THE SOCIETAL SECURITY OF ROMANIANS IN HARGHITA AND COVASNA COUNTIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes Romanian Hungarian dynamics in Covasna and Harghita counties from the perspective of societal security, based on Barry Buzan's vision. The research question I am starting from concerns the main identity challenges faced by Romanians in the two counties. The aim of the research is to discuss the societal security of Romanians in this area, in a context marked by complex intercultural dynamics. The theoretical approach is based on the concept of societal security, but also on other subsidiary concepts such as local minority, security, securization. From a methodological point of view, the research is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques. I am referring to statistical data analysis, secondary press analysis and space file. The main ideas focus on interethnic dynamics, which outline the main challenges faced by the Romanian community in the studied area. I believe that this topic is of interest and public utility because the ethnic profile of the two counties is unique in the country, and inter-ethnic dynamics are constantly changing. For this reason, an analysis of societal security may be useful in studying the evolution of this phenomenon. The paper emphasizes the need to reconsider public policies to promote real integration based on mutual respect and direct contact between groups, so that both groups are assured of societal security.

Keywords: societal security, identity, interethnic cohabitation, Covasna, Harghita.

1. INTRODUCTION

In his work *People, States, and Fear*, Barry Buzan rethinks the issue of security by redefining the concept of threat and linking it to that of vulnerabilities. Barry Buzan argues that

> "(...) the security of human communities is affected by various factors across five major sectors: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental. Military security concerns the two-level interplay of states' offensive and defensive capabilities. Political security concerns the organizational stability of states, systems of governance, and the ideologies that confer legitimacy upon them. Economic security concerns access to the resources, markets, and capital necessary to sustain acceptable levels of state welfare and power. Societal security concerns the sustainability, under acceptable conditions of evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, and religion, as well as customs and national identity. Environmental security concerns the

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> preservation of the local and global biosphere as the essential foundation upon which all other human activities depend. These five sectors do not operate separately from one another. Each defines a focal aspect of the security issue and a way of prioritizing, but all are linked together by a strong network of connections"[56].

Even though he has clearly demarcated the sectors of security, for Buzan, the state remains, for now, the central element in the security equation:

> "Buzan identifies the 'international system', 'states', and 'individuals' as 'objects of reference' and the military, political, economic, societal, and environmental spheres as potential sources of threat to those 'objects of reference'"[57].

However, for Buzan, at least in this work, the primary object of reference for any security analysis must remain the state[58]. Security is of interest to us because it concerns the state itself and has direct implications for its survival and development.

The multidimensional nature of security is increasingly well-defined in the 1998 work by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Japp De Wilde, titled *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, in which security is analyzed in military, societal, economic, environmental, and political terms. This school of thought has remained a benchmark due to the way in which, despite considerable criticism at the time, it had a tangible impact even on the most powerful military alliance of all time:

> "In 1991, at the Rome summit, NATO declared – in language strikingly reminiscent of that of the Copenhagen School – that security now has five dimensions: military, societal, economic, political, and environmental. This is the most enduring and concrete achievement of this perspective: it has left its mark at the highest level of global politics. Even more reason to embrace it in its true scope"[59].

In other words, societal security is an area of interest because it ensures the preservation of national identity.

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[56] Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear – An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, (2nd ed.), London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, pp. 19–20.

[57] „Buzan delimitează «sistemul internațional», «statele» și «indivizii» ca «obiecte de referință» și spectrul militar, politic, economic, societal și de mediu ca surse potențiale de amenințare la respectivele «obiecte de referință»", in Dan Dungaciu, „Securitate, relații internaționale și studii de Securitate" ["Security, international relations, and security studies"], in *the Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, Vol. IX, No. 4/2012, Bucharest, p. 11, Available at: https://79dd720e4b654316bb39526d8ea1c51d.filesusr.com/ugd/d1cf60_bdfcc1538b884d459c8f37c780cead35.pdf, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[58] *Ibidem*.

[59] „În 1991, la summit-ul de la Roma, NATO decreta – într-un limbaj care amintește izbitor de cel al Școlii de la Copenhaga – că securitatea are acum cinci dimensiuni: militară, societală, economică, politică și de mediu. Este performanța cea mai durabilă și concretă a acestei perspective: și-a imprimat pecetea la cel mai înalt nivel al politicii mondiale. Un motiv în plus pentru a fi asumată la adevărata sa dimensiune", in *Ibidem*, p. 12.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. UNDERSTANDING THE TERMS WE USE

2.1. Security

Security is

"(...) the movement that takes politics beyond the rules of the game and the scope of the issue, whether as a special kind of politics or as something that transcends politics"[60].

It should be noted that the definition of the concept of security provided by Buzan, Waever, and Japp is situated within the context of international relations. The traditional understanding of the term "security" is defined with reference to the military-political dimensions of security. In this case, the objects of reference are the state, governance, territory, and society. When we speak of threats in this context, we refer to the use of "extreme measures" adopted by a state representative, such as declaring a state of emergency. In this case, the government assumes the right to use whatever means are necessary to prevent the escalation of threats[61]. Barry Buzan, on the other hand, believes that security lies at the intersection of peace and power, encompassing both[62].

In the context of the extended security agenda, threats are perceived in relation to the reference object of each security sector. For the military sector, the state is typically the reference object. Another example of a reference object for this sector could be potential threats to the "survival of the armed forces". While in traditional security studies military issues are always security issues, for many advanced states, national defense is one of the many functions of the armed forces, and peacekeeping or maintaining order are not considered existential threats to the state. For the political sector, existential threats are traditionally defined in terms of the state's constitutive principle – sovereignty, but sometimes also ideology. When sovereignty is threatened, it means that the state's recognition, legitimacy, or governmental authority is being called into question. In the economic sector, reference points and threats are concepts that involve a certain degree of abstraction and unpredictability, making them difficult to define. An example of this is companies, which are often threatened either by bankruptcy or by legislative changes that can affect their operations. What must be noted in this case is that if the survival of the population is not threatened, economic fluctuations cannot be considered security threats. In the

[60] „(...) mișcarea care trece politica dincolo de regulile jocului și de cadrul problemei, fie ca un tip special de politică, fie deasupra politicii", in Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Wilde De Japp, *Securitatea – un nou cadru de analiză [Security: A new Framework for Analysis]*, (trans.) George Jiglău, CA Publishing, 2010, p. 44.

[61] *Ibidem*, pp. 41-42.

[62] Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear – The National Security Problem in International Relations*, Great Britain, Thomson Press, 1983, p. 2.

societal sector, collective identities are the primary focus. Threats to this sector of security cannot be clearly defined. Generally, changes that may affect the national identity of individuals are considered threats. An example of this is the ability to maintain or reproduce a language. This can be viewed in terms of survival. Finally, is the environmental sector. This sector encompasses a wide range of threats, from concrete issues such as tigers or whales to various types of habitats, such as lakes or tropical forests, to more ambiguous issues, such as maintaining normal parameters of the biosphere or the climate[63].

2.2. Securitization

Securitization can be seen as an "extreme form of politicization"[64]. An issue is considered a security issue when

> "it can be argued that the issue in question is more important than others and should be given absolute priority. This is why we associate the issue with what appears to be a mandatory criterion: that the issue be presented as an existential threat"[65].

Buzan, Waever, and Wilde define securitization as

> "(...) the process that takes politics beyond the rules of the game and the scope of the issue, either as a special type of politics or as something that transcends politics"[66].

In other words, the concept of securitization involves an intersubjective determination of what constitutes a threat. When we engage in securitization, we have in mind an issue that could set a precedent; for this reason, even if it is not currently a cause for concern, the issue must be securitized so that it does not become one in the future:

> "The distinctive feature of securitization is a specific rhetorical trait (survival, the priority of action, 'because if the problem is not addressed now, it will be too late, and we will no longer exist to correct our mistake')"[67].

In other words, security is a concept that takes various forms and involves survival in the face of existential threats, though these existential threats vary from sector to sector. For the societal sector, the threat takes the form of the possibility of no longer being able to be yourself.

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[63] Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Wilde De Japp, *op. cit.*, 2010, pp. 42–44.

[64] Barry Buzan, *op. cit.*, 1983, p. 2.

[65] „se poate afirma că problema în cauză este mai importantă decât altele și ar trebui să aibă prioritate absolută. Acesta este motivul pentru care asociem problema cu ceea ce pare un criteriu obligatoriu: ca problema să fie prezentată ca o amenințare existențială", in Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Wilde De Japp, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 45.

[66] „(...) mișcarea care trece politica dincolo de regulile jocului și de cadrul problemei, fie ca un tip special de politică, fie deasupra politicii" in *Ibidem*, p. 44.

[67] „Trăsătura distinctivă a securizării este o trăsătură retorică specifică (supraviețuirea, prioritatea acțiunii, «deoarece dacă problema nu este tratată acum, va fi prea târziu și noi nu vom mai exista pentru a ne îndrepta greșeala»)", in *Ibidem*, p. 47.

According to Arnold Wolfers[68], security can be approached either from an objective perspective – when we are talking about a real threat – or from a subjective perspective – when we are talking about a threat perceived by the individuals concerned. However, Buzan, Waever, and Wilde argue that for a proper approach to securitization, we must adopt an intersubjective perspective:

> "We argue that securitization, like politicization, must be understood as an essentially intersubjective process. Even if a more objective approach were desired, it is unclear how this could be achieved except in cases where the threat is clear and immediate"[69].

The issue of securitisation is a sensitive and complex one because perceptions of security vary, and this determines how actors within the system will respond to a potential security claim:

> "What may appear to be legitimate securitisation within a particular political community may seem like a paranoid gesture to those outside it"[70].

We will conclude by saying that securitization means understanding the answers to the following questions: Who is securitizing? What issues are being securitized (threats)? For whom is it being securitized – that is, what are the objects of reference? Why? And finally, how is it being securitized? Under what conditions?[71]. Furthermore, we will also note that by "reference object" we mean "things that are considered to be under an existential threat and that have a legitimate claim to survival"; by "securitizing actors" we mean "actors who securitize issues by declaring a thing – a reference object – to be under an existential threat", and by "functional actors" we mean "actors who influence the dynamics of a sector"[72].

2.3. Societal security

Societal security is an umbrella term that encompasses the state's efforts to address new threats. This term refers equally to social cohesion as a source of social instability, and thus, implicitly, of insecurity[73]. Societal security is a society's ability to preserve the identity of its individuals, despite potential threats or social changes. In other words, societal insecurity arises when society perceives a threat in terms that

[68] *Ibidem*, p. 52.

[69] „Noi susținem că securizarea, ca și politizarea, trebuie înțeleasă ca un proces esențial intersubiectiv. Chiar dacă s-ar dori o abordare mai obiectivă, nu este clar cum ar putea fi realizată aceasta cu excepția cazurilor în care amenințarea este clară și imediată", in *Ibidem*, p. 52.

[70] „Ceea ce poate părea o securizare legitimă într-o anumită comunitate politică poate părea un gest paranoic celor din afara ei", in *Ibidem*.

[71] *Ibidem*, p. 54.

[72] *Ibidem*, p. 60.

[73] Iulian Chifu, "Societal security: an agenda for the Eastern Europe", 2009, p. 3, Available at: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ccd3/03c3c4a1a58c43a202cf80fe71ea0f4d3b83.pdf?_ga=2.67681942.629087231.1590414801201723705 2.1583793890, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

relate to its identity[74]. The term "societal security" was first used by Barry Buzan in his 1991 book *People, States, and Fear* and was intended to bridge the gap between state security and human security[75].

The organizing concept in the societal sector is that of identity. When we speak of societal insecurity, we are referring to the way in which different types of communities define the threats they perceive as endangering their survival as a community. We will thus define societal security as referring to

> "(...) large, self-sustaining identity groups; their empirical content varies both over time and across space. In contemporary Europe, these groups are primarily national, but in other regions religious or racial groups are more relevant. The concept could also be understood as 'identity security'"[76].

Societal security focuses on the identity of individuals, which makes the process of ensuring security a difficult one because:

> "Given the unique nature of this focus, it is extremely difficult to draw clear boundaries between existential threats and less serious ones"[77].

The security agenda encompasses various threats, but the most common ones are migration, lateral competition, and horizontal competition. In this paper, we will focus primarily on the latter two. By horizontal competition, we mean that

> "although there are still x people living there, they will change due to the cultural and linguistic influence generated by the expansion of neighboring culture y", and by vertical competition we mean that

> "people will cease to see themselves as x, either because there is an integration project or because there is a secessionist project, which leads them to orient themselves toward broader or narrower identities"[78].

Integration projects, whatever their nature – whether imperialist or democratic – when they attempt to "level" identities to "harmonize" them with the state, will in some cases control them partially, and in others almost entirely, the institutions that guarantee the mechanism of cultural reproduction – namely schools, churches, and linguistic rights. Nor are cases excluded in which a situation may arise where

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[74] Ole Waever, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup and Pierre Lemaitre, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*, London, Pinter, 1993, p. 23.

[75] Iulian Chifu, "Societal security: an agenda for the Eastern Europe", 2009, p. 3, Available at: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ccd3/03c3c4a1a58c43a202cf80fe71ea0f4d3b83.pdf?_ga=2.67681942.629087231.1590414801201723705 2.1583793890, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[76] „(...) grupuri identitare mari care se auto-susțin; conținutul empiric al acestora, variază atât în timp cât și în spațiu. În Europa contemporană, aceste grupuri sunt în principal naționale, însă în alte regiuni grupurile religioase sau rasiale au mai multă relevanță. Conceptul ar putea fi înțeles și «ca securitate a identității»", in Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Wilde De Japp, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 172.

[77] „Având în vedere natura particulară a acestui tip de obiect de referință, sunt extrem de dificil de stabilit granițe clare între amenințările existențiale și cele mai puțin grave", in *Ibidem*, p. 43.

[78] „deși încă există x oameni care trăiesc acolo, aceștia se vor schimba din cauza influenței culturale și lingvistice generate de extinderea culturii vecine y", iar prin competiție verticală înțelegem că „oamenii vor înceta să se vadă pe ei înșiși ca x, fie pentru că există un proiect de integrare, fie pentru că există un proiect secesionist, care îi determină să se orienteze înspre identități mai largi sau mai înguste" in *Ibidem*, p. 174.

minorities lose their ability to reproduce their culture due to the fact that the state encourages the structuring of the educational system, the media, and others in such a way as to favor the culture of the majority[79].

In this paper, we will use the term "minority" as follows:

> "(...) we will refer to the national minority that holds a quasi-monopoly on political and administrative power at the local level as the 'dominant minority', and to the population that constitutes a majority at the national level but a minority at the local level as the 'local minority'"[80].

In the analysis we will conduct, we will attempt to assess the capacity for coexistence between the two ethnic groups by examining the attitude adopted by the dominant minority – in our case, the Hungarian community. This attitude can be classified into one of three categories:

> "Generally, minorities strive for one of three basic options: to dominate the incumbent government (such as the Tutsi or whites under apartheid), to form their own government (the Slovenes, the Zionists), or to be left in peace (traditionally, the Jews of Europe)"[81].

In the societal sector, the point of reference is our sense of "us". In other words, the idea of "us" is threatened when the identity of a group of individuals is threatened. The most important reference points in the current world system, for the societal sector, are tribes, clans, nations (and ethnic units like nations, called minorities), civilizations, religions, and race[82]. This analysis aims to capture, through the media, how the stakeholders involved perceive this threat. We turned to the media because "it is a key player that contributes significantly to shaping situations"[83].

2.4. A necessary clarification

Throughout this paper, we will take care not to confuse societal security with social security, nor with the concept of society. Societal security differs from social security in that social security refers to individuals and pertains primarily to the economic sphere, whereas societal security refers to communities and their identities. On the other hand, when it comes to the concept of society, it is used to denote, in a broader and at the same

[79] *Ibidem*, p. 175.

[80] „(...) vom denumi minoritatea naţională care deţine cvasi-monopolul politic şi administrativ în plan local cu termenul de minoritate dominantă, iar populaţia care este majoritară în plan naţional, dar minoritară în plan local, «minoritate locală»", in Radu Baltasiu, Gabriel Săpunaru and Ovidiana Bulumac, *Slăbirea comunităţii româneşti din Harghita-Covasna – raport de cercetare [The weakening of the Romanian community in Harghita-Covasna – research report]*, Bucharest, Ethnological Publishing House, Collection of Sociological Studies, 2013, p. 137.

[81] „În general minorităţile se luptă pentru una dintre cele trei opţiuni de bază: să domine guvernul în exerciţiu (precum Tutsi sau albii în Apartheid), să îşi formeze propriul guvern (slovenii, sioniştii), sau să fie lăsaţi în pace (în mod tradiţional, evreii din Europa)", in *Ibidem*, p. 176.

[82] *Ibidem*, p. 177.

[83] *Ibidem*, p. 178.

time more ambiguous sense, the population of a state; what is worth noting here is that the group in question is not always a bearer of identity[84].

Another point we believe is important to highlight is that of the nation. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde argued that in Europe, societal security primarily concerns nations – or, more precisely, nations as ethnic groups or minorities[85]. From a terminological standpoint, this term is also shrouded in conceptual ambiguity:

> "(...) some define the nation in terms of people living in a state to which they are loyal, while others define it as an ethnic, organic community bound by language, blood, and culture"[86].

We will highlight here the conceptual similarity to the notion of the "imagined community". This concept is based on Benedict Anderson's idea of the "invented community" and that of "lateral ethnicity", a concept found in Smith:

> "the imagined community forms the basis of the nation-state". In other words, the state is founded on a false community in which, as Anderson shows, tradition is nothing more than an ideological construct. Being ideological, lateral constructs, such communities are easily regimented through the vectors of secular or ecclesiastical authority, those that define the political nation. It is true, for Anderson, that all nations are invented, as he does not distinguish between political nations and organic nations. Anderson omits what Anthony Smith calls vertical ethnicities. Unlike lateral ethnicities, created from the top down through political command, vertical ethnicities are demotic, organic, with an ancient foundation of shared traditions"[87].

3. WHY HARGHITA AND COVASNA? TRANSYLVANIA AS A GEOSTRATEGIC REGION

Geopolitics is "a science of connections, rifts, and political and geographical pressures generated by statesmen out of their own fears"[88]. In other words, geopolitics is the science of the distribution of power across a given territory. We will therefore say that geopolitics is

[84] *Ibidem*, p. 172.

[85] Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Wilde De Japp, *Security: A new Framework for Analysis*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1998, p. 123.

[86] „(...) unii definesc națiunea în termeni de oameni care trăiesc într-un stat căruia îi sunt loiali, alții o definesc ca pe o comunitate etnică, organică, de limbă, de sânge și cultură", in *Ibidem*, p. 173.

[87] „comunitatea imaginată reprezintă baza statului naţional. Cu alte cuvinte, statul se întemeiază pe o falsă comunitate în care, arată Anderson, tradiţia nu ar fi altceva decât un imaginar ideologic. Fiind constructe ideologice, laterale, astfel de comunităţi sunt uşor de înregimentat prin vectorii autorităţii laice sau bisericeşti, cele care definesc naţiunea politică. Este adevărat, pentru Anderson, toate naţiunile sunt inventate, el neavând acces la distincţia dintre naţiuni politice şi naţiuni organice. Anderson omite ceea ce Anthony Smith numeşte etnii verticale. Spre deosebire de etniile laterale, create de sus în jos, prin comandă politică, etniile verticale sunt demotice, organice, cu o bază străveche de tradiţii comune", in Radu Baltasiu, Gabriel Săpunaru and Ovidiana Bulumac, *op. cit.*, 2013, p. 15.

[88] Gheorghe Văduva, *GEOPOLITICS: Theories. Areas. Fault lines. Confluences – geopolitical excursion*, Bucharest, The Military Writers Society, 2013, p. 2.

> "a projection of politics onto geographical coordinates, obviously in the interest of state policy and not of geography. A possible definition, simplified to the utmost, might sound something like this: geopolitics represents a way of studying the geographical determinants that intervene in the state's domestic and foreign policy and, above all, their possible effects"[89].

Anton Golopenția considers that geopolitics represents a new science of reality. For him, geopolitics is a tool at the service of the state. In fact, he agrees almost entirely with Ladis Kristof, who asserts that the essence of geopolitics is politics and not geography[90].

On the other hand, Simion Mehedinți, one of the founding fathers of Romanian geopolitics, believes that the geopolitics of the Romanian state must encompass its inner circle, consisting of four major geographical landmarks: the Pontic-Baltic isthmus, the straits, the Danube, and the Carpathians[91]. The Carpathians hold particular importance for Ion Conea, in whose view they are "the backbone of the Romanian land and people"[92]. For Ion Conea, geopolitics becomes a science of relations between states, or more precisely, of the pressure between states. In fact, Conea applies to Romania a concept established by Ratzel in geopolitics, that of the Mittelpunkt. The Romanian geopolitician identifies Transylvania as the heart of Romania. This way of looking at things is not unique. It was also addressed by Mihai Eminescu, who was the pioneer in this regard[93]. We know that, in the case of the countries we will be analyzing – Romania and Hungary – the concept of friendship is a sensitive one. Transylvania has been a point of interest for the neighboring country, an area that naturally includes the region we will be analyzing, Harghita-Covasna. Kjellen states in this regard that every state seeks to encompass a geographical region in its entirety. According to Conea, the Middle Danube Basin is such a region for Hungary; however, this region cannot be claimed by our Hungarian neighbors, because Transylvania is for Greater Romania "the heart of the country" and not a marginal part as it would have been in a Greater Hungary[94].

This region served as a meeting point for two distinct geopolitical perspectives: the Romanian and Hungarian geopolitics of the Carpathian Basin. We will address here the issue of Hungarian geopolitics in the Carpathian Basin, as it may be related to what we call the security complex. According to Brătianu, the security space is

[89] „o proiecție a politicii în coordonate geografice, evident în interesul politicii statului și nu al geografiei. O posibilă definiție, simplificată la maximum, ar putea suna cam așa: geopolitica reprezintă o modalitate de studiere a determinărilor geografice care intervin în politica internă și externă a statului și mai ales a posibilelor efecte", in *Ibidem*, p. 17.

[90] Călin Cotoi, *Primordialism cultural și geopolitică românească – lecturi în oglindă [Cultural primordialism and Romanian geopolitics – mirror lectures]*, Bucharest, Little Wallachia Publishing House, 2011, pp. 155–156.

[91] Ilie Bădescu, Dan Dungaciu, Sandra Cristea, Claudiu Degeratu and Radu Baltasiu, *Sociologia și geopolitica frontierei [The Sociology and Geopolitics of the Border]*, Vol. I, Bucharest, The Blue Flower Publishing House, 1995, p. 78.

[92] *Ibidem*, p. 84.

[93] *Ibidem*, p. 82.

[94] *Ibidem*.

that space without which a nation cannot sustain its existence, and for the Romanians, as I mentioned, it comprises four fundamental elements: the straits, the Carpathians, the Danube, and the Pontic-Baltic isthmus. On the other hand, Hungarian plans for domination were also present in the area in question. Thus, various "projects" emerged to repopulate the Carpathian Basin exclusively on ethnic grounds, meaning only with Hungarians: Hungarian plans regarding Transylvania unfolded on three levels: the first called for every family to have six children, the second aimed at the assimilation of other nationalities, and the third consisted of bringing in Mongolian tribes believed to be related to the Hungarians from the Caucasus and the Urals[95].

Nicolae Iorga stated regarding the Hungarian question in Romania that:

> "Our relations with the Hungarians are relations with the Hungarian people – and that makes one – and relations with the Hungarian monarchy – and that makes two; they are also relations with the Hungarian feudal class – which makes three; and finally, relations with the dominant Hungarian political class of the modern era, and this makes four"[96].

From a practical standpoint, the dynamics of Romanian Hungarian relations are shaped by the debate over primacy in Transylvania.

In Popa-Vereș's view, geopolitics has two components: one objective and one subjective. The former claims to be scientific in nature and is relatively impartial, while the latter component is where the sphere of operation of the nation-state lies. According to the above-mentioned theorist, only in this sense does geopolitics become a science of the nation, or in other words

> "a scientific expression of political ideals, conceived within a specific geographical framework, within which the nation moves or toward which it is carried to fulfill its historical destiny"[97].

It should be noted, moreover, that Popa-Vereș, along with the entire Romanian school of geopolitics, understood geopolitics as the science of the nation. By "nation" we mean

> "a delimited population occupying a historical territory, possessing shared myths and historical memory, a common culture, a shared economy, and common rights and duties for all members"[98].

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[95] *Ibidem*, p. 96.

[96] „Relaţiile noastre cu ungurii sunt relaţii cu poporul unguresc – şi aceasta înseamnă una – şi sunt relaţii cu regalitatea ungurească – şi aceasta înseamnă două; sunt apoi relaţii cu feudalitatea ungurească, – ceea ce înseamnă trei; şi în sfârşit relaţii cu clasa dominantă politică ungurească din epoca mai nouă, şi aceasta înseamnă patru", in Nicolae Iorga, *Români şi Slavi. Români şi Unguri. Două conferinţe ale Institutului pentru Studiul Europei Sud-Orientale [Romanians and Slavs. Romanians and Hungarians. Two conferences of the Institute for the Study of Southeast Europe]*, Bucharest, The Southeast European Institute Publishing House, 1922, p. 14.

[97] „o expresie științifică a unor idealuri politice, zămislite într-o anumită albie geografică, în care se mișcă sau spre care este purtată națiunea pentru îndeplinirea destinului ei istoric", in *Ibidem*, p. 117.

[98] „o populație delimitată ce ocupă un teritoriu istoric, având mituri comune și memorie istorică, cultură populară, o economie comună și drepturi și îndatoriri comune pentru toți membrii", in Smith Anthony, *National identity*, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 14.

We will also distinguish between lateral and vertical ethnic groups:
"Unlike lateral ethnic groups, created from the top down by political decree, vertical ethnic groups are grassroots, organic, with an ancient foundation of shared traditions. The historical experience of Romanians in Transylvania is that of an organic nation in the face of the advance of a political nation"[99].

4. THREATS TO IDENTITY: THREATS TO A COMMUNITY'S MYTHS, RITUALS, AND SYMBOLS

The focal point of the societal sector is collective identity. This focal point is unique, which is why drawing clear distinctions between existential threats and less serious ones can be a real challenge. Collective identities have their own dynamics and a conservative nature, which means that threats to this sector are perceived as threats to our identity – that is, we are in danger of ceasing to be ourselves[100].

Threats to societal security are mainly related, as I mentioned, to migration, vertical competition, and horizontal competition. Vertical competition arises particularly where there are projects of political integration or secessionist projects, while horizontal competition can arise at any level. Many local conflicts are linked to vertical competition between nation-states and nation-minorities and have as their trigger, or as the subject of contention, an element that refers to the idea of a minority[101].

To understand the concept of "us", we must first define society. Society is thus defined as a group united by a collective identity. Applying the concept of security to this definition, we see that societal security aims to preserve the identity and social cohesion of the group in question[102]. Thus, the main risks and threats to societal security are those related to language, religion, traditions, symbols, and collective memory – components that constitute the sense of belonging to a specific community. In Buzan's view, these threats to identity stem more from within the state in question than from outside it. However, threats from outside are not ruled out either[103].

The states within a system are interconnected and interdependent when it comes to their security. For this reason, the concept of the security complex can be invoked, by which we mean

[99] „Spre deosebire de etniile laterale, create de sus în jos, prin comandă politică, etniile verticale sunt demotice, organice, cu o bază străveche de tradiţii comune. Experienţa istorică a românilor în Transilvania este aceea a unei naţiuni organice în faţa înaintării unei naţiuni politice", in Radu Baltasiu, Gabriel Săpunaru and Ovidiana Bulumac, *op. cit.*, 2013, p. 15.

[100] Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Wilde De Japp, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 173.

[101] *Ibidem*, p. 189.

[102] Iulian Chifu, "Societal security: an agenda for the Eastern Europe", 2009, p. 4, Available at: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ccd3/03c3c4a1a58c43a202cf80fe71ea0f4d3b83.pdf?_ga=2.67681942.629087231.1590414801201723705 2.1583793890, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[103] Barry Buzan, *op. cit.*, 1991, p. 123.

"a group of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interconnected that their international security issues cannot be analyzed or resolved independently"[104].

What is worth noting in this regard is that the concept of insecurity is linked to the concept of proximity, since

"most political and military threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones; insecurity is often associated with proximity. Most states fear their neighbors more than more distant powers"[105].

What matters in this case is the reference space – that is, a specific region – in which the powers involved simultaneously demonstrate an interest:

"Because they are composed of local groups of states, classical security complexes not only play a central role in relations among their members; they also crucially determine, where applicable, how external powers penetrate the region"[106].

The dynamics of security complexes are determined by the friendly or hostile relations between the states in question. These dynamics can unfold in three directions:

"At the negative end of the spectrum lies the emergence of conflicts, in which interdependence arises from fear, rivalry, and mutual perceptions of threat. In the middle lie security regimes, in which states treat each other as potential enemies but have concluded security agreements aimed at reducing the security dilemma between them. At the positive end of the spectrum lies a pluralist security community, in which states no longer expect or prepare for the use of force in their relations with one another"[107].

Therefore, security complexes are

"self-contained subsystems – miniature anarchies – and, by analogy with full-fledged systems, they have their own structure"[108].

They consist of three key components:

"(1) the arrangement of units and the differences between them (the same applies to the international system as a whole and is thus not a significant variable at the regional level), (2) patterns of friendship and enmity, and (3) the distribution of power among the main units"[109].

[104] „un grup de state ale căror percepții și preocupări majore de securitate sunt atât de interconectate încât problemele lor de securitate internațională, nu pot fi analizate sau rezolvate independent", in Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Wilde De Japp, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 27.

[105] „majoritatea amenințărilor politice și militare se deplasează mai ușor pe distanțe scurte decât pe distanțe lungi; insecuritatea este deseori asociată cu proximitatea. Majorității statelor le e frică mai degrabă de vecinii lor, decât de puterile mai îndepărtate", in *Ibidem*.

[106] „Deoarece sunt formate din grupări locale de state, complexele clasice de securitate, nu au numai un rol central în relațiile dintre membrii lor; ele condiționează crucial, dacă este cazul, modul în care puterile externe penetrează regiunea", in *Ibidem*, pp. 27–28.

[107] „La polul negativ se află formarea conflictelor, în care interdependența se naște din frică, rivalitate și percepții reciproce de amenințare. La mijloc se situează regimurile de securitate, în care statele se tratează reciproc ca potențiali dușmani, dar au încheiat acorduri de asigurare cu scopul de a reduce dilema de securitate dintre ele. La polul pozitiv al spectrului se află o comunitate pluralistă de securitate, în care statele nu mai așteaptă și nu se mai pregătesc de utilizarea forței în relațiile dintre ele", in *Ibidem*, p. 28.

[108] „subsisteme – anarhii în miniatură – de sine stătătoare, și în analogie cu sistemele pline, ele au propria lor structură", in *Ibidem*.

[109] „(1) aranjarea unităților și diferențelor dintre ele (același lucru este valabil și pentru sistemul internațional ca întreg, nefiind astfel o variabilă semnificativă la nivel regional), (2) tiparele de amiciție și inamiciție și (3) distribuirea puterii între principalele unități", in *Ibidem*, p. 28.

Threats to a community's myths, rituals, and symbols can weaken collective identity and lead to the loss of cultural cohesion, which gives people a sense of belonging to the community. These threats have direct implications for our sense of security and, unless measures are taken to safeguard them, contribute to the undermining of national security.

5. METHODOLOGY

From a methodological standpoint, this research is based on a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques. Specifically, I have analyzed statistical data, conducted a secondary analysis of online news articles, and examined spatial data.

I conducted a secondary analysis of online print media to track the repercussions of the recorded dynamics. Furthermore, using data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, I aim to understand the statistical dimension of the phenomenon under study.

Finally, we utilized the "space file", which is a research tool conceptualized by Prof. Radu Baltasiu, Ph.D., director of the European Center for Ethnic Studies at the Romanian Academy and is intended to serve the public interest. According to him, the "space file" has three purposes: first, it focuses on understanding the nature of neighboring states; second, it seeks to understand Romanian communities outside the country's borders, namely the diaspora and historical communities; and third, it involves mapping the internal components that enable the country's development[110]. The space file represents

> "a description of a space along its defining dimensions in relation to the interests of truth-seeking and governance. It is the primary tool for the rigorous collection of data and the concise presentation of a large volume of information in a form accessible to policymakers. It is a product situated at the intersection of academic research, intelligence, and public administration. The space file should constitute the informed basis of political action, and thus of a country's administration. It represents the level of maturity of applied academic research and, depending on its use, the degree of seriousness of governance"[111].

[110] Radu Baltasiu, "The sociological political-space case-file – scientific instrument and institution for the relationship between the Romanian state and Romanians abroad", in *Etnosfera Journal*, No. 1/2025, Year XVII, Vol. 45, p. 5, https://doi.org/10.59277/Etnosfera.2025.01.01, Available at: https://www.etnosfera.ro/wpcontent/uploads/2025/12/ETNOSFERA-1-2025-5-16.pdf, Accessed on February 4, 2026.

[111] „descrierea unui spațiu pe direcțiile lui definitorii în raport cu interesul cunoașterii adevărului și al guvernării. Este principalul instrument de culegere riguroasă a datelor și de prezentare succintă a unei mase mari de informații într-o formă accesibilă factorului politic. Este un produs care se află la încheietura dintre cercetarea academică, intelligence și administrația publică. Dosarul de spațiu ar trebui să constituie baza informată a actului politic, deci a administrației unei țări. Reprezintă nivelul de maturitate al cercetării academice aplicate și, funcție de utilizarea sa, gradul de seriozitate al guvernării", in *Ibidem*.

6. ANALYSIS

This analysis focuses on the societal threats faced by Romanians in Covasna and Harghita counties, which affect their sense of belonging and undermine their national identity. We will analyze the following: education – in terms of the possibility of learning in their mother tongue, the language they speak, religious challenges, as well as potential symbolic issues.

6.1. Education

Based on a survey of educational institutions conducted by Ioan Lăcătușu and Ioan Solomon and published in 2007, we find that there were 74 educational institutions in Covasna. Of these, 56 were elementary and middle schools, and 18 were high schools. In 35 educational institutions, teaching was in Hungarian, in 10 in Romanian, and in 29 in both Romanian and Hungarian. In 28 schools, teaching was in Hungarian at the elementary and middle school levels, in 7 in Romanian, and in 21 in both Romanian and Hungarian. In 7 high schools, teaching was in Hungarian, in 3 in Romanian, and in 8 in both Romanian and Hungarian. We note that in 2007, in Covasna, the comparative data showed the following: the number of schools teaching in Romanian was 3.5 times smaller than that of schools teaching in Hungarian and 2.9 times smaller than that of schools teaching in both Romanian and Hungarian. The number of elementary and middle schools teaching in Romanian is 4 times smaller than that of schools teaching in Hungarian and 3 times smaller than that of schools teaching in both Romanian and Hungarian. The number of high schools teaching in Romanian is 4 times smaller than that of schools teaching in Hungarian[112].

On the other hand, there were 153 educational institutions in Harghita. Of these, 111 were elementary and middle schools, and 42 were high schools. In 117 educational institutions, teaching was in Hungarian, in 13 in Romanian, and in 23 in both Romanian and Hungarian. In 87 schools, teaching was in Hungarian at the primary and lower secondary levels, in 6 in Romanian, and in 18 in both Romanian and Hungarian. In 30 high schools, teaching was in Hungarian, in 7 in Romanian, and in 5 in both Romanian and Hungarian. We note that as of 2007, in Harghita, comparative data showed that the number of institutions teaching in Romanian was 9 times smaller than that of institutions teaching in Hungarian and 1.8 times smaller than that of institutions teaching in both Romanian and Hungarian. The number of elementary and middle schools teaching in Romanian was 14.5 times smaller than that of schools teaching in Hungarian and 3 times smaller than that of schools teaching in both Romanian and Hungarian. The number of high schools teaching in Romanian was 4.2 times smaller than that of schools teaching in Hungarian[113].

[112] Ioan Lăcătușu and Ioan Solomon, *Un fals „referendum" pentru impunerea unei autonomii anacronice deja existențe [A false "referendum" to impose an anachronistic autonomy that already exists]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Eurocarpatica Publishing House, 2007, pp: 87–99.
[113] *Ibidem*.

In total, as of 2007, there were 227 primary, middle, and high schools in the two counties. Of these, 167 were primary and middle schools, while the remaining 60 were high schools. In 152 institutions, teaching was in Hungarian, in 23 in Romanian, and in 52 in both Romanian and Hungarian. In 115 schools, teaching was in Hungarian at the elementary and middle school levels (grades 1–8), in 13 it was in Romanian, and in 39 it was in both Romanian and Hungarian. At the high school level, 37 institutions taught in Hungarian, 10 in Romanian, and 13 taught in both Romanian and Hungarian. We note that as of 2007, comparative data for Covasna and Harghita counties showed that the number of Romanian-language schools was 6.6 times lower than that of Hungarian-language schools and 2.3 times lower than the number of schools teaching in both Romanian and Hungarian. The number of elementary and middle schools teaching in Romanian was 8.8 times lower than that of schools teaching in Hungarian and 3 times lower than that of schools teaching in both Romanian and Hungarian. Finally, the number of high schools teaching in Romanian was 3.7 times smaller than that of high schools teaching in Hungarian[114].

The data above show that, at least as of 2007, there was an institutional underrepresentation of schools offering instruction in Romanian, a situation that raises serious questions regarding the level of social security felt by the Romanian community in the two counties. In this regard, there is concern that students who chose to be educated exclusively in Romanian have fewer options than those who chose mixed-language education, and even fewer than those who chose Hungarian-language education. From this perspective, there is a significant challenge in terms of identity, in that the restriction of mother-tongue education for Romanian students directly affects their sense of belonging.

Nearly 20 years later, by the 2023–2024 school year, the state of Romanian-language education in the two counties had not improved. In Covasna County, during the 2023–2024 school year, there were 40 educational institutions offering teaching exclusively in Hungarian, comprising a total of 741 classes and 13,739 students. In total, the county had 32,149 students, of whom 21,846 (68%) were enrolled in classes taught in Hungarian, and 10,303 (32%) in classes taught in Romanian. It is interesting to note that although Romanians accounted for approximately 23% of the county's population, the percentage of those studying in schools with instruction exclusively in Romanian was about half that, or 16% of the total number of students[115].

In Harghita County, the predominance of Hungarian-language schools was even more evident, with 2,258 classes and 43,021 enrolled students, representing 85.6% of the county's total student population. In contrast, there were only 418 classes taught in Romanian, with 7,235 students, or 14.4% of the total[116]. Given the predominantly Hungarian population, schools that teach in Hungarian receive

[114] *Ibidem*.
[115] Covasna County School Inspectorate, *Address no. 12 R.S./June 28*, 2024.
[116] Harghita County School Inspectorate, *Address no. 2925/June 7*, 2024.

higher funding and benefit from better facilities, while mixed schools and those teaching in Romanian are becoming increasingly scarce and poorly equipped. This disparity reflects an educational policy that has led to the creation of an ethnically divided education system, undermining social cohesion in the county[117]. Data provided by the school inspectorates in the two counties show the following situation regarding classes taught in Romanian and Hungarian, respectively, for the 2023–2024 school year: in Covasna and Harghita counties, the number of students enrolled in classes taught in Romanian is two or even three times lower than that in classes taught in Hungarian: Covasna 32% *vs*. 68%[118], and Harghita 14% *vs*. 85%[119].

By the end of May 2025, Romanians in Covasna had taken to the streets to demand their rights: "You're making a mockery of us, Romanians come second", "Mourning for education in Covasna", "The brave do not give in", were just a few of the messages from students at the only high school in Sfântu Gheorghe offering instruction in Romanian, who protested on May 23, 2025, in front of City Hall, because for five years they have been forced to study at other schools, as renovation work has been delayed by local authorities[120]. Following the protest, the Sfântu Gheorghe City Hall, led by ethnic Hungarian Antal Arpad, announced that the 1,000 Romanian students at the "Mihai Viteazul" National College would receive containers[121].

The Hungarian community, however, benefits – compared to the Romanian community – from a double support: from the Romanian state, but also from the Hungarian state, which is present in the area as a factor ensuring the security of the Hungarian ethnic group. A concrete example illustrating the above is the following situation: between 2021 and 2024, Harghita County ranked among the counties with the lowest high school graduation rates[122]. Arguing that the situation stems from the

[117] The Edupedu Editorial Team, „Școlile maghiare din Transilvania sunt mai puțin aglomerate și mai bine dotate decât media din România – MTI" ["Hungarian schools in Transylvania are less crowded and better equipped than the average in Romania – MTI"], in *Edupedu*, 2021, Avai lable at: https://www.edupedu.ro/mtiscolilemaghiaredintransilvaniasuntmai-putin-aglomerate-si-maibinedotate decatmediadinromania/, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[118] Covasna County School Inspectorate, *Address no. 12 R.S./June 28*, 2024.

[119] Harghita County School Inspectorate, *Address no. 2925/June 7*, 2024.

[120] Oana Mădălina Negrea, „REPORTAJ Covasna: Protest al părinților, elevilor și dascălilor de la singurul liceu de limbă română din Sfântu Gheorghe" ["REPORT: Covasna: Protest by parents, students, and teachers at the only Romanian language high school in Sfântu Gheorghe"], in *Agerpres*, May 23, 2025, Available at: https://agerpres.ro/2025/05/23/reportaj-covasna-protestalparintilorelevilor-si-dascalilor-de-la-singurul-liceu-de-limba-romana-d--1452628, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[121] The Carei Newspaper Editorial Team, „România vândută! Containere pentru elevii români, săli de clasă pentru elevii maghiari la Sfântu- Gheorghe" ["Romania's been sold out! Containers for Romanian students, classrooms for Hungarian students in Sfântu-Gheorghe"], in *Buletin de Carei*, 2025, Available at: https://www.buletindecarei.ro/2025/05/romaniavandutacontainerepentrueleviiromanisalideclasapentruelevii maghiarilasfantugheorghe.html, Accessed on February 25, 2026.

[122] See:

1. The Pro TV News Editorial Team, „Rezultate BAC 2021. În ce județe avem cea mai mare și cea mai mica rată de promovare?" ["2021 High School Graduation Exam Results: Which Counties Have the Highest and Lowest Pass Rates?"], in *PRO TV*, 2021, Available at: https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/ rezultatebac2021incejudeteavemceamaimaresiceamaimicaratadepromovare.html, Accessed on February 25, 2026.

poor results obtained on the Romanian language and literature exam, the president of the Harghita County Council has sued the Ministry of Education for emotional distress on behalf of the Hungarian students who failed to pass this exam in 2024[123]. As a result, starting in 2025 – for the first time since the fall of communism – students enrolled in Hungarian-language classes will be given separate exam questions for the Romanian language and literature section of the high school graduation exam[124]. Another concrete measure, supporting the argument that Budapest provides support to Hungarians in the two counties, is the fact that in 2023 the Hungarian state allocated approximately 263 million euros to mother-tongue education for approximately 300,000 ethnic Hungarians in the so-called "Carpathian Basin" (which includes Romania), funding 50 high schools and boarding schools, 8 institutions of higher education, and approximately 900 kindergartens and daycare centers[125]. By 2023, the Hungarian government had built approximately 900 educational institutions in the so-called "Carpathian Basin", most of which were

2. Raluca Juncu, „Rezultate BAC 2022. Care sunt județele cu cea mai mare rată de promovare" ["2022 High School Graduation Exam Results: Which Counties Have the Highest Pass Rates?"], in *Wall Street*, 2022, Available at: https://www.wallstreet.ro/articol/Educatie/287147/rezultate-bac-2022-care-sunt-judetele-cucea-mai-mare-rata-de-promovare.html, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

3. The Edupedu Editorial Team, „Județele cu cea mai mare rată de promovare la Bacalaureat 2023: Cluj, Brăila și Iași. Ilfov – în coada clasamentului/Scădere generalizată față de 2022" ["The counties with the highest pass rates on the 2023 Baccalaureate: Cluj, Brăila, and Iași. Ilfov at the bottom of the rankings/A general decline compared to 2022"], in *Edupedu*, 2023, Available at: https://www.edupedu.ro/judetelecuceamaimareratadepromovarelabacalaureat2023brailaclujsiiasiilfovincoadaclasamentului/#:~:text=Cluj%2C%20Br%C4%83ila%20%C8%99i%20Ia%C8%99i%20sunt,curent%C4%83)%2C%20potrivit%20datelor%20f%C4%83cute%20publice, Accessed on February 10, 2026.

4. The Edupedu Editorial Team, „Topul județelor la Bacalaureat 2024: Cea mai mare rată de promovare este în județele Cluj, Galați și Bacău. Ilfov – în coada clasamentului, pentru al cincilea an consecutiv" ["2024 High School Graduation Exam Rankings by County: The highest pass rates are in Cluj, Galați, and Bacău counties. Ilfov ranks last for the fifth consecutive year"], in *Edupedu*, 2024, Available at: https://www.edupedu.ro/topul-judetelor-la-bacalaureat2024ceamaimareratadepromovare-este-in-judetele-clujgalati-si-bacau-ilfov-in-coadaclasamentului-pentru-al-cincilea-an-consecutiv/, Accessed on February 10, 2026.

[123] Andrei Popo, „Elevi maghiari dau în judecată Ministerul Educației și cer subiecte diferite la Bac, la examenul de Limba română, pentru minoritatea maghiară" ["Hungarian students are suing the Ministry of Education and demanding different exam questions for the Romanian language section of the Baccalaureate exam for the Hungarian minority"], in *Edupedu*, October 16, 2024, Available at: https://www.edupedu.ro/elevimaghiaridauinjudecataministeruleducatieisicersubiectediferitelabaclaexamenuldelimbaromanapentruminoritatea-maghiara/, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[124] Ramona Florean, „Bacalaureat 2025. Doar elevii maghiari care au învățat după noua programă de examen la Limba și literatura română vor avea subiecte diferențiate" ["2025 High School Graduation Exam. Only Hungarian students who have studied under the new exam curriculum for Romanian Language and Literature will receive different exam questions"], in *Edupedu*, February 19, 2025, Available at: https://www.edupedu.ro/bacalaureat2025doareleviimaghiaricareauinvatatdupanouaprogramadeexamenlalimbasiliteraturaromanavoraveasubiectediferentiate/, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[125] MTI, „Secretar de stat ungar la Oradea: Școala este a doua cea mai puternică verigă în unitatea națiunii" ["Hungarian State Secretary in Oradea: School is the second strongest link in the unity of the nation"], in *Hirado*, 2023, Available at: https://hirado.hu/romana/cikk/2023/11/27/secretar-de-statungarlaoradea-scoala-este-adouaceamaiputernicaverigainunitatea-natiunii, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

intended for ethnic Hungarians in Romania[126]. According to data provided by Hungarian officials, because of investments from Budapest, a comprehensive Hungarian-language education system has been established for Hungarians in Transylvania (from preschool through university), a rare achievement, especially when comparing this case to the situation of other ethnic minorities in the country[127].

6.2. Spoken language

Regarding the language spoken by Romanians in the study area, we note that, according to the 2021 census, in Covasna approximately 25% of the population reported Romanian as their native language, while in Harghita the percentage was around 11%[128]. This percentage does not fully correspond to the demographic profile of the two counties, given that in Covasna, approximately 21% of the population identified as Romanian in the 2021 census (42,752 people out of the county's total registered population of 200,042), and in Harghita, the percentage of those who identified as Romanian in the 2021 census was approximately 11.5% (33,634 Romanians out of the county's 291,950 inhabitants)[129]. We note that educational segregation is particularly evident in Covasna County, where the percentage of Romanian speakers is approximately 4% lower than that of those who identified as Romanian. In the long term, this gap may accelerate the erosion of the Romanian community's sense of belonging, as language is one of the fundamental factors of national identity. As the number of Romanians declines, the likelihood that this area will become ethnically homogeneous grows. The number of Romanians in Covasna, just like in Harghita, is on a downward trend; as evidence, while in the 1992 census

[126] MTI, „Creşă maghiară renovate cu sprijinul statului ungar, inaugurate la Cluj Napoca" ["H ungarian nursery renovated with support from the Hungarian government opens in Cluj Napoca"], in *Hirado*, 2023a, Available at: https://hirado.hu/romana/cikk/2023/11/18/cresamaghiararenovatacuspriji nulstatuluiungarinauguratalaclujnapoca, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[127] Radu Ursan, „Secretar de Stat al Guvernului Orban: În Transilvania a fost creată o structură completă de învățământ în limba maghiară" ["State Secretary of the Orban Government: A comprehensive Hungarian-language education system has been established in Transylvania"], in *R3media*, 2022, Available at: https://r3media.ro/secretardestatalguvernuluiorbanintransilvaniaafostcre ataostructuracompletadeinvatamantinlimbamaghiara/, Accessed on February 11, 2026.

[128] National Institute of Statistics, „2.3.1 Populatia rezidenta dupa limba materna, pe macroregiuni, regiuni de dezvoltare si judete, la 1 decembrie 2021" ["2.3.1 Resident population by native language, by macroregions, development regions, and counties, as of December 1, 2021"], 2021, Available at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.recensamantromania.ro%2Fwpcontent%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F06%2FTabel2.03.1siTabel2.03.2.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[129] National Institute of Statistics, „2.1. Populatia dupa etnie la recensamintele din perioada 1930/2021, pe județe" ["2.1. Population by ethnicity in censuses from 1930 to 2021, by county"], 2021a, Available at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.recensamantromania.ro%2Fwpcontent%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F06%2FTabel-2.01.xls&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

approximately 23% of Covasna County's population was Romanian, by the 2021 census that percentage had dropped to approximately 21%. On the other hand, in Harghita County, the number of Romanians fell from 14% in 1992 to approximately 11% in 2021[130]. From this perspective, it can be argued that to the extent that ethnic Hungarians control the institutions that ensure the cultural reproduction of Romanians – such as schools – the likelihood that Romanian speakers will maintain their national identity is diminishing, while the possibility that this community will become increasingly weakened in terms of its identity is growing.

6.3. Religion

Religious statistics may represent another point of interest regarding the societal security of Romanians in the two counties, since, alongside language, religion is another fundamental element of our national identity. Local statistics compiled by Romanian Orthodox priests show that the Romanian population in Covasna and Harghita is declining at an accelerated rate. In this regard, we find the statistics presented by His Eminence Andrei, Bishop of Harghita and Covasna, to be highly relevant. He states that in the Harghita-Covasna region, over a relatively short period, what is likely the country's largest demographic collapse has occurred: "a decrease in the number of Romanians by 30,000 (from 81,000 to 50,000, or 37% in just 4 years – the period 2015–2019)[131]. The decline in the number of Romanians in these two counties is more significant given that they are already in the position of a local minority. To the extent that security actors fail to give due importance to the 0 for a quarter of the county's population; the neglect of Romanian symbols (most UDMR mayors do not wear the tricolor scarfs at events required by law – see the case of the mayor of Sf. Gheorghe on National Day 2007); their absence in public spaces (the meeting hall of the municipality of Sf. Gheorghe)[132]; the approval of street names and names of public institutions, while omitting or disregarding Romanian figures[133]; the rejection by the Sfântu Gheorghe City Council of proposals by representatives of Romanian civil society and Romanian councilors to award the "Pro Urbe" distinction to Romanian citizens of Sfântu Gheorghe; failure to comply with legal provisions regarding the use of

[130] *Ibidem*.

[131] Iulia Drăghici-Taraș, „Exodul românilor din Covasna și Harghita provoacă îngrijorare" ["The exodus of Romanians from Covasna and Harghita is causing concern"], in *Covasna Media*, January 28, 2019, Available at: https://covasnamedia.ro/stireazilei/exodulromanilor-din-covasna-si-harghita-provoacaingrijorare, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[132] Ioan Lăcătușu, *Argumente împotriva autonomiei teritoriale pe criterii etnice ale așa-zisului „Ținut Secuiesc" [Arguments against the ethnic-based territorial autonomy of the so-called "Szeklerland"],* Sfântu Gheorghe, Eurocarpatica Publishing House, 2008, p. 58.

[133] *Ibidem*, pp. 58–59.

the Romanian language in public institutions – specifically, the Rules of Procedure of the Sfântu Gheorghe City Council and other similar regulations[134].

On the other hand, in the cultural sphere, the Romanian community has faced several challenges over time, including: the transformation of community museums into Szekler ethnic museums (as in the case of the Sfântu Gheorghe County Museum, which became the Szekler National Museum after 1990. Romanian curators were forced to leave their jobs, and Romanian heritage was sent to storage)[135]; the transformation of professional folk ensembles into "Szekler ensembles"; the dissolution of the professional folkloric ensemble "Ciobănaşul"; the transformation of the "Andrei Mureșan" Theater in Sfântu Gheorghe into a "hosting theater," which effectively meant the dissolution of the institution; efforts made by some UDMR leaders (Marko Bela, Kelemen Hunor, etc.) to abolish the National Museum of the Eastern Carpathians; overfunding of Hungarian cultural events and underfunding of Romanian ones; the exclusion of Romanian-language performances from publicly funded events such as: "Local Days" – Miercurea Ciuc, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Târgu Secuiesc, Sf. Gheorghe (with great difficulty), or Harghita County Days; the lack of Romanian specialists and Romanian cultural events at most municipal and town cultural centers; the tolerance of the profanation of Romanian monuments and symbols, etc.[136]. While significant differences can be observed at the central level regarding budget allocations for cultural events in the two communities, the Romanian community also faces challenges from local authorities. A relevant example in this regard is the fact that the mayor of Sfântu Gheorghe refuses to approve the placement of a bust of Mihai Eminescu on public property in the city, even though this procedure was carried out without difficulty for the Hungarian national poet, Petofi Sándor. Furthermore, the mayor is making approval conditional on the withdrawal of the lawsuits that Romanian organizations have filed in court. The lawsuits arose because of the discrimination to which Romanians are repeatedly subjected, but the mayor considers that they "harm the city's interests"[137].

As for the underfunding of Romanian cultural events, official data show that between 2011 and 2014, the Ministry of Culture allocated only 112,600 lei for the restoration of Romanian monuments in Harghita and Covasna, while 25.2 million lei

[134] *Ibidem*, p. 59.

[135] Ana Grama and Ioan Lăcătușu, *Români din Arcul Carpatic și instituțiile lor identitare (sec. XVII-XX) [Romanians in the Carpathian Basin and Their Institutions of Identity (17th-20th Centuries)]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Eurocarpatica Publishing House, 2023, p. 592.

[136] Ioan Lăcătușu, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 55.

[137] Ioan Radu Gava, „Primarul din Sfântu Gheorghe condiționează eventuala ridicare a unei statui a lui Mihai Eminescu în oraș. Statuia lui Petőfi Sándor va fi inaugurată anul viitor" ["The mayor of Sfântu Gheorghe has set conditions for the possible installation of a statue of Mihai Eminescu in the city. The statue of Sándor Petőfi will be inaugurated next year"], in *DC News*, November 18, 2022, Available at: https://www.dcnews.ro/primaruldinsfantugheorgheconditioneazaeventuala-ridicare-a-unei-statui-a-lui-mihai-eminescu-in-orasstatuia-lui-pet-fi-s-ndor-va-fi-inaugurata-anul-viitor_895459.html, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

were allocated during the same period for the restoration of Hungarian monuments in Harghita and Covasna. Most of these funds were spent during the period when Kelemen Hunor, president of the UDMR, headed the ministry[138]. In other words, over the course of less than three years, the amounts received by the Romanian community in the two counties from the Romanian state were 22 times smaller than those received by the Hungarian community.

In the religious sphere as well, Romanians in Covasna and Harghita face situations that affect their national identity, such as: the obstruction of the establishment of the Orthodox Diocese of Covasna and Harghita; the reluctance of local public administration to return properties that belonged to Orthodox parishes and were expropriated by the communist regime; the total lack of support for Orthodox parishes from local public administration subordinate to the UDMR; the portrayal of the Orthodox Church in the two counties in the Hungarian-language media as an institution seeking to "conquer Szeklerland" (through onion-domed churches)[139].

From a symbolic perspective, it should be noted that certain Hungarian cultural events affect the Romanian community's sense of belonging in these two counties. One such event is the Pilgrimage to Șumuleu Ciuc. This is the largest Roman Catholic pilgrimage in Central and Eastern Europe[140], with attendance ranging from 100,000 in 2008[141] to 300,000 in 2023[142]. Most pilgrims come from Romania's

[138] Dan Tanasă, „EXCLUSIV. În patru ani, peste 14,3 milioane de lei de la Cultură pentru reno varea conacelor secuiești din Covasna și Harghita. VEZI ce sumă RIDICOLĂ au primit monumentele românești DOCUMENTE" [EXCLUSIVE. Over the past four years, more than 14.3 million lei from the Ministry of Culture have been allocated for the renovation of Szekler mansions in Covasn a and Harghita. SEE the RIDICULOUS amountRomanian monuments received DOCUMENTS"], in *Dan Tanasa Blog*, 2015, Available at: http://www.dantanasa.ro/exclusivinpatruanipeste143milioanede leidelaculturapentrurenovareaconacelorsecuiestidincovasnasiharghitavezicesumaridicolaauprimitmon umenteleromanesti-documente/, Accessed on February 25, 2026.

[139] Ioan Lăcătușu, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 55.

[140] The G4Media Editorial Team, „Ziua Maghiarilor de Pretutindeni va fi marcată la Târgu Secuiesc sub genericul «Acum ori niciodată!»/Ziua Maghiarilor, care coincide la 15 martie cu i zbucnirea Revoluției pașoptiste în Ungaria, va fi marcată și în alte comunități maghiare" ["The Day of Hungarians Everywhere will be celebrated in Târgu Secuiesc under the slogan 'Now or Never!'/The Day of Hungarians, which falls on March 15 – the anniversary of the outbreak of the 1848 Revolution in Hungary – will also be celebrated in other Hungarian communities"], in *G4Media*, 2025, Available at: https://www.g4media.ro/ziuamaghiarilordepretutindenivafimarcatalatargusecuiescsubgenericulacu moriniciodataziuamaghiarilordepretutindenicarecoincidela15martiecuizbucnirearevolutieipasopti.html , Accessed on February 10, 2026.

[141] Lumina, „150.000 de credincioși romano- catolici, în pelerinaj la Șumuleu Ciuc" ["150,000 Roman Catholic faithful on pilgrimage to Șumuleu Ciuc"], in *Lumina*, May 11, 2008, Avai lable at: https://ziarullumina.ro/actualitate-religioasa/stiri/150-000-de-credinciosi-romano-catolici-in-pelerinaj-la-sumuleu-ciuc-58372.html, Accessed on February 11, 2026.

[142] Mihai Toma, „Președinta Ungariei, la pelerinajul de la Șumuleu Ciuc, unde sunt așteptați 300.000 de oameni" ["The President of Hungary at the pilgrimage in Șumuleu Ciuc, where 300,000 p eople are expected"], in *Libertatea*, 2023, Available at: https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/pelerinaj-sumuleu-ciuc-2023-4558452, Accessed on February 25, 2026.

Hungarian community; in the 2022 edition, only about two thousand people from Hungary participated[143]. Even though it is a religious event, and the organizers – namely the Franciscan Order – claim to keep it separate from political matters, we observe facts that contradict their assertions, such as: the display of secessionist symbols, including the flag of the so-called "Szeklerland"[144], the fact that through their public speeches, shared on social media or in the press, Hungarian political leaders promote the idea that the so-called "Szeklerland" is a territorial entity distinct from Romania[145], an aspect that flagrantly contravenes the Constitution, as well as the fact that until recently, namely 2022, the religious ceremony was conducted exclusively in Hungarian[146].

A significant portion of Hungarian cultural events are aimed at securing territorial autonomy for the so-called "Szeklerland". Of all the cultural events used to promote the autonomy of the so-called "Szekler Land", the most representative bears the evocative name "Szekler Freedom Day", The Szekler National Council has been organizing the event since 2012[147], primarily in the city of Târgu-Mureș, but also in other localities in Covasna and Harghita, in memory of Gálffy Mihály, Horváth Károly, and Török János, who are considered heroes after the Austrian authorities executed them on March 10, 1854, for coordinating acts of rebellion against the ruling power. Since 2014[148], as part of the events, a petition is adopted annually in which the Szekler National Council requests territorial autonomy for the so-called region from the Government and Parliament of Romania[149].

[143] Adrian Meitner, „Pelerinaj la Șumuleu-Ciuc. Cum arată locul unde ieri au fost peste 350.000 de pelerini" ["Pilgrimage to Șumuleu-Ciuc. A glimpse at the place where yesterday there were over 350,000 pilgrims"], in *Știrile Transilvaniei*, 2022, Available at: https://stiriletransilvaniei.ro/2022/06/05/pelerinaj-la-sumuleuciuccum-arata-locul-unde-ieriaufostpeste-350-000-de-pelerini/, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[144] Magda Grădinaru, „Sute de mii de oameni la pelerinajul de la Șumuleu Ciuc. Unii au venit pe jos sute de kilometri (Foto&Video)" ["Hundreds of thousands of people at the pilgrimage in Șumuleu Ciuc. Some walked hundreds of kilometers to get there (Photos & Video)"], in *Spot Media*, June 6, 2022, Available at: https://spotmedia.ro/stiri/social/sute-de-mii-de-oameni-la-pelerinajul-de-la-sumuleu-ciuc-unii-au-venit-pe-jos-sute-dekilometri-fotovideo, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[145] Mihai Toma, „Președinta Ungariei, la pelerinajul de la Șumuleu Ciuc, unde sunt așteptați 300.000 de oameni" ["The President of Hungary at the pilgrimage in Șumuleu Ciuc, where 300,000 people are expected"], in *Libertatea*, 2023, Available at: https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/pelerinaj-sumuleu-ciuc-2023-4558452, Accessed on February 25, 2026.

[146] Adrian Meitner, „Pelerinaj la Șumuleu-Ciuc. Cum arată locul unde ieri au fost peste 350.000 de pelerini" ["Pilgrimage to Șumuleu-Ciuc. A glimpse at the place where yesterday there were over 350,000 pilgrims"], in *Știrile Transilvaniei*, 2022, Available at: https://stiriletransilvaniei.ro/2022/06/05/pelerinaj-la-sumuleuciuccum-arata-locul-unde-ieriaufostpeste-350-000-de-pelerini/, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[147] The Rador Editorial Team, „Ziua Libertăţii Secuieşti – o comemorare controversată" ["Szekler Freedom Day. A Controversial Commemoration"], in *Rador*, 2018, Available at: https://www.rador.ro/2018/03/07/ziua-libertatii-secuiesti-o-comemorare-controversata/, Accessed on February 10, 2026.

[148] Ciprian Plăiaşu, „Adevărul despre 10 Martie – Ziua Libertaţii Secuieşti" ["The Truth About March 10- Szekler Freedom Day"], in *Historia*, n.d., Available at: https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/adevarul despre10martieziualibertatii-572431.html, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[149] Marcela German, „Ziua Libertății Secuilor, marcată la Târgu-Mureș" ["Szekler Freedom Day, Celebrated in Târgu-Mureș"], in *România Actualități*, 2024, Available at: https://www.romaniaactualitati.ro/stiri/romania/ziualibertatiisecuilormarcatalatargumuresid189943.html, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

Another Hungarian cultural event that directly affects the societal security of Romanians in Covasna and Harghita is the Băile Tușnad Summer University (the so-called "Balvanyos"). In 2025, the university reached its 34th edition. Valer Marian states that

> "over the course of three decades, Viktor Orbán and his lieutenants have, for the first time, delivered several inflammatory and provocative messages at the Tușnad Summer University, many with revisionist or irredentist overtones: ranging from the collective rights of national minorities, personal autonomy, cultural autonomy, and territorial autonomy for Hungarian members and communities in Romania, with the greatest emphasis placed on the territorial autonomy of the so-called Szeklerland, the granting of dual citizenship, specifically Hungarian citizenship, and so on"[150].

This event, which carries strong political implications, is organized with the direct support of the Hungarian government[151]. An example of an official statement that affects the societal security of Romanians in this region, as well as Romania's security in general, is the one made in 2025 by the Hungarian prime minister, who, before participating in the events and meeting with his Romanian counterpart, publicly suggested that the region of Transylvania was not Romanian territory: "I have arrived in Bucharest, on Romanian soil. Tonight, we're going to Transylvania!"[152]. At the 2025 edition, Viktor Orbán spoke explicitly about the "recovery" of Transylvania, stating that the essence of the Hungarian strategy lies in the restoration of the so-called "Greater Hungary":

> "First, regarding the great Hungarian strategy (…) What is the great Hungarian strategy? The essence of the great Hungarian strategy stems from the fact that we were defeated in 1920, and at that time our defeat was finalized or sanctioned by the powers of the day. At that time, our enemies decided our fate. Our enemies decided that

[150] „pe parcursul a trei decenii, Viktor Orban și locotenenții săi au lansat, în premieră, la Universitatea de vară de la Tușnad mai multe mesaje incitante și provocatoare, multe cu tentă revizionistă sau iredentistă: începând cu drepturile colective ale minorităților naționale, autonomia personală, autonomia culturală și autonomia teritorială a membrilor și comunităților maghiare din România, cel mai mult insistându-se pe autonomia teritorială a așa-zisului Ținut Secuiesc, acordarea dublei cetățenii, respectiv și a cetățeniei ungare, ș.a." in

1. Marian Valer, „Efectul Băilor Tușnad: românii umiliți, secuii nemulțumiți (I)" ["The Tușnad Baths Effect: Humiliated Romanians, Dissatisfied Székelys (I)"], in *Cotidianul*, 2023a, Available at: https://www.cotidianul.ro/efectulbailortusnadromaniiumilitisecuiinemultumiti-i/, Accessed on February 11, 2026.

2. Marian Valer, „Efectul Băilor Tușnad: românii umiliți, secuii nemulțumiți (II)" ["The Tușnad Baths Effect: Humiliated Romanians, Dissatisfied Székelys (II)"], in *Cotidianul*, 2023b, Available at: https://www.cotidianul.ro/efectul-bailor-tusnad-romanii-umiliti-secuii-nemultumiti-ii/, Accessed on February 11, 2026.

[151] Gina Ștefan, „Harghita: Universitatea de Vară Tusvanyos, de la Băile Tușnad, la a 34a ediție; Viktor Orban va ține obișnuitul discurs" ["Harghita: The Tusvanyos Summer University in Băile Tușnad, now in its 34th year; Viktor Orbán will deliver his regular speech"], in *Agerpres*, July 21, 2025, Available at: https://agerpres.ro/politic/2025/07/21/harghitauniversitateadevaratusvanyosdelabailetusnadlaa34aeditieviktororbanvatineob1470021, Accessed on February 25, 2026.

[152] Orban Viktor, the statement can be consulted by accessing: https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1301677057996556&set=a.347694613394810, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

> Hungary would be small and poor. That was our destiny. We are in politics, and the essence of our national strategy is to change that destiny so that Hungary may be great and rich. This is the core of the Hungarian national strategy"[153].

At the same event, Kalmár Ferenc, the government commissioner responsible for developing Hungary's neighborhood policy, argued that Hungarian should become an official language in regions where ethnic Hungarians are in the majority (Covasna and Harghita counties in particular)[154].

One of the most recent significant developments regarding the pursuit of territorial autonomy for the so-called "Szeklerland" took place in early 2026, when the media reported that

> "Viktor Orbán's government is officially and legally involved for the first time in securing autonomy for Szeklerland! (...) Hungary is joining the proceedings at the European Union level on the side of the Szekler National Council of Romania, challenging before the Court of Justice of the EU the European Commission's decision to reject the petition signed by over one million Hungarians, which calls for the legal recognition of territorial autonomy for three counties in Romania (Mureș, Harghita, Covasna)"[155].

On this subject, Mihai Tîrnoveanu states that:

> "This is an extremely serious matter, especially from a political standpoint, because for the first time, officially, Viktor Orbán's government is essentially demanding territorial autonomy within Romania. Until now, it has limited itself to statements and economic, political, cultural, and religious offensives, preparing the 'ground' through

[153] „În primul rând, despre marea strategie maghiară(…) Care este marea strategie maghiară? Esența marii strategii maghiare provine din faptul că am fost învinși în 1920, iar la acea vreme înfrângerea noastră a fost finalizată sau binecuvântată de puterile de atunci. La acea vreme, inamicii noștri au decis soarta noastră. Inamicii noștri au decis că Ungaria va fi mică și săracă. Acesta a fost destinul nostru. Suntem în politică, iar esența strategiei noastre naționale este să schimbăm acel destin astfel încât Ungaria să fie măreață și bogată. Acesta este nucleul strategiei naționale maghiare", in Bogdan Tiberiu Iacob, „Stupefiant: la Tușnad, Orban a vorbit explicit despre recuperarea Transilvaniei. Bucureștiul tace mîlc" ["Shocking: In Tușnad, Orban spoke explicitly about reclaiming Transylvania. Bucharest remains completely silent"], in *In Politics*, 2025, Available at: https://inpolitics.ro/stupefiantlatusnadorbanavorbitexplicitdesprerecuperareatransilvanieibucurestiul tacemilc_1860087783.html, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

[154] Adrian Zia, „Cum a explicat vicepremierul Ungariei susținerea lui Simion de către Viktor Orbán. «În câteva secunde a existat o așezare a subiectului la locul unde trebuie să fie»" ["How Hungary's Deputy Prime Minister explained Viktor Orbán's support for Simion. 'In a matter of seconds, the issue was put in its proper place'"], in *Ziare*, 2025, Available at: https://ziare.com/ungaria/cumexplicatvicepremierulungarieisustinere simionviktororban1955107?utm_source=Ziare.com&utm_medium=copypaste, Accessed on February 11.

[155] „Guvernul Viktor Orban se implică pentru prima dată oficial, din punct de vedere juridic, în obținerea autonomiei ținutului secuiesc! (...) Ungaria intră în proces la nivelul Uniunii Europene de partea Consiliului Național Secuiesc din România, în contestarea la Curtea de Justiție a UE a deciziei Comisiei Europene de respingere a proiectului semnat de peste un milion de maghiari, prin care se cere legiferarea autonomiei teritoriale a trei județe din România (Mureș, Harghita, Covasna)", in Mihai Tîrnoveanu „Atenție români! Ungaria se implică oficial în autonomia «Ținutului Secuiesc» 2026" ["Attention, Romanians! Hungary is officially getting involved in the autonomy of the 'Szeklerland' in 2026"], in *Active News*, February 16, 2026, Available at: https://www.activenews.ro/opinii/Mihai-Tirnoveanu-Atentie-romani-Ungaria-se-implicaoficialinautonomiainutului-Secuiesc-202904, Accessed on May 10, 2026.

the concept of co-sovereignty. Now it is openly embracing, from every perspective, this autonomist goal, which effectively means occupation"[156].

This analysis has highlighted the fact that Romanians in Covasna and Harghita face multiple challenges related to their identity. As a local minority, they perceive societal threats, the most significant of which target their language, religion, and symbols. From this perspective, security actors must pay increased attention to protecting identity and social cohesion in this region. One of the distinctive features of inter-ethnic dynamics is their dynamism, which is why the nature of the phenomenon under study is constantly changing. However, statistical data confirming the continuous and accelerated decline of the Romanian population in Covasna and Harghita show that these inter-ethnic dynamics are not favorable to the Romanian community, which risks disappearing from this region. The creation of a Hungarian ethnic enclave in the center of the country is problematic, even more so as Hungarian political leaders seek territorial autonomy for this area, which would effectively mean the creation of a state within a state – a situation that violates constitutional provisions.

Consequently, the societal security of Romanians in Covasna and Harghita is an issue that extends beyond the analyzed area because generated by the failure to address the identity-related threats they perceive. Given the geopolitical importance of Transylvania, we can say that what happens at the national level has repercussions throughout the entire country. Thus, the issue of the societal security of Romanians in these two counties is a matter of national interest that requires immediate and heightened attention. The interests of the Hungarian community are very well represented, which cannot be said of the interests of the Romanian community. In this context, the societal security of Romanians in Covasna and Harghita becomes a national imperative.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Societal security refers to a society's ability to preserve its traditional ways of life, identity, culture, language, and fundamental institutions in the face of changes and threats, whether internal or external. This analysis shows that the societal security of Romanians in Covasna and Harghita is under threat, with the main challenges arising in the areas of language, religion, and symbols. While it has been observed that the interests of the Hungarian community are very well represented by their political leaders, there is a notable lack of representation regarding the

[156] „Faptul este extrem de grav mai ales din punct de vedere politic, pentru că pentru prima oară, oficial, Guvernul Viktor Orban cere practic autonomie teritorială în România. Până acum s-a rezumat la declarații, ofensivă economică, politică, culturală, religioasă, a pregătit «terenul» prin conceptul de co-suveranitate. Acum își asumă fățis, din toate perspectivele acest deziderat autonomist care se traduce practic în ocupație", in *Ibidem*.

protection of the Romanian community's identity, which has a significant impact on the community, especially given that they are already a local minority. From this perspective, securing the identified threats is essential, since, in the long term, without such security measures, the Romanian community risks disappearing from this region. The two counties occupy an important geostrategic position, forming part of what geopoliticians have called the state centre. Given that what happens in the state center has repercussions throughout the entire country, it can be said that the issue of societal security for Romanians in Covasna and Harghita can be viewed as a national imperative.

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