

Acta
Universitatis
Danubius



COMMUNICATIO

Communication, Ethics, and Organizational Culture in the Leadership of Contemporary Security Institutions

Cornel Zamfirescu¹

Abstract: This paper explores the role of communication, ethics, and organizational culture as fundamental dimensions of institutional leadership within contemporary security organizations. In an increasingly complex and uncertain security environment, leadership effectiveness depends not only on operational and strategic capabilities but also on the ability to manage information flows, ensure ethical decision-making, and cultivate a resilient organizational culture. The study adopts an integrative approach, combining insights from organizational theory, communication studies, and ethics, to examine how these dimensions interact in shaping leadership performance. The findings emphasize that effective communication enhances coordination and trust, ethical leadership strengthens legitimacy and accountability, and organizational culture supports adaptability and resilience. The paper contributes to the literature by proposing a comprehensive framework that links communication processes, ethical principles, and cultural dynamics in the context of security institutions.

Keywords: institutional leadership; security organizations; communication; ethics; organizational culture

1. Introduction

In the context of the accelerated transformation of the contemporary security environment, characterized by increasing complexity, systemic interdependence,

¹ Colonel, Ph.D. student, Valahia University of Targoviste, Romania, Corresponding author: cornelzamfirescu82@gmail.com.



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors.
Open access publication under the terms and conditions of the
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial (CC BY NC) license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

and the emergence of hybrid threats, institutional leadership is facing unprecedented demands for adaptation, flexibility, and effectiveness. Recent developments demonstrate that security organizations operate in a volatile and uncertain environment in which the capacity to anticipate and respond rapidly has become a decisive determinant of institutional performance (Boin et al., 2013). Consequently, leadership can no longer be understood solely through its traditional functions of planning and control but must instead be viewed as a dynamic process aimed at integrating human, informational, and technological resources.

Whereas classical leadership theories primarily emphasized the strategic and operational dimensions of management, contemporary literature highlights the growing importance of its relational and normative dimensions (Northouse, 2019). Within this perspective, communication, ethics, and organizational culture emerge as fundamental pillars of institutional effectiveness, contributing to organizational legitimacy, cohesion, and performance (Schein, 2010).

These dimensions should not be regarded as merely complementary components of leadership; rather, they constitute structural factors that directly influence organizational processes and their outcomes. Effective communication facilitates the coordination of activities and the management of information, playing a crucial role in reducing uncertainty and enhancing organizational responsiveness during crises (Miller, 2015). At the same time, ethics provides the normative framework required for legitimate and responsible decision-making, helping prevent unethical behavior while strengthening organizational trust. Organizational culture, in turn, represents the mechanism through which values and norms are internalized and translated into organizational practices, shaping both individual and collective behavior (Schein, 2010).

The interdependence of these dimensions generates a synergistic effect whereby communication supports the dissemination of ethical values, while organizational culture facilitates their integration into everyday organizational behavior. Previous research indicates that organizations characterized by a strong organizational culture and a well-established ethical climate demonstrate higher levels of performance and resilience in times of crisis (Reason, 1997; Treviño & Nelson, 2016). Likewise, two-way communication enhances employee engagement and improves organizational decision-making processes (Men, 2014).

Against this background, institutional leadership in security organizations should be approached as a multidimensional construct integrating strategic, operational, relational, and normative dimensions. This perspective is consistent with the existing

literature, which emphasizes the necessity of adopting a systemic approach to leadership in complex organizations (Northouse, 2019).

The purpose of this article is to examine the role of communication, ethics, and organizational culture in achieving leadership objectives within security institutions, highlighting the interdependencies among these dimensions and their impact on organizational performance. Through this approach, the paper seeks to contribute to the development of an integrated conceptual framework capable of explaining the mechanisms through which institutional leadership enhances the resilience and effectiveness of security organizations in addressing contemporary security challenges.

2. Strategic Communication in the Institutional Leadership of Security Organizations

Communication represents one of the fundamental pillars of institutional leadership, playing a crucial role in coordinating activities, disseminating information, and managing crisis situations. Within security organizations, characterized by high operational complexity and intense decision-making pressure, communication can no longer be regarded merely as a support function. Instead, it has become a strategic instrument that directly influences organizational performance and the capacity to respond effectively to security threats (Boin et al., 2013).

From a theoretical perspective, organizational communication is defined as the process through which information is created, transmitted, and interpreted within an organization, thereby facilitating the coordination of activities and the achievement of institutional objectives (Miller, 2015). In security organizations, this process is characterized by a high degree of formalization, hierarchical structuring, and standardization, supported by secure communication channels designed to protect sensitive information and minimize the risk of data compromise (Dragomir-Constantin, Alexandrescu & Postolache, 2018).

A central element of effective communication is message clarity, which reduces ambiguity and prevents misinterpretation. In security environments, where decisions must be implemented rapidly and without uncertainty, communication ambiguity may generate significant operational dysfunctions, negatively affecting team coordination and the effectiveness of interventions. Research consistently

demonstrates that clear and well-structured messages improve organizational performance and enhance compliance with institutional objectives.

Equally important is the speed of information transmission, which becomes a critical factor during crisis situations. Delays in communication may amplify the consequences of emerging threats and reduce the effectiveness of the organizational response. Consequently, the adoption of advanced communication technologies, together with the implementation of clearly defined information-sharing protocols, is essential for ensuring a continuous, secure, and efficient flow of information (Boin et al., 2013; Dragomir-Constantin, 2025d).

Another essential component of strategic communication is organizational feedback, which enables decision-makers to adjust strategies and continuously improve organizational processes. Two-way communication facilitates the identification of operational challenges while encouraging employees to participate actively in achieving organizational objectives. Empirical studies indicate that organizations promoting an open and participative communication climate achieve higher levels of performance, organizational cohesion, and institutional trust (Men, 2014).

In the context of digital transformation, communication within security institutions is increasingly supported by sophisticated information infrastructures that enable the rapid and secure transmission of data. However, these technological developments also introduce new challenges, including information overload, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and the growing need to manage large volumes of data efficiently. Institutional leadership must therefore develop integrated information management strategies capable of balancing accessibility, security, and informational relevance (Dragomir-Constantin, 2025b).

Strategic communication also contributes significantly to strengthening organizational trust, a critical prerequisite for the effective functioning of security teams. Trust is built through transparency, consistency, and coherence in communication. Institutional leaders play a decisive role in this process through the manner in which they communicate organizational objectives, strategic decisions, and core institutional values (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010).

Ultimately, strategic communication within the institutional leadership of security organizations should be understood as a comprehensive and integrated process that combines message clarity, rapid information exchange, continuous feedback, and the effective use of advanced technologies. The effectiveness of this process directly determines an organization's ability to respond to security challenges, while

simultaneously enhancing organizational performance, resilience, and institutional legitimacy.



Figure 1. Strategic Communication in the Institutional Leadership of Security Organizations

In the digital era, communication within security institutions relies increasingly on advanced technologies that enable the secure and rapid exchange of information. Nevertheless, these technologies also create significant challenges, including cyber vulnerabilities and information overload, making the development of effective information management strategies indispensable.

In conclusion, strategic communication strengthens organizational trust, improves operational efficiency, and enhances the capacity of security organizations to respond effectively to crises and emerging threats.

3. Ethical Foundations and the Legitimacy of Decision-Making in Institutional Security Leadership

Ethics constitutes a fundamental dimension of institutional leadership within security organizations, playing a decisive role in establishing the legitimacy of decision-making processes and strengthening both organizational and public trust. In operational environments characterized by uncertainty, intense decision-making pressure, and significant implications for individual rights and freedoms, ethics should be regarded not merely as a normative framework but as a strategic criterion for evaluating leadership effectiveness (Treviño & Nelson, 2016).

From a theoretical perspective, organizational ethics refers to the set of values, principles, and norms that guide the behavior of organizational members and influence decision-making processes. Within security institutions, these ethical principles acquire particular significance because of the organizations' public

responsibilities and the direct impact of their decisions on society. Consequently, security institutions are expected to uphold high ethical standards supported by robust mechanisms of accountability, oversight, and responsible governance.

A central component of ethical leadership is decision legitimacy, which derives from the alignment of decisions with legal standards, moral values, and societal expectations. Legitimacy is determined not only by the outcomes of decisions but also by the fairness and transparency of the decision-making process itself. Therefore, transparency, procedural fairness, and accountability are essential characteristics of legitimate leadership (Suchman, 1995). Institutional leaders must therefore ensure not only operational effectiveness but also the moral acceptability of their actions. In practice, ethical leadership requires leaders to assume responsibility for the consequences of their decisions and to justify those decisions in a coherent, transparent, and professionally accountable manner. Research has consistently demonstrated that leaders who promote ethical conduct contribute to creating organizational environments characterized by trust, integrity, and mutual respect while reducing unethical behavior and organizational risk. In this regard, ethics becomes an essential mechanism of organizational governance, supporting institutional stability and long-term sustainability.

A particularly significant challenge within the security sector is the management of ethical dilemmas, which frequently arise during crises or in situations where operational effectiveness appears to conflict with the protection of individual rights and civil liberties. The literature suggests that decisions in such circumstances are influenced by leaders' personal values, organizational culture, and institutional pressures. Ethics therefore provides a structured analytical framework through which decision alternatives can be assessed not only in terms of effectiveness but also with regard to fairness, proportionality, and justice.

Ethical leadership is also closely associated with the concept of organizational justice, which reflects employees' perceptions regarding the fairness of organizational procedures, decisions, and interpersonal treatment. Empirical evidence indicates that higher levels of perceived organizational justice contribute to increased job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and improved performance. Within security organizations, these effects are even more pronounced due to the demanding nature of operational activities and the necessity for exceptionally high levels of cohesion, discipline, and interpersonal trust.

Another critical aspect concerns the integration of ethics into organizational culture, through which ethical principles become internalized and transformed into everyday

operational behavior. According to Schein (2010), organizational culture directly shapes how members perceive, interpret, and apply ethical norms. Institutional leadership therefore bears the responsibility of fostering an ethical culture by clearly defining organizational values, implementing comprehensive codes of conduct, and establishing effective systems for ethics education, monitoring, and evaluation.

The rapid digital transformation of security institutions and the growing use of emerging technologies have expanded the scope of ethical leadership. Contemporary leaders must now address issues such as data protection, the responsible deployment of artificial intelligence, algorithmic transparency, and the prevention of algorithmic bias and discrimination (Dragomir-Constantin, 2025a). These developments require institutional leaders to develop new ethical competencies capable of responding to increasingly complex technological challenges.

Finally, ethical leadership plays a decisive role in strengthening public trust in security institutions, which represents one of the fundamental conditions for institutional legitimacy and operational effectiveness. Public confidence is built through consistency between declared organizational values and actual institutional behavior. Conversely, deviations from ethical principles can significantly damage institutional reputation, reduce public confidence, and weaken the relationship between security institutions and the society they are intended to protect (Tyler, 2006).



Figure 2. Ethical Foundations and the Legitimacy of Decision-Making in Institutional Security Leadership

Ethical leadership also exerts a profound influence on organizational culture by promoting values such as integrity, accountability, fairness, and mutual respect.

These values contribute to the development of a stable organizational climate, reinforce team cohesion, and strengthen institutional resilience.

In conclusion, the ethical foundations of institutional leadership within security organizations highlight the necessity of adopting an integrated approach in which decision legitimacy, accountability, organizational justice, and ethical culture are viewed as interconnected dimensions. Ethical leadership should therefore be understood not merely as a normative aspect of management but as a strategic capability that significantly enhances organizational performance, institutional stability, resilience, and public legitimacy.

4. Organizational Security Culture and the Integration of Institutional Leadership

Organizational culture represents one of the fundamental dimensions of the effective functioning of security institutions, exerting a direct influence on the behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making processes of organizational members. In an environment characterized by high levels of risk, uncertainty, and operational pressure, organizational culture becomes a critical factor in ensuring internal cohesion, organizational discipline, and the capacity to respond effectively to evolving security threats.

From a theoretical perspective, organizational culture is defined as the system of shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that shapes the perceptions and behaviors of organizational members (Schein, 2010). Within security institutions, these elements assume particular importance because they influence how personnel perceive risks, respond to crisis situations, and collaborate in achieving institutional objectives.

A central concept in this context is security organizational culture, which reflects the degree to which security-oriented values and practices are internalized throughout the organization. Research indicates that organizations characterized by a strong security culture demonstrate greater capabilities in preventing and managing incidents while achieving superior levels of operational performance (Reason, 1997). Such a culture is distinguished by collective responsibility, constant vigilance, professional discipline, and a commitment to continuous learning.

Institutional leadership plays a decisive role in shaping and reinforcing organizational culture by defining institutional values, establishing behavioral standards, and promoting appropriate professional conduct. As emphasized in the

literature, leaders influence organizational culture not only through formal decisions but also through their personal example, organizational symbols, leadership practices, and everyday interactions, thereby creating a coherent institutional framework (Schein, 2010; Northouse, 2019). One of the primary mechanisms through which leadership shapes organizational culture is the institutionalization of values. This process integrates organizational principles into policies, procedures, and routine operational practices, creating a stable and predictable organizational climate in which employees can align their behavior with institutional objectives. Organizational culture also directly influences organizational adaptability and resilience, two capabilities that have become increasingly important within the contemporary security environment. Organizations characterized by flexible, learning-oriented cultures are better equipped to anticipate change, respond to crises, and adapt to rapidly evolving operational conditions (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Consequently, institutional leaders must foster a culture that encourages innovation, collaboration, professional development, and the continuous exchange of knowledge. Another significant aspect concerns the close relationship between organizational culture and communication. These two dimensions are mutually reinforcing: effective communication disseminates organizational values and norms, while organizational culture shapes how information is interpreted, shared, and applied. Empirical research demonstrates that organizations characterized by open and transparent cultures achieve higher levels of communication effectiveness, employee engagement, and organizational commitment (Men, 2014).



Figure 3. Integrated Model of Communication, Ethics, and Organizational Culture

At the same time, organizational culture is closely connected with the ethical dimension of leadership. Ethical values promoted by institutional leaders gradually become internalized by organizational members and eventually constitute an integral component of organizational culture. This integration strengthens trust, reinforces institutional legitimacy, and supports long-term organizational effectiveness (Treviño & Nelson, 2016).

The ongoing digital transformation and the adoption of emerging technologies require organizational culture to evolve continuously. Security institutions must cultivate a culture that embraces innovation, technological competence, and digital literacy while ensuring that technological development remains aligned with ethical principles and institutional objectives (Dragomir-Constantin, 2025c). A defining characteristic of a mature security culture is collective responsibility, whereby every organizational member assumes an active role in maintaining security and preventing operational risks. This collective commitment is reinforced through clearly defined organizational policies, continuous professional training, systematic risk assessment, and effective feedback mechanisms that enable vulnerabilities to be identified and corrected before they escalate into significant threats.

In conclusion, organizational security culture constitutes a strategic pillar of institutional leadership, contributing directly to organizational cohesion, adaptability, resilience, and operational performance. Its integration with communication processes and ethical leadership highlights the necessity of adopting a systemic approach in which organizational values, norms, and practices are fully aligned with institutional security objectives and long-term strategic priorities.

5. Conclusions

The analysis presented in this paper demonstrates that institutional leadership within security organizations should be understood from a multidimensional perspective in which communication, ethics, and organizational culture play decisive roles in shaping organizational performance and institutional legitimacy. In today's security environment, characterized by increasing complexity, uncertainty, and rapidly evolving threats, these dimensions can no longer be considered secondary elements of leadership; rather, they represent structural determinants of organizational effectiveness.

First, the findings emphasize the central role of strategic communication in coordinating organizational activities and managing information during crisis situations. Clear, timely, and bidirectional communication reduces uncertainty and strengthens the capacity of security organizations to respond effectively to emerging threats. Consequently, communication becomes an essential mechanism for organizational integration, aligning individual efforts with institutional objectives. Second, the ethical dimension of leadership emerges as a fundamental determinant of decision legitimacy and of both organizational and societal trust. Ethical

leadership extends beyond compliance with formal regulations by requiring accountability, transparency, integrity, and the ability to address complex moral dilemmas in a balanced and responsible manner. Integrating ethical principles into organizational processes reduces behavioral risks while reinforcing institutional stability and credibility. Third, organizational security culture is identified as a strategic asset that facilitates the internalization of institutional values and norms, shaping both individual and collective behavior. A strong organizational culture founded on responsibility, collaboration, professionalism, and continuous learning enhances organizational resilience and strengthens the capacity to adapt to the rapidly changing external environment.

A key contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the interdependence between communication, ethics, and organizational culture. Together, these dimensions generate a synergistic effect within institutional leadership: communication disseminates ethical values, ethics provides the normative framework for responsible action, and organizational culture ensures the internalization and long-term sustainability of these principles. This relationship is synthesized in the conceptual model proposed in this paper, illustrating that effective institutional leadership results from the integration of these three complementary dimensions.

The scientific contribution of this research consists in the development of an integrated institutional leadership framework for security organizations, connecting communication, ethics, and organizational culture within a unified conceptual model. This perspective extends the existing literature by providing a systemic explanation of the mechanisms that determine leadership performance and institutional legitimacy in organizations operating under conditions of risk, uncertainty, and complexity.

From a practical standpoint, the findings highlight the necessity of designing organizational strategies that simultaneously strengthen internal communication, reinforce ethical governance, and cultivate a security-oriented organizational culture. Investments in communication competencies, ethical leadership development, governance mechanisms, and organizational values should therefore be regarded as strategic priorities for contemporary security institutions.

In conclusion, effective institutional leadership in security organizations depends on the ability to integrate relational and normative dimensions into a coherent leadership model capable of addressing the challenges of the contemporary security environment while ensuring sustainable organizational performance. This

perspective confirms that the future of leadership in the security sector will depend largely on maintaining an appropriate balance between communication, ethics, and organizational culture, which together constitute the essential pillars of institutional legitimacy, resilience, and long-term effectiveness.

References

- Boin, A., 't Hart, P., Stern, E., & Sundelius, B. (2013). *The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Dragomir, F.–L. (2016). Models of Trust and Reputation in eCommerce. *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Œconomica*, 12(6), 235–242.
- Dragomir, F.–L., Alexandrescu, G., & Postolache, F. (2018). Tools for Hierarchical Security Modeling. *eLearning and Software for Education*, 4, 34–38. <https://doi.org/10.12753/2066-026X-18-219>
- Dragomir, F.–L., Dumitriu, C., & Bărbulescu, A. (2021). Recommendation Systems – Modeling Abusive Clauses in E-commerce. *International Conference on Electrical, Computer, Communications and Mechatronics Engineering*, 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICECCME52200.2021>
- Dragomir-Constantin, F.–L. (2025a). Algorithmic Transparency in Information Systems: A Legal Necessity for the Protection of Fundamental Rights. *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Juridica*, 21(1), 126–136. <https://dj.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/AUDJ/article/view/3298>
- Dragomir-Constantin, F.–L. (2025b). Capital Taxation and Economic Resilience: Decision-Making Prediction through Information Systems in the National Security Architecture. *Internal Auditing & Risk Management*, 71(1), 20–32.
- Dragomir-Constantin, F.–L. (2025c). Information Systems and Technological Security Strategy for Reducing Economic Dependency. *EuroEconomica*, 44(1), 17–26.
- Dragomir-Constantin, F.–L. (2025d). Information Systems for Real-Time Decisions: A Strategic Approach to Strengthening National Security and Economic Resilience. *The Journal of Accounting and Management*, 15(2), 112–121.
- Dragomir-Constantin, F.–L. (2025e). Intelligent Information Systems for the Circular Economy: A National Security-Oriented Approach and Adaptive Decision Making. *Hyperion Economic Journal*, 1(12), 44–51.
- Dragomir-Constantin, F.–L. (2025f). Modeling Fiscal Pressure for Economic Resilience: An Intelligent Information System Approach Based on J48 Tree. *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Œconomica*, 21(3).
- Men, L. R. (2014). Strategic internal communication: Transformational leadership, communication channels, and employee satisfaction. *Public Relations Journal*, 8(1), 1–21.
- Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Northouse, P. G. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Reason, J. (1997). *Managing the risks of organizational accidents*. Ashgate.

- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Shockley-Zalabak, P., Ellis, K., & Winograd, G. (2010). Organizational trust: What it means, why it matters. *Organization Development Journal*, 28(1), 39–48.
- Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 571–610. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258788>
- Tache, F.-L. (2009). Advice in electronic commerce. *3rd International Workshop on Soft Computing Applications*, 111–114.
- Tache, F.-L. (2010). Trust model for consumer protection (TMCP). *4th International Workshop on Soft Computing Applications*, 107–112.
- Treviño, L. K., & Nelson, K. A. (2016). *Managing business ethics: Straight talk about how to do it right* (7th ed.). Wiley.
- Tyler, T. R. (2006). *Why people obey the law*. Princeton University Press.
- Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2007). *Managing the unexpected: Resilient performance in an age of uncertainty* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.