillar policy (Klaus Iohannis Speech, 18.01.2017), while in 2017 Iohannis reiterated the need for re-armament in the context of regional threats (Klaus Iohannis Speech, 15.08.2017).

The National Strategy for Homeland Defense (SNAP) and its associated guide (released later in 2015) operates with the tri-partite distinction between risks, threats and vulnerabilities. It defines an extended concept of national security, which includes all three referent objects of security (Baldwin 1997; Waever et all. 1998; Stone 2009): the state, the individual and the community. Thus, according to the SNAP guide, "extended national security is the state of normality ensured through the promotion of the constitutional principles, social, economic and political stability and the safe exercise of rights, liberties and fundamental duties of the citizens" (SNAP guide, 2015). The strategy defines three situations or actors which imperil national security: threats (defined as "plans, capabilities

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[1] Romanian foreign policy categorize some bilateral relations as "Strategic Partnerships". The most important one is that between Romania and the United States, consecrated through the *Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century*, *https://www.mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/2011.09.13_declaratie.pdf*

and intentions, that can affect national security"), risks (defined as the "probability of events that can imperil national security") and vulnerabilities ("consequences of systemic weaknesses which can be exploited and contribute the realization of a threat") (SNAP 2015). Given the Strategy does not make any distinction between the importance of either of these perils, it could be assumed they are all treated as existential to the Romanian state and requiring exceptional means to be addressed.

The strategy does not aim to clarify these rather ambiguous terms. Both from the definition given and from the aspects included under each heading, it is not always clear what distinguishes a risk from threat and from a vulnerability. However, on a closer reading one can understand that threats are elements external to the Romanian state while vulnerabilities represent weaknesses inherent to the state itself. Finally, risks should represent potentialities which, if manifested, could destabilize national security.

Under the impact of the Donbas war (still raging when it was adopted), the strategy highlights, as the main threat to national security, the "destabilizing actions in the Eastern neighborhood". Other threats are the region's frozen conflicts and instability in the Western Balkans, energy supply variations (referring to the Russia – Ukraine gas wars) and cyber threats, as well as terrorism and WMD proliferation (SNAP 2015).

The Strategy lists, among "risks to national security": regional instability, the failure to achieve Romania's development objectives (potentially caused by economic difficulties, crime and corruption), social risks (such as demographic decline and emigration), the radicalization of extremist groups, trans-border crime, weapons trafficking, and migration flows (SNAP 2015). This category is the most ambiguous of all three, as it is supposed to present "probabilities" or "probable events", but lists a wide set of phenomena.

Finally, the strategy defines as "vulnerabilities", the inability of central and local administration to implement public policies, resource scarcity, corruption (which, in the language of the strategy, affects both the capacity to implement public policy and Romania's image abroad) and the unequal development among Romania's regions. (SNAP 2015). This section is much more consistent

than the previous, as most phenomena listed could be grouped under the heading "internal dysfunctionalities".

The document securitizes a wide number of issues: while terrorism, WMD proliferation, inter-ethnic conflict and bad governance were treated as security issues in the 2006 National Security Strategy, the 2015 Strategy also treats developments in the East, frozen conflicts, energy markets and the cyber domain, as well as social inequalities and under-development as security issues. Not only that the Strategy designates new areas of legitimate security action, but overall it could be said to take a wide approach on security, both concerning problem definition and problem resolution. For example, the European Union distinguishes between the internal dimension of security, addressed through the 2015 European Agenda on Security and the external dimension of security, which it addresses through the 2016 European Global Strategy.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

The article employs a quantitative methodology to assess how a securitizing tool was received by a wider population. It does not envision that the respondents of the study are a form of audience in Cote's sense, but is interested in how the narratives proposed by Romania's main securitizing tool were internalized by a set of respondents. Since the Strategy and associated speech is treated as a securitizing tool, the acceptance/authorization of the audience is irrelevant. Only socio-demographic variables were used as independent as no other data was collected to differentiate members of the respondent set from each other.

In order to assess the narratives of risk present in Romania, an online Q-sort questionnaire was applied. Unlike a usual, Likert-scale questionnaire, "the Q-sort method is a forced-choice research approach: all items must be ranked and each position can only be used once" (Kloosteret all 2008). The results of Q-sort results represent an inverted data-matrix, and, at, the end, correlates respondents rather than items.

The Q-sort methodology can be defined as a series of five steps: 1. Collection of relevant ideas, beliefs and opinions, concerning the research object 2. Selection

and formulation of meaningful statements (the total set of statements is labeled *concourse*) 3. The printing of these statements on several cards (or, in this particular case, in a computer program) 4. Administering the questionnaire to respondents 5. Data analysis, which results, unlike in a classical factor analysis, in a set of factors grouping respondents rather than statements. Finally, the extracted factors are selected according to eigenvalues and then their loadings on specific statements are analysed (Klooster et all. 2008; Barry and Proops 1998; Brown 1971; Watts and Stenner 2005; Zabala 2014). This allows one to distinguish between several groupings of statements (narratives), which are labelled according to the logical commonalities that they share.

Q-sort methodology has been applied for research in attitudes towards beef (Kloosteret all 2008), environmental sustainability (Barry and Proops 1998) and punishing juveniles (Watts and Stenner 2005). One of the advantages of the Q-method is its ability to extract relevant conclusions out of a relatively small sample of respondents, as it aims to identify narratives rather than samples representative for a population.

The *concourse* for this study was composed of sixty-eight statements (presented in the appendix), referring to "risks to national security". These included aspects outlined by the National Strategy for Homeland Defense, such as corruption, terrorism or the possibility of a deterioration of frozen conflicts, etc. Statements were derived from the Strategy or from mass-media representations of risks to national security. An automated machine search of media items containing the terms "risks to national security", "threats to national security" was conducted on the Romanian media outlets ranked top according to traffic. An online questionnaire (www.kross.ro/perceptie-risc) was administered, through a snowball sample, to eighty respondents which came from four professional groups (which respondents were allowed self-identify with): academics, NGO representatives, private sector employees and governmental employees. The respondent's age and gender were also recorded. Descriptive statistics about the respondent set are presented below. Only 47 valid responses were received which included the respondents' professional category.

Professional Group	Number	Education		Gender	
Academic	9	Bachelor's degree	28	Female	26
NGO	3	Master's degree	34	Male	54
Private sector employees	9	PhD Degree	18		
Governmental employees	26				
Total	47		80		80

Table 1 – Descriptive statistics of the respondent set

Two sets of analyses were performed on the data. Firstly, in order to assess the risk narratives, data was analysed with the FlashQ software[1]. Four factors were extracted by the program, representing four "narratives of risk". There are presented in the next section along with their interpretation. This analysis was used to test the following hypothesis:

H1: There are distinct narratives of risk that the audience internalizes

Secondly, the data was "turned around" and the connection between socio-demographic variables and risk perception was explored. This was done in order to explore several other hypotheses:

H2: There is a statistically significant difference in the extent of the acceptance of different narratives of risk according to gender

H3: There is a statistically significant difference in the extent of the acceptance of different narratives of risk according to age

H4: There is a statistically significant difference in the extent of the acceptance of different narratives of risk according to professional group

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[1]Available at http://www.hackert.biz/flashq/downloads

One of the limitations of the Q-sort method is its inability to gauge the impact of socio-demographic variables on the acceptance of narratives of risk. In order to overcome this difficulty, a conversion mechanism was designed. This relied on the fact that respondents were forced to choose a pre-determined set of statements in each category of responses. The first transformation involved the subtraction of the number of statements which the respondent neither agreed not disagreed with ("neutral statements") (10) from the total number of statements (68). Then, the total number of non-neutral statements (58) was divided by the number of statements allowed by the questionnaire in each category. Statements expressing disagreement were given a negative ranking while those expressing agreement were given a positive ranking. Finally, 58 was added to each result in order to achieve a positive scale. The results of the conversion are reproduced in Table 2.

Response option	N = number of statements allowed by the questionnaire	Post-conversion result
-5 = full disagreement	1	0
-4	4	43.5
-3	7	49.71
-2	8	50.75
-1	9	51.55
0= neutral	10	58
1	9	64.44
2	8	65.25
3	7	66.28
4	4	72.5
5= complete agreement	1	116

Table 2 – Response variable conversion results

1. Results and analysis – risk narratives

As can be seen from thefactor loading scores reproduced in the appendix, four significant factors were extracted, having eigenvalues above 1 and significant loadings on more than two respondents. Grouping together the narratives they express, one could identify the following:

a) The risks of corruption

Respondents in this group are concerned with the impact that corruption has on governance and decision-making. They see that corruption creates vulnerabilities to the state, leads to a reduction in trust from the citizenry, rent-extraction from public institutions and inefficient government. People associate corruption with mass migration of medical personnel, negative demographic trends and a negative image abroad for Romania. Thus, for this group of people, the state is threatened by internal rather than external factors. This group seems to grant much more credence to the idea that the phenomena termed "vulnerabilities" by the National Strategy are those mostly affecting Romania'snational security. They are negative in themselves rather than instrumental towards the manifestation of other threats.

Statement number	Statement	Z-score
17	Corruption affects good governance and decision-making in favor of citizens	2.214
20	Corruption weakens the state	2.041
18	Corruption leads to economic problems and affects the country's development potential	1.637
19	Corruption weakens trust in justice and in state institutions	1.52
46	The excessive politicization of institutions, both locally and nationally	1.181

64	Negative demographic trends and the widespread aging process	1.102
40	The massive migration of specialized medical personnel in the European space for financial reasons leads to the lack of trained personnel in the country's rural areas	1.096
34	The persistence of corruption negatively affects Romania's image abroad.	1.058
11	The education system's deficiencies, its lack of resources and the difficulties to adapt content.	1.037
35	The lack of security culture and of critical thinking among decision-makers.	1.032
27	Inefficient governance (budgetary disequilibria caused by mistaken political decisions) are the effect of the democratic deficit and institutionalized corruption and undermine the trust of citizens in public institutions.	1.002

Table 3 – Z score loadings for Factor 1 – "Corruption risks"

b) Espionage

Respondents in this category believe that the most important threat to national security is Russia and its external activities. They see the expansion of Russia's intelligence operations in connection with its expansionist policies and its cyberwarfare campaign. Furthermore, Russia's actions are not only negative by themselves but also create negative results such as migration and organized crime. In this narrative, hostile intelligence actions are aided by Romania's vulnerabilities such as corruption and inefficient government. This view treats causality different from the previous factor. Rather than "vulnerabilities" being negative in themselves, respondents in this group more likely accept the

Strategy's view that corruption is only a facilitating factor for the actions of hostile external actors.

Statement number	Statement	Z-score
61	Espionage and hostile intelligence activity of state and non-state actors aim to influence decision-making, including political decision, mass-media and public opinion.	1.974
63	Russia's expansionist tendency and the precedent it set by annexing Crimea	1.913
5	The threat from Russia	1.818
3	Hostile intelligence action aims to develop strategic points on the national territory and can obstruct Romania's strategic projects and state decisions.	1.703
2	Destabilizing actions in the Eastern neighborhood generate major challenges for the euro-atlantic space, leading to regional instability and other negative phenomena, including migration, organized crime and the diminishing of economic development potential	1.547
16	Regional conflicts in the Black Sea region generate tense situations, separatist tendencies and instability.	1.545
27	Inefficient governance (budgetary disequilibria caused by mistaken political decisions) are the effect of the democratic deficit and institutionalized corruption and undermine the trust of citizens in public	1.177

	institutions	
18	Corruption leads to economic problems and affects the country's development potential.	1.094
56	Risks to Romanian economic security	1.093
20	Corruption weakens the state	1.087
6	Cyber-attacks launched by hostile entities, either state or non-state, on strategically relevant information infrastructure and public interests institutions and companies, relevant to national security.	1.008

Table 4 – Z score loadings for Factor 2 – "External risks"

c) Governance risks

While the first narrative identified focused expressly on corruption, the third takes a wider approach and looks at bad governance as a threat to national security, including corruption as part of a wider phenomenon. This includes aspects such as lack of professionalism in the medical sector, social insecurity and chronic poverty, democratic deficit and the lack of evidence-based policy making, especially of a multi-annual budgetary planning and execution mechanism. Respondents in this group look at corruption as weakening the delivery of basic services rather than as a moral wrong in itself.

Statement number	Statement	Z-score
19	Corruption weakens trust in justice and in state institutions	2.299
20	Corruption weakens the state.	2.01

17	Corruption affects good governance and decision-making in favor of citizens	1.848
36	The lack of professionalism and corruption in the medical system.	1.759
14	Terrorist attacks being committed in Romania	1.752
18	Corruption leads to economic problems and affects the country's development potential.	1.462
42	The high level of social insecurity, chronic poverty and the increase of social inequality	1.401
27	Inefficient governance (budgetary disequilibria caused by mistaken political decisions) are the effect of the democratic deficit and institutionalized corruption and undermine the trust of citizens in public institutions	1.329
62	The precarious state and reduced efficiency of the health system	1.296
37	The lack of a coherent mechanism to predict, plan, execute and control the country's budget in a multiannual fashion and the absence of evidence-based policy making.	1.192

Table 5 – Z score loadings for Factor 3 – "Governance risks"

d) Terrorism

Those in this group look at terrorism as the main threat to Romania. They believe that, even if a terrorist attack on Romanian territory has not happened yet, the influx of migration in Europe increases the possibility of this occurring. This is closely associated with the belief that there is a strong possibility of radicalization of extremist entities, who, through contacts with organized crime, might take possession of weapons of mass destruction and employ them in an attack. According to this view, organized crime has a clear connection to terrorist activity, while corruption and foreign intelligence action areconditionsaiding terrorism.

Statement number	Statement	Z-score
14	Terrorist attacks being committed in Romania	2.599
59	Romania is a transit area of organized transnational crime (illegal weapons smuggling, human trafficking, contraband and money laundering)	1.546
52	Terrorist and extremist propaganda.	1.461
24	Migration flows that affect Europe.	1.418
38	Radical and extremist manifestations that can affect the rights and liberties of citizens, social cohesion or inter-ethnic relations.	1.299
15	The connection between terrorism and cross-border crime	1.233
54	The radicalization of extremist entities in the country	1.226
33	The Internet has become a space for spreading propaganda, radicalization and recruitment of jihadist terrorism, but also for right-wing extremism.	1.224

68	Drug trafficking.	1.212
65	Al-Qaeda and Daesh inspired terrorism in Romania	1.2
67	International terrorism leading to deaths and material damage	1.17
50	The presence in Romania of citizens that are suspect of terrorism and of belonging to Daesh	1.09
61	Espionage and hostile intelligence activity of state and non-state actors aim to influence decision-making, including political decision, mass-media and public opinion.	1.045
18	Corruption leads to economic problems and affects the country's development potential	1.003

Table 6 – Z score loadings for Factor 4 – "Terrorism"

2. Data analysis – group differences in risk perception

Considering that the Q-sort methodology does not allow for an estimation of impact of socio-demographic variables on risk perception, a series of conversions outlined above were conducted. The socio-demographic variables were then connected with the respondents' answer to the statements, using the most appropriate statistical methods, according to the type of independent variable.

Given the continuous nature of the variable "age", a correlation analysis was performed between age and each of the statements. Responses for five statements reached statistical significance (Table 7).

Correlation coefficient age*statement	Migratory flows affecting Europe	Regional instability limits Romania's capavity to promote its strategic interests, especially those regarding the European direction of the Republic of Moldova	Romania is a source of organized transnational crime (illegal weapons smuggling, human trafficking, contraband and money laundering)	Romania is a transit area of organized transnational crime (illegal weapons smuggling, human trafficking, contraband and money laundering)	Russia's expansionist tendencies and the precedent it set by occupying Crimea
Pearson's R	-0.22*	0.249*	-0,253*	-0,229*	0,386**
p-value	0,050	0,026	0,024	0,041	0,000
N	80	80	80	80	80

Table 7 - Correlation between age and dependent variables

The strongest correlation is that between age and the fear of Russia's military actions in the wake of the occupation of Crimea. This could be explained by the negative memories that older people share of the communist period and its association with Russia. This is confirmed by positive correlation found between age and the fear of regional instability, especially regarding the situation in Moldova. Conversely, younger respondents fear migration and crime comparatively more than older respondents. A potential explanation is their higher exposure to news about the refugee crisis affecting Germany and other Western European countries.

Correlation analysis was also chosen to explore the relationship between education and risk perception. This yielded the results presented in Table 8. The

strongest and most statistically significant correlation was found between education and the fear of ballistic threats. The view that corruption is a risk to national security as well as the belief that civic spirit in Romania is weak were also positively correlated with education. This might be explained by the higher news consumption of more educated people, considering that the topic of Russia's aggressions and the anti-corruption protests were featured highly. Conversely, education negatively correlates with the belief that massive migration for labor is a threat to national security and with the idea that crisis management institutions are inadequately provisioned. This might be explained by the fact that less educated people tend to experience, either themselves or their close relative, migration for labor or a failure of emergency institutions.

Correlation coefficient between education (last school attended)* statement	Increasing ballistic threats to NATO also affect Romania	Corruption weakens people's trust in justice and in state institutions	A weak civic spirit and civic solidarity	Massive migration of the Romanian labor force leading to decreasing family cohesion	Inadequate organization and insufficient resources for crisis management institutions	Romania is a destination of organized transnational crime (illegal weapons smuggling, human trafficking, contraband and money laundering)
Pearson's R	0,309**	0,232*	0,229*	-0,254*	-0,237*	-0,227*
p-value	0.005	0.039	0.041	0.023	0.034	0.043

N	80	80	80	80	80	80

Table 8 - Correlation between education and dependent variables

Relationships between variables such as gender and professional group belonging on the one hand and risk perception on the other were examined through a series of t-tests, which allow for a comparison of the means of two groups. For this analysis, variables relating to professional group were recoded into dummy variables.

Only one of the 68 statements yielded significant results when testing for the impact of gender differences (Table 9). According to this, women perceive the mismanagement of the health system as significantly more of a risk than men. A possible explanation for this is the fact that women generally interact more with the health system, as opposed to men.

Statement	Gender	N	Average	P-value
The chaos in the health system is generated by the defective implementation of the computer system for medical services.	Female	26	58.9935	0.049
	Male	54	55.3365	
	Total	80		

Table 9 - T-test results – "gender" as the grouping variable

When analysing the impact of professional group belonging on risk perception, another series of t-tests were performed. Some of these required that the significance coefficient of the Levene's test be initially assessed in order to verify whether the equal variances of the two groups can be assumed. Academics (table 10) perceive migratory flows as less threatening than other groups, and the possibility of pandemics as representing a higher threat. An explanation for the

first relationship might be the fact that academics generally see themselves as being tolerant people.

Statement	Academic	N	Average	Levene's test p-value	P-value of t-test
Migratory flows affect Europe	yes	9	49.9167	0.015	0.026
	no	38	56.7045		
	Total	47			
The possibility of pandemics	yes	9	64.4156	0.209	0.012
	no	38	50.0813		
	Total	47			

Table 10 - T-test results – "Academic" as the grouping variable

The most interesting results were obtained when investigating the risk perception of governmental employees (Table 11). They rejected wholesale the idea that governance risks are problematic and acquiesced to the view that external risks are the most dangerous for Romania's national security. Governmental employees were more inclined to disagree that corruption and bad governance represent risks to national security.

Statement	Governmental	N	Average	Levene's test p-value	P-value of t-test
Destabilizing actions in the eastern neigborhood cause	yes	26	62.9858	0.05	0.043
	no	21	59.2081		

major problems for the security of euro-atlantic space and create instability and other negative phenomena such as migration, organized crom and the hampering of the economic development potential.	Total	47			
Corruption affects good governance and decision in favor of citizens and communities.	yes	26	62.0608	0.114	0.038
	no	21	69.8738		
	Total	47			
Inefffiecient governance (budgetary disequilibria caused by wrong political decisions) are and effect of the democratic deficit and of institutionalized corruption and undermine citizen trust in public institutions.	yes	26	56.5950	0.948	0.027
	no	21	64.5800		
	Total	47			
The chaos in the health system is generated by the defective implementation of the computer system for medical services.	yes	26	55.0715	0.073	0.008
	no	21	60.9519		
	Total	47			
The migration of	yes	26	56.7450	0.849	0.018

specialized medical personnel in Europe for financial reasons and the lack of medical personnel especially in rural areas.	no	21	64.3700		
	Total	47			
Romania is a transit area of organized transnational crime (illegal weapons smuggling, human trafficking, contraband and money laundering)	yes	26	59.4412	0.670	0.031
	no	21	53.5814		
	Total	47			

Table 11 - T-test results – "Governmental" as the grouping variable

5.CONCLUSIONS

The national security strategy succeeds in transmitting its message and to create several narratives of risk. In the context of the Crimean war, it securitizes Russian aggression, terrorism and bad governance as mutually reinforcing problems for national security. These are the narratives that are also accepted by members of the public. However, each audience relates differently to each type of securitized issue, depending on their subjective experiences with it. Older people fear Russia consistently more, while women focus more on the health sector. Education positively associates with the perception of corruption as a security risk, while being a governmental employee leads to the rejection of this association. Conversely, governmental employees believe in the threatening nature of external threats.

The article concludes that the effects of securitizing practices depends, to a great extent, on the nature of the audience. The characteristics of each audience makes it more receptive to particular narratives of risk and more susceptible to reject or accept some of them. The differential response by each audience to the broad

securitizing of the 2015 National Strategy for Homeland Defense represents an argument for the claim that the experiences of audiences play a part in establishing which securitizing narrative they are willing to accept. Thus, securitization succeeds only when falling on "fertile ground" rather than on unwilling audiences.

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APPENDIX

List of statements part of the *concourse*

1.   Abuses concerning the respect of private life and the protection of personal data

2.   Destabilizing actions in the Eastern neighborhood generate major challenges for the euro-Atlantic space, leading to regional instability and other negative phenomena, including migration, organized crime and the diminishing of economic development potential

3.   Hostile intelligence action aims to develop strategic points on the national territory and can obstruct Romania's strategic projects and state decisions.

4.   Increasing ballistic threats to NATO also affect Romania

5.   The threat from Russia

6.   Cyber-attacks launched by hostile entities, either state or non-state, on strategically relevant information infrastructure and public interests institutions and companies, relevant to national security.

7.   The insufficient participation of civil society in the debate on the solution of security problems.

8.   The emergence of non-state entities which can aquire capabilities of mass destruction

9. *Cyber-attackscarried out by groups of cyber criminals or cyber-attacks launched by hacker groups.*

10. *Reduced administrative capacity at the central and local level.*

11. *The education system's deficiencies, its lack of resources and the difficulties to adapt content.*

12. *Industrial or ecological catastrophes, leading to the significant pollution of the environment on the national territory and adjacent regions and the disruption of economic and social life*

13. *Natural catastrophes such as earthquakes and global warming.*

14. *Terrorist attacks being committed in Romania*

15. *The connection between terrorism and cross-border crime*

16. *Regional conflicts in the Black Sea region generate tense situations, separatist tendencies and instability*

17. *Corruption affects good governance and decision-making in favor of citizens*

18. *Corruption leads to economic problems and affects the country's development potential*

19. *Corruption weakens trust in justice and in state institutions*

20. *Corruption weakens the state.*

21. *Illegal woodcutting*

22. *Significant dependence on vital resources that are difficult to access*

23. *The development of ballistic missile programs*

24. *Migration flows that affect Europe*

25. *The frailty of the civic spirit and civic solidarity*

26. *The inefficient handling of public affairs*

27. *Inefficient governance (budgetary disequilibria caused by mistaken political decisions) are the effect of the democratic deficit and institutionalized corruption and undermine the trust of citizens in public institutions*

28. *The chaos of the medical system is generated by the defective implementation of the computer system.*

29. *The impact of terrorism on international tourism*

30. *Weak infrastructure that is insufficiently protected (deficiencies in the protection and working of critical infrastructure).*

31. *Regional instability limits Romania's capacity to promote its strategic interests, especially those relating to the European road of the Republic of Moldova.*

32.   *The installation of the Deveselu missile shield and the operationalization of the military base.*

33.   *The Internet has become a space for spreading propaganda, radicalization and recruitment of jihadist terrorism, but also for right-wing extremism.*

34.   *The persistence of corruption negatively affects Romania's image abroad.*

35.   *The lack of security culture and of critical thinking among decision-makers.*

36.   *The lack of professionalism and corruption in the medical system.*

37.   *The lack of a coherent mechanism to predict, plan, execute and control the country's budget in a multiannual fashion and the absence of evidence-based policy making.*

38.   *Radical and extremist manifestations that can affect the rights and liberties of citizens, social cohesion or inter-ethnic relations.*

39.   *Massive migration of labor force leads to the degrading of family cohesion and particularly impacts young people and children.*

40.   *The massive migration of specialized medical personnel in the European space for financial reasons leads to the lack of trained personnel in the country's rural areas.*

41.   *Repeated changes in the criminal legislation make the punishment of criminals more difficult.*

42.   *The high level of social insecurity, chronic poverty and the increase of social inequality.*

43.   *The inadequate organization and the lack of resources allocated to crisis management*

44.   *The porousness of external borders.*

45.   *The threat of a classical type war – conventional military aggression*

46.   *The excessive politicization of institutions, both locally and nationally*

47.   *The possibility of pandemics*

48.   *The risk of use of weapons of mass destruction during warfare*

49.   *The potential access to weapons of mass destruction can increase the consequences of the actions of terrorist groups*

50.   *The presence in Romania of citizens that are suspect of terrorism and of belonging to Daesh*

51.   *The problems of the health system: treatment is refused due to the malfunction of the computer system*

52.   *Terrorist and extremist propaganda*

53.   *The insufficient role of the middle class in the economic and social life*

54.   *The radicalization of extremist entities in the country*

55.   *The radicalization of foreign citizens in Romania and the recruitment activities they carry out.*

56.   *Risks to Romanian economic security*

57.   *Romania is a destination of organized transnational crime (illegal weapons smuggling, human trafficking, contraband and money laundering)*

58.   *Romania is a source of organized transnational crime (illegal weapons smuggling, human trafficking, contraband and money laundering) .*

59.   *Romania is a transit area of organized transnational crime (illegal weapons smuggling, human trafficking, contraband and money laundering)*

60.   *Situation on the energy markets and the competing projects of state and non-state actors affect Romania's efforts to ensure a sufficient level of energy security*

61.   *Espionage and hostile intelligence activity of state and non-state actors aim to influence decision-making, including political decision, mass-media and public opinion.*

62.   *The precarious state and reduced efficiency of the health system*

63.   *Russia's expansionist tendency and the precedent it set by annexing Crimea*

64.   *Negative demographic trends and the widespread aging process*

65.   *Al-Qaeda and Daesh inspired terrorism in Romania*

66.   *Terrorism inspired by anti-American feeling in Europe*

67.   *International terrorism leading to deaths and material damage*

68.   *Drug trafficking.*

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