THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

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Abstract: The relationship that is created between mass communication and the national interest, in general, and the national security interest, in particular, is based on the relationship between communion and democracy in the public space. We will demonstrate that the media message can perhaps contribute to social integration and solidarity, by offering journalistic products that capture the general attention and interest, and by promoting the culture of security, an aspect that we consider essential in our analysis. We propose certain ways by which the media treatment of the topics related to issues of national security should have the purpose of promoting national security interests, through journalistic products.

Key words: information, media, national interest, information sources.

1. National Interest of Security and Defense

The official documents from Romania that refers to the national interests of security and defense are in the context of the international environment, being directly in line with the changes of the status of our country, both regionally and globally, the first two aspects that are of obvious importance are Romania`s accession to NATO and the EU. The first reference to national interests can be found in the Constitution of Romania 2003, (Constitution of Romania, 2003) in the first article: "Romania is a national, sovereign and independent, unitary and indivisible state". This is the premise to start defining the categories of national interests, to which are added the sources of national power, the actors of the international environment, the characteristics of their interests and the way there are influences on the behavior of our country, within the international medium. The official documents that establish the national interests of Romania are the 2017 Defense White Paper (Defense White Paper, 2017), the National Strategy for the Defense of the Country for the period 2015-2019 (National Strategy for the Defense of the Country for the period 2015-2019, 2015). In the introduction, point 13 of the National Defense Strategy are defined the national security interests and objectives, an assessment of the security environment is presented, the main threats,

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risks and vulnerabilities to the fundamental interests of Romania are presented and the main directions of actions for ensuring national security are formulated.

Chapter 1 of the document specifies certain values underlying the definition of national security interests and objectives, such as:

−Dignity as an essential attribute of the human person;
−Civic cohesion and affirmation of national identity, as common aspirations of the community of citizens;
−Constitutional democracy and the rule of law, participatory political culture, political pluralism, separation and balance of powers in the state, guaranteeing the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, respect for constitutional and legal provisions;
−The state and territorial integrity of Romania based on the loyalty of citizens and public institutions and national sovereignty. The National Strategy for the Defense of the Country proposed for the period 2015-2019 (project) emphasizes the importance of promoting these values, starting from the premise of respecting a set of principles:

  −Continuity, a principle that derives from the need for policy coherence on the basis of which Romania builds its future and integrates into the European and Euro-Atlantic community. Thus, maintaining the vision and the directions of cooperation within NATO, the European Union and the strategic partnerships, especially the one with the USA, is able to provide Romania with the conditions necessary to increase the capacity for conflict prevention, crisis management and capacity building and operational response to threats;
  −National security policies at internal level, as well as in foreign policy, respecting the imperative of firm and irreversible connection to the principles, mechanisms and procedures of consultation, decision and planning allied in order to increase Romania's contribution to collective defense;
  −Legality, a principle that implies the fulfillment of the obligations assumed by Romania at national, European and international level in good faith when acting to ensure and guarantee the defense of the country, its citizens, their fundamental rights, as well as the prevention of risks, combating threats and limiting vulnerabilities that could endanger them;
  −Proportionality, a principle aimed at the adequacy of the means of action necessary to ensure national security to the objectives set and the resources allocated.

From our point of view, the values and principles mentioned above, contribute significantly to the definition of national security interests, based on the provisions of the Constitution presented above. Based on this idea, the document we refer identifies the following national security interests:

−Area guaranteeing the national character, sovereignty, independence, unity and indivisibility of the state;
−Defending the territorial integrity and inalienability of the country;
−Defending and consolidating constitutional democracy and the rule of law;
−Protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens and guaranteeing their safety;

−Guaranteeing the right to preserve, develop and express ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity regarding the persons belonging to national minorities.

National security objectives, both internal and external, represent the modality of promoting national security interests. These aspects, according to the National Strategy for the Defense of the Country for the period 2015-2019 (draft 2015), art. 22, art. 23 and art. 24 are considered as the base on the analysis to identify the connections between the media and the national security interest.

From the internal perspective, the national security objectives are aimed at: strengthening the national defense capacity meant to ensure the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Romania, as well as the security of the Romanian people; promoting and ensuring the unrestricted exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms; the proper functioning of justice and ensuring the order of law; removing deficiencies affecting good governance, strengthening administrative capacity, protecting the decision-making process against/or illegitimate or non-transparent actions; ensuring the efficiency of national systems for preventing and managing crisis situations, internal and external, military or civil in nature; strengthening the security and protection of critical infrastructures - energy, transport and cyber - as well as food and environmental security; ensuring an efficient, dynamic and competitive economic environment, in investment and entrepreneurship, as well as the financial-budgetary stability of the state; the consolidated, sustainable and adapted development for the social changes of the big public systems (health, education, social protection); preventing radical or extremist reactions and tendencies, by respecting pluralism in society and cultivating tolerance at the level of civil society; promoting national identity, including by preserving and exploiting cultural and natural heritage, as well as encouraging responsible areas of excellence.

From the perspective of foreign policy, Romania must pursue the outline of a country profile that corresponds to the level of ambition assumed at political level, the demographic weight and the capacity for economic development. In this respect, the national security objectives are aimed at: strengthening Romania's profile in NATO and the European Union, through both conceptual and operational contributions; respecting the fundamental principles and values of the European Union; strengthening the strategic partnership with the USA, including the economic and commercial field; ensuring security in the Black Sea region; deepening cooperation with neighboring and NATO eastern states; intensifying regional cooperation, including the field of defense; supporting the European path of the Republic of Moldova; promoting political, economic and security interests in areas of strategic relevance for our country.

We consider that, regarding the national security interest, it manifests as a dynamic concept, with increasing complexity, with an evolution determined by the geopolitical context of each state, as well as by the characteristics of the international environment. The knowledge of the valences that the national interest can take, especially in the field of security and defense, is the basis for substantiating the way in which the media can contribute to its materialization.

2. The Role of Media in Promoting Media Messages in the Sphere of National Security and Defense Interests

From our point of view, in this context, the approach can be made from two perspectives. On the one hand, it is the analysis of the preventive role of the media messages, and, on the other hand, it is the form that the media message can take in presenting the informational aspects regarding security and defense. In our previous analyzes of the relationship between media and security, we introduced the phrase journalism for conflict prevention, theoretically framed it and came up with made arguments in favor of the existence of the preventive activity of the press. Our research was in parallel with the procedures for approving the National Strategy for the Defense of the Country for the period 2015-2019, entitled "A strong Romania in Europe and in the world" (2015), which is presented in the plenary session of the Parliament by President Klaus Iohannis. The document was voted.

In the new document media is mentioned as a vulnerability to the national security, as it existed in the National Defense Strategy of 2010, in the chapter 6.2. "the phenomenon of press campaigns on order, in order to denigrate state institutions, by spreading false information about their activity; the pressure exerted by press trusts on political decision in order to obtain advantages of an economic nature or in relation to state institutions represent a (...) vulnerability of the Romanian state" (National Defense Strategy of 2010, 2010). In 2010, after mentioning the media as a vulnerability to national security, a number of media organizations such as ActiveWatch-the Press Monitoring Agency, the Center for Independent Journalism, the Local Association of Local Publishers, the Convention of Media Organizations and the Romanian Federation of Journalists MediaSind, the Romanian Press's patronage of Romedia rejected and condemned the conclusions integrated in the strategy proposal at that time.

From the perspective of our analysis, the approach at the time of 2010 posed a real question regarding the relationship between the media and the national security interest, respectively its promotion. The accusations brought to the press, through such an important document, as the National Defense Strategy, constituted a real threat to the freedom of speech, important pawns in a rule of law. Or precisely the existence of the freedom of expression can favor the promotion of the national security interests of Romania, through mass communication, therefore through media messages. We consider that the relationship that is created between mass communication and national interest, in general, and the national security interest in particular is based on the relationship between communication and democracy in the public space. The intrinsic elements of public space such as public opinion, mass-media and political actors - power, political parties - determine new forms of political communication. According to Dennis McQuail (McQuail, 1999, p. 210-211) the power of the media to influence, positively or negatively, is exercised through direct propaganda or training; by offering definitions of situations, problems and actors, which are favorable to certain interests; by legitimizing existing institutions and order; and by directly motivating individuals to take action. Media messages can also have negative consequences for those in power, if some of the processes mentioned above do not work.

It is argued, maintaining the same line of analysis, that the media can exercise power in the opposite direction, that is, in favor of the societal base or an opposition, by controlling and limiting the action of those who hold the power. Regardless of the perspective that the analysis is subject to, it is indisputable that the media message can contribute to social integration and solidarity, by offering products that capture the general attention and interest, encouraging a more or less common vision of society and the world, through propagating a culture that is shared by the whole society and by offering behavioral models. The short incursion into the effects of mass communication (Drăgan, 2007, p. 219-227) is another determined facto of the existence of a relationship between the media and the promotion of the national interest. Another element that, in our point of view, is really essential in addressing the relationship between the media and promoting the national interest is the security culture. Here, an interesting paradox is born: on the one hand, the understanding of the media message in the sphere of security and defense is conditioned by the existence of the security culture among the public, and, on the other hand, the media is the main instrument that contributes to the building process of the security culture inside society. This dual role of the press in relation with the fields of security and defense is the central element that can favor the public's understanding (and here we do not refer only to the target audience of mass communication, which is supposed to have knowledge in this field, but also to the heterogeneous public) of the importance of national interests, in their generality, and of national security interests, in particular. Media should guarantee the soft power of media messages, meaning that media has the function of a conviction element, to the detriment of force (Nye, 2016, p. 213-224).

3. Modalities of Action of the Media in Promoting National Security Interests

We propose certain ways in which the media approach to topics related to issues regarding the national security interests will have the purpose of promoting national security interests, through media products (Munteanu, 2019, p. 133). These are: the separation between information journalism and opinion journalism, the correct approach to the sources of information, the emphasis on non-discrimination and tolerance, the avoidance of dangerous practices and the respect of human rights. We emphasize that their identification, following our analysis and research, falls into the dual role that the press has in relation with the security fields, which we have analyzed above. Therefore, the personalized modalities can give rise to strategies with dual purpose: both the creation of a security culture and the promotion of national security interests provided that there is already a report on the existence of a security culture.

3.1. The division between information journalism and opinion journalism

It implies that media networks, through the journalist, make the distinction between information and opinion. The news is represented by facts and the opinion of convictions, thoughts, and value judgments. "News means facts, facts, I repeat: facts. No opinions. And no assumptions. Avoid this with all costs" (Clayton, 2000, p. 24). News

includes opinions or comments only from a source interviewed or quoted, not from the journalist. The opinions of the journalists can be expressed through publishing houses, when we refer to the written press or through some programs like debate, in the audio-visual press.

We consider that the distinction between news and opinion is also made through the first two functions of mass communication (Van Cuilenberg, Scholten & Noomen, 2004, p. 213-224), the information function and the modelling function of public opinion. The first information function is characteristic of the news, which must answer questions such as: who? what? where? when and how? From our point of view, the second function is specific to the question why? which allows the expression of opinions. We mention that news is specific only to the information function, while the opinion is specific to both functions of mass communication mentioned.

We believe that journalism not only involves the communication of a novelty, but also the collection of information containing the answers to the above mentioned questions, especially in the field of information in the security sector. From our point of view, the opinion and fact have combined, the commentary is present in a news story and the editorials present a multitude of facts, which has reduced the performance of the media product specific to the media networks and has jeopardized the professionalism of the journalist (Munteanu, 2018, p.221-222). At the same time, we acknowledge the importance of commentary in discussing issues that relate to national security interests, aimed at understanding the public.

3.2. The correct approach of information sources

A single source means no source. We consider that the media message specific to the field of security and defense, and not only, must be verified by at least two sources, with different experiences, independent of each other, they must be identified by name, surname, position and, as the case may be, social status or age. We consider lack of professionalism the use of expressions such as "certain sources have declared", "according to a source inside the army", or "according to the statements of the party involved".

Mentioning sources, especially in order to promote national security interests, involves certain nuances in the journalistic environment. If the source is not a private person and disclosure of the source identity may have negative repercussions on the respective source, expressions such as "a person whose identity we will not disclose for security reasons" may be used. We believe that the anonymity of the source is justified only if it is the only way to obtain particularly important information, which is of public interest. In a crisis situation, for the preventive information of the public, anonymous sources are also used, the essential condition being the existence of the public interest represented by that information in order to be disseminated by media networks. The identity of the sources is protected before the courts, being a basic principle of journalism.

The right to anonymity can only be violated in exceptional cases, when the effects on the source and on society are negative. In case of conflicts, as possible components of

information from the sphere of national security interests, anonymous sources are used to protect the security of the individual, especially for the protection of minors, as victims or as perpetrators.

3.3. Emphasis on non-discrimination and tolerance

The transmission of the media message for the national security interests` promotion, but not only, especially in the case of inter-ethnic or religious tensions, must be characterized by tolerance and non-discrimination, by equidistance and information parity. We believe that media networks should avoid providing information that builds a negative stereotype towards a particular ethnicity or religion, that highlights the supremacy of one ethnicity or religion over another, or that favors certain classifications of activities or sources according to the criterion of ethnic homogeneity or religion. It is also necessary to eliminate certain ethnically discriminatory messages from the media product, such as phrases, sayings, and proverbs, which may have the effect of perpetuating stereotypes and prejudices. We consider that aspects of tolerance and non-discrimination should be applied in all press materials when certain social categories are presented according to age, gender, race, ethnicity, political affiliation, and sexual orientation.

3.4. Avoiding dangerous practices

Within the building process of the specific media message in order to promote national security interests, we consider that it is necessary to avoid certain actions, in order to make communication more efficient and professional. We believe that a simplistic presentation should be avoided, but it is necessary for the journalist to simplify the message in such a way that it can be folded by the heterogeneity of the public. We consider that this method builds a creative potential for the actors involved in transmitting the media messages: journalists, specialists, and opinion leaders. The overlapping of contradictory ideas is not recommended in the media message, but, of course, it is a common practice, because the diversity of opinions is an integral part of the freedom of expression. The media networks must insist on the historical complexity of the constituent elements of issues related to the national security interest, which has roots in the past and present the long-term consequences.

3.5. Respecting human rights

We believe the complex framework of the media presentation in promoting issues related to promoting national security interests should be based on respect for human rights. From our point of view, media networks are bound to respect the national and international law, but at the same time to reject the attempts of interference in the journalistic act and the pressure from the authorities. In a crisis situation, the smallest detail of the journalistic text can generate particularly serious consequences.

4. Methods of Building the Media Message in order to Promote National Security Interests

We believe that the media approach to all aspects related to reporting national interest, in particular to their promotion, by the media networks, depends on a number of issues that materialize in methods of constructing the media message in order to promote national interests, in general, and national security interests, in particular: speed of reaction, documentation, identification, alarmism, and accuracy (Munteanu, 2019, p. 138-141).

4.1. Rapid reaction

Given the abundance of information surrounding a topic that addresses issues related to the national security interest, it is necessary to react quickly, which we consider a journalist's own purpose, which involves the prompt transmission of verified information. We insist on the verification of information. Because of the lack of time, journalists transmit unverified information, which deforms reality; the effects could generate new crises, affecting the image of the media institution and of the institutions part of the crisis/conflict.

4.2. Documentation

Documentation by media networks from the media networks involves activities with the purpose of clarifying possible contradictory messages, finding connections between different events, framing events within the historical framework, as well as presenting the evolution of events and the harsh impact of society. Although this method may seem inappropriate, we consider it particularly important for media networks to disseminate timely and real information. From our point of view, the speed of reaction should not exclude documentation for the media product. However, media networks prefer to present the hot news, live, related only to the ongoing event and its unfolding. Even in these situations, media networks have a duty to present accurate information. The insufficient documentation must be supplemented by the presence of a specialist covering the subject with accurate information.

4.3. Identification

Another element that we consider important in the media treatment of information related to the promotion of national security interests is that the public should know the security and defense officials, both decision makers and specialists. We believe that the media messages through media networks of certain opinion leaders with a high degree of notoriety and credibility contribute effectively to the transmission of messages in order to promote national security interests. At the level of receiving the message, the presentation of the actors has an emotional character, which increases the identification effect.

4.4. Alarmism

In the field of information within the sphere of national security interests, there may be crisis and/or conflict situations. The delicate context of the crisis and the conflict must be treated coldly by media networks, avoiding alarmism. From our point of view, the alarm in order to awaken the public interest translates into the contribution to the escalation of the crisis. There are certain cases where this is necessary: when a crisis or conflict is in progress and the decision makers do not take attitude, when there are negative effects on the public by not respecting the improvement decisions, when the financial resources for solving the consequences of the crisis and the conflict are improperly managed.

4.5. The accuracy of the media message

From our point of view, is very important that the transmission of information should promote national security interests. This refers to the simplification of the text from the presentation method perspective, not to the factual information. The language used by journalists must be constructive, not to feed fear, not to cause panic and not to create prejudices.

5. Conclusions

We consider that the activity of media networks in information management to promote national security interests becomes more efficient if it fulfills certain conditions: contacting all potential sources, even tangential sources involved in the event, treating sources and interviewees in an equidistant, objective and respectful way, carefully analyzing the statements from the perspective of the public interest, of the social utility, reflecting the segments of the society involved in a fair and correct way, and following the evolution of the statements of the people able to transmit information.

In our analysis we demonstrate that the use of specialized journalists is a mandatory condition in the media treatment of topics about national security interests, as they have the ability to understand the context, the causes of the differences, as well as the interests pursued by the actors involved. Any professional media network includes journalists specialized in fields such as: legal, economic, social, cultural, as well as special journalists, such as war correspondents and crisis journalists. However, we admit that specialized journalists have a general training, which is why the documentation technique is of the utmost importance as a superficial image of a phenomenon can induce false or dangerous reactions in the public opinion, instead of serving it. It is especially important when dealing with media communication to prevent crises and conflicts. An aspect that was analyzed refers to the journalist who has to present opinions of civil society, other points of view than the official ones expressed by the participating actors, practically or doctrinally, when drawing up the framework of the national security interests.

From the perspective of the connections between media and the security field our analysis concludes that public education is a primordial element; the instrument consists in information campaign about the subjects regarding national security interests. The main issues about those subjects involve maintaining a communication channel between the public and the institutions with responsibilities in the security field.

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