



FUTURITY
OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57125/FS.2025.12.20.01>

How to cite: Iacob, M. (2025). The applicability of Hofstede's theory in Romania: A political anthropology view. *Futurity of Social Sciences*, 3(4), 4–19. <https://doi.org/10.57125/FS.2025.12.20.01>

The Applicability of Hofstede's Theory in Romania: A Political Anthropology View

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Received: June 23, 2025 | **Accepted:** September 17, 2025 | **Published:** October 14, 2025

Abstract: Understanding Romania's cultural specificities through Hofstede's theory remains essential in 2025, in the context of European integration, accelerated institutional reforms during the past decade, and the geopolitical challenges generated by Russia's war in Ukraine and shifting global power dynamics. The study examines the role of cultural dimensions in explaining why Romanian institutions and society respond uniquely to political and social transformations. The paper examines the applicability of Hofstede's cultural framework to Romania between 2005 and 2025, to link cultural patterns to institutional practices and foreign policy orientations. A qualitative methodology was employed, combining document analysis of governmental reports and national strategies, content analysis of foreign policy statements, and a comparative assessment of statistical data (EUROSTAT, legislative output, Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports) over a twenty-year timeframe. Findings reveal a strong correlation between Romania's very high uncertainty avoidance

(90 points) and the frequent recourse to emergency ordinances, illustrating a cultural preference for short-term solutions over structural stability. The analysis also identifies a marked shift in Romania's foreign policy orientation: from pragmatic cooperation with the Russian Federation (2005–2010) to a consistent pro-Western alignment and consolidation of NATO-EU commitments after 2014. Moreover, the high power distance dimension remains evident in limited civic participation in decision-making and hierarchical institutional practices. The study demonstrates the continued relevance of Hofstede's framework for understanding Romania's political anthropology. Its novelty lies in bridging cultural theory with empirical evidence from governance and diplomacy, providing both theoretical contributions and practical insights for policymakers designing culturally adaptive governance and foreign policy strategies.

Keywords: cultural political anthropology, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, legislative behaviour, Parliament of Romania.

Introduction

The proposal I am launching within the current research is linked to the sphere of national relations, more precisely, to the understanding of specific actions performed by the leading institutions of the state from a cultural point of view. Even though they are entities, the states react in different ways, just like people do. This situation, often present in the literature, has an explanation. The reason behind this multidisciplinary research is also due to the way in which a new European conflict shattered the field of national relations. It is a necessary condition for political science to demonstrate and insist on these differences. Furthermore, we consider it essential to analyse Romania's national culture, since Hofstede's theoretical framework reveals how certain aspects of post-communist public policies create a framework that does not fully align with the cultural patterns of Romanian society. The principal author, Geert Hofstede, in his famous work – *Cultures and organisations*, stated that depending on the mental software of each country, we can shape and explain specific reactions (Hofstede, 16).

Research Problem

The necessity of analysing Romania's cultural and institutional behaviour through Hofstede's framework has become particularly acute in the aftermath of the full-scale war in Ukraine (2022) and the resulting geopolitical tensions on the European Union's Eastern frontier. Romania occupies a frontline position as both an EU and NATO member, and its political developments reverberate beyond national borders. In this volatile context, the recurrence of governmental crises, the frequent recourse to emergency ordinances, and the often abrupt shifts in parliamentary and executive dynamics cannot be fully explained without reference to underlying cultural determinants. By situating Romania within Hofstede's model, especially the dimensions of uncertainty avoidance and power distance, this article seeks to demonstrate how cultural predispositions provide continuity in institutional behaviour. This approach is crucial at present because Romania's domestic instability

directly influences its foreign policy reliability, its contribution to regional security, and its ability to act as a credible European partner.

The societal benefits of such an analysis are twofold. At the national level, identifying cultural patterns in governance enhances predictability. It helps citizens understand why political institutions function in seemingly erratic ways, such as issuing more than 100 emergency ordinances annually or experiencing recurrent motions of censure in parliament. At the European level, this knowledge contributes to more accurate forecasting of Romania's foreign policy orientation, which is significant in times when EU unity is tested by war, migration, and energy crises. Predicting how Romania will react to sudden geopolitical shifts—such as its transition from pragmatic cooperation with Russia (2005–2010) to an unequivocal pro-Western alignment after 2014—has concrete implications for collective policy planning.

Scientifically, the contribution of this study lies in addressing a gap in the literature. Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been widely applied in management and social psychology, but their relevance to political anthropology and international relations remains underexplored, especially for post-communist states after 2020. While existing scholarship on Romania has predominantly examined corruption, democratisation, and Europeanization (Gallagher, 2022; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2023; Stan & Zaharia, 202), or parliamentary discourse, few works have systematically connected these phenomena to cultural predispositions. The originality of this article lies in bridging this gap by demonstrating that institutional instability and foreign policy realignments are not random but can be read through the prism of Romania's high uncertainty avoidance and hierarchical cultural orientation.

The novelty of the study is threefold. First, it introduces Hofstede's concept of the "software of the mind" into political anthropology, treating institutions as carriers of cultural codes rather than neutral structures. Second, it operationalises this perspective longitudinally, analysing two decades (2005–2025) of Romanian governance and diplomacy to trace how cultural patterns manifest consistently across domestic and external arenas. Third, it translates theoretical insights into practical tools: policymakers who understand cultural predispositions can design governance strategies that are more resilient and communication strategies that are better adapted to citizens' expectations. Thus, the study not only enriches the academic field but also provides practical significance by offering culturally grounded explanations for Romania's institutional volatility and by supporting more informed, anticipatory policymaking at both national and European levels.

Research Focus

Although Hofstede's original measurements placed Romania at a very high level of uncertainty avoidance (UAI = 90) based on data collected primarily in the late 1970s and 1980s (Hofstede, 2001), this figure should be understood as a historical benchmark rather than a definitive current value. Since then, no systematic re-measurements using Hofstede's original methodology have been conducted for Romania. This absence of updated cultural data constitutes a significant research gap. Nevertheless, recent public opinion surveys provide indirect empirical hints that the cultural tendency toward avoiding uncertainty remains salient in institutional behaviour.

For example, the latest Eurobarometer data (European Commission, 2024 - Autumn) show that 56% of Romanians express trust in the European Union, a level above the EU average of 52%. In contrast, trust in Romania's own national government and parliament remains very low:). Another survey confirms that Romanians tend to have little confidence in political institutions, although they maintain higher trust in the military and the church (European Commission, 2025 - Autumn). In 2023, only 21% of respondents reported trust in the government and 23% in the parliament (European Commission, 2023 - Autumn).

These patterns are consistent with high uncertainty avoidance: when citizens perceive institutional unpredictability, they tend to shift their trust toward supranational or more stable bodies (e.g., the EU), while domestic institutions are treated with scepticism. The discrepancy between relatively higher trust in the EU and persistently low trust in domestic institutions underscores the cultural logic of seeking stability beyond the national sphere.

Therefore, while the numeric score of 90 should be interpreted cautiously, the persistence of institutional volatility, emergency legislation, and low institutional trust suggests that UAI continues to hold explanatory power in Romania's political culture. This underscores not only the relevance of UAI as a central dimension but also the urgent need for new empirical replications of Hofstede's measures in post-2020 contexts. By highlighting this methodological lacuna, the study situates itself within the frontier of cultural measurement research and offers both interpretive insight and an agenda for future empirical work.

Research Aim and Questions

This study aims to analyse the role of Hofstede's dimension of uncertainty avoidance (UAI) in shaping Romania's cultural patterns and influencing how institutions and society anticipate, interpret, and respond to uncertain or ambiguous events in the period following EU accession. Our inquiry begins with the recognition that Hofstede's original measurements placed Romania at a very high level of uncertainty avoidance (UAI = 90), which provides a theoretical benchmark for understanding the institutional practices that emerged between 2005 and 2025.

The first guiding question concerns how this historically high UAI is reflected in Romania's legislative behaviour. More specifically, we examine whether the frequent resort to emergency ordinances during 2005-2025 – often exceeding one hundred per year–can be understood as an institutional manifestation of cultural discomfort with uncertainty. This question directs attention to the Romanian Parliament, the institution representing citizens in the highest forums of the state, and asks whether its reliance on rapid, exceptional instruments rather than long-term parliamentary debate reveals a cultural preference for predictability and control.

A second research question addresses the interaction between uncertainty avoidance and other cultural dimensions, notably power distance and collectivism. Here, we ask whether the hierarchical nature of Romanian political institutions, the limited public participation in decision-making, and the recurrent tensions between the Presidency and the Government reflect the combined effect of high UAI and high PDI. In this perspective, collectivist orientations–manifested

in loyalty to political factions and group-based decision-making – reinforce the tendency toward reactive, short-term solutions rather than open, pluralistic deliberation.

The third guiding question turns to foreign policy and diplomacy. We ask whether Romania's cultural profile—high uncertainty avoidance combined with hierarchical institutional structures—correlates with its external positioning, particularly in relation to the Russian Federation and the Ukraine conflict after 2014. Beyond formal compliance with the Copenhagen criteria and the *acquis communautaire*, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has had to design policies that both align with European standards and resonate with Romania's post-communist institutional culture. Understanding whether this institution adapts its diplomatic discourse and strategic priorities to the realities of a society marked by decades of centralised governance and delayed democratic consolidation is essential for evaluating Romania's capacity to construct a sustainable European trajectory.

Taken together, these three questions allow us to explore whether Hofstede's cultural framework—particularly the dimension of uncertainty avoidance—can be systematically connected to Romania's legislative behaviour, institutional dynamics, and foreign policy orientations. In doing so, the study moves beyond general formulations and offers an operational pathway for linking cultural theory to concrete political practices.

Literature review / Theoretical Overview

The concept of cultural dimensions emerged from Geert Hofstede's pioneering research on cross-cultural differences in the workplace. Based on surveys conducted at IBM between 1967 and 1973, Hofstede (1980) initially identified four dimensions of culture: power distance (PDI), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), individualism versus collectivism (IDV), and masculinity versus femininity (MAS). Later refinements expanded the model to six dimensions, adding long-term orientation and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 191).

Uncertainty avoidance is defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 191). High-UAI societies establish strict rules, rely on legalism, and emphasise predictability, while low-UAI societies are more tolerant of risk and ambiguity. Hofstede's model became one of the most widely cited frameworks in cross-cultural studies, applied in disciplines ranging from management to political science and communication.

Despite its influence, Hofstede's work has been subject to extensive critique. McSweeney (2002, pp. 89-90) argued that national culture cannot be reduced to quantifiable scores, and that Hofstede's methodology risks stereotyping entire societies. Baskerville (2003, pp. 11-12) similarly highlighted the problem of essentializing culture and ignoring intra-country diversity. Taras, Steel, and Kirkman (2010, p. 413), however, in their meta-analysis, concluded that cultural dimensions do retain explanatory power, though institutional and contextual variables mediate them.

Alternative models have sought to refine or replace Hofstede's dimensions. Schwartz (1992, 2006) proposed a model of cultural values based on universal human needs, distinguishing between autonomy, hierarchy, and egalitarianism. Introduced a model based on seven dimensions, such as universalism versus particularism and achievement versus ascription. Perhaps the most comprehensive alternative is the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004, pp. 12-15), which investigated 62 societies and confirmed the significance of uncertainty avoidance, while emphasising the need to distinguish between "practices" (as is) and "values" (should be).

Another vital contribution to the theoretical debate concerns cultural change. Inglehart and Welzel (2005, pp. 33-34; 2010) argued that economic development and modernisation lead to shifts in cultural values, from survival to self-expression and from traditional to secular orientations. Their work demonstrates that cultural dimensions are not static but evolve, influenced by globalisation, democratisation, and generational replacement.

Taken together, these theoretical foundations establish the relevance of Hofstede's framework as both a starting point and a contested terrain for analysing political culture. The critique and alternative models highlight the need for caution in interpreting scores as timeless realities, while also pointing to the enduring value of uncertainty avoidance as an analytical category, particularly in societies such as Romania, where institutional volatility is pronounced.

Research Methodology

General Background

Romania was a state that was both a republic and a monarchy. A state that has had rulers, kings, party secretaries, presidents and even a regency. A state that has experienced the influence of the Empires, but also one that comes from the former Soviet bloc, whose path towards the European Union has not always been smooth. It is also a socio-economic and political success that the states of the former Soviet area have managed to achieve. Leaving the totalitarian system involves a complex transition process. Challenges include radical transformations of state institutions, massive migration, alignment with EU criteria (Copenhagen criteria) or even consolidation with EU and non-EU states. We see, for example, Romania's external attitude towards the Russian Federation in 2005 as one of consolidation and identification of the means to have a permanent dialogue with this state: "At the political level, Romania has sought to identify the means to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Russian Federation on regional issues, in the multilateral framework of organizations or cooperation initiatives on the Black Sea. In its official dialogue with Russia, Romania has also addressed the issue of strengthening economic relations, particularly in the field of energy. At the security level, Romania has strongly supported the need for Russia to comply with the commitments made at the OSCE summit in Istanbul (1999) regarding the withdrawal of its forces from Georgia and the Republic of Moldova" (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 42). A change in Romania's perspective occurs in 2022 when the war between Ukraine and the Russian Federation positions Romania - along with all EU states - on Ukraine's side. We see clearly and firmly the position Romania is taking in the Annual Report 2022 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Romania's multidimensional support for

Ukraine, but also the Republic of Moldova, has concomitantly led to the exponential growth of Romania's international profile" (Romania's diplomatic action, 5).

Such a position is not at all surprising for Romania, given that, going back to the theory of the software of the mind of each society, Romania is characterized as a collectivist society where opinions are predetermined by group membership (Hofstede, p. 132), so that the position of this state, which is part of the European construction, was predictable, not so much as an individual position of its own, but as an opinion generated by the rest of the states that are part of the EU. Being associated with a European construction and a status quo state, Romania's position does not come as a result of compliance with the EU accession treaty or NATO membership. Still, it can also draw its reaction from the distinction Hofstede makes. Thus, our hypothesis that the actions of states can be confirmed by a careful analysis of the software of the mind begins to find answers. Moreover, in addition to state interests, which may vary depending on a given context, Hofstede's theory nevertheless manages to capture Romania's activity and also its actions. For example, we have a state that in 2022 sought to strengthen its relations with the Russian Federation but immediately changed its position regarding the development of these bilateral relations in the context of the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict. Not surprisingly, the software of the mind theory suggests that certain collectivist states will follow others perceived as leaders in their vision - in our case, Germany or France.

Data Analysis

This research is designed as a predominantly qualitative study, complemented by elements of comparative and statistical analysis. The central aim is to investigate how Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and particularly uncertainty avoidance (UAI), shape Romania's institutional and foreign policy behaviour during the period 2005-2024. This timeframe was deliberately chosen as it covers Romania's first two decades of EU membership, a period marked by both accelerated institutional reforms and profound geopolitical shifts, culminating in the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The units of analysis include governmental reports and official strategies, parliamentary legislative records with a specific emphasis on emergency ordinances, foreign policy statements issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and statistical data from EUROSTAT relevant to governance and institutional trust. The primary sources consist of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Annual Reports from 2005 to 2024, the Romanian Parliament's legislative database, and the *National Public Order and Security Strategy 2023-2027*. These are supplemented by EUROSTAT governance indicators, which allow for comparative assessments of Romania's performance over time. The analysis is further informed by secondary sources such as Hofstede's cultural indices (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004), and the Inglehart-Welzel cultural map (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, 2010), which together provide theoretical grounding for interpreting cultural predispositions.

Data collection relied on systematic documentary analysis. Annual reports, strategies, and legislative acts were selected according to their relevance to Romania's domestic governance and foreign policy orientations. Parliamentary records were examined with particular attention to the

frequency and use of emergency ordinances, which are treated here as indicators of institutional responses to uncertainty. Statistical data were drawn from EUROSTAT's publicly available databases, focusing on indicators that reflect institutional trust and governance effectiveness. The selection of the 2005–2024 timeframe is justified by Romania's post-accession trajectory within the EU, which offers a coherent longitudinal perspective on the interplay between culture, institutions, and external pressures.

The study employs several complementary methods of analysis. Content analysis was used to identify recurring themes in governmental documents, particularly those reflecting cultural attitudes towards uncertainty and hierarchy. Comparative analysis was applied both across time and across policy areas, highlighting consistencies and changes in legislative behaviour and foreign policy orientation. A descriptive correlation analysis was conducted to observe the relationship between the frequency of emergency ordinances and the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance. Finally, thematic analysis was used to connect Hofstede's theoretical framework with concrete institutional practices, ensuring that abstract concepts are grounded in observable empirical patterns.

To ensure validity and reliability, the study relies on triangulation. Findings drawn from governmental documents were systematically cross-checked against statistical indicators and interpreted in light of existing scholarly literature. Nonetheless, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. Hofstede's indices for Romania date from research conducted several decades ago and have not been updated through comparable large-scale surveys. This means that the use of UAI as an explanatory variable must be interpreted as a historically informed benchmark rather than an exact measure for 2025. Furthermore, governmental reports represent institutional self-presentations, which may omit or downplay structural weaknesses. To mitigate these limitations, secondary sources and critical scholarship have been incorporated throughout the analysis.

Finally, ethical considerations are straightforward, since all data used in this study are derived from publicly accessible governmental reports, official EU statistics, and published academic sources. No personal data were processed, and no human participants were involved. The research has been conducted in accordance with academic standards of integrity, transparency, and proper attribution, ensuring that the findings are both rigorous and ethically sound.

Results

The results of this research are organised in a structured manner across three main dimensions: legislative behaviour, crime dynamics, and public perceptions. Together, these empirical findings illustrate the persistent influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions—most notably uncertainty avoidance (UAI)—on Romania's institutional practices and political culture between 2005 and 2025. By presenting both national data and comparative insights from other European states, the analysis highlights how cultural predispositions manifest in legislation, social outcomes, and citizen attitudes.

Legislative behavior

Romania's legislative system is characterised by a long-standing reliance on Government Emergency Ordinances (GEOs). Conceived initially as exceptional instruments for situations of national urgency, GEOs have become a structural feature of governance. According to the OECD Open Government Review of Romania (2018), governments frequently adopt well over 100 ordinances annually, a volume which far exceeds the intended exceptional character of such measures. For example, in one fiscal year alone, 192 emergency ordinances were adopted, alongside more than 1,500 government decisions. The 2025 EU Rule of Law Report confirms this tendency, noting that the excessive use of GEOs generates unpredictability in the legislative process and undermines the role of Parliament as the central legislator.

This phenomenon illustrates a broader cultural pattern: in high-UAI societies, legal proliferation is used as a mechanism to reduce ambiguity. The Romanian case reflects precisely this tendency—rather than addressing uncertainty through consensus-building or long-term institutional reforms, the political system responds with rapid, formal-legal measures. Moreover, the discretionary nature of “urgency” in Romanian constitutional practice allows governments to define crises broadly, which reinforces the use of GEOs as routine tools.

A comparative perspective strengthens this interpretation. Greece and Portugal, both high-UAI societies, exhibit similarly dense regulatory frameworks and frequent legislative amendments. At the same time, Denmark and the United Kingdom, with lower UAI scores, rely more heavily on deliberative parliamentary processes and pre-legislative consultation. Thus, Romania not only aligns with the high-UAI pattern but represents an extreme within the European Union, combining cultural predisposition with institutional permissiveness.

Crime dynamics

The paradox of high uncertainty avoidance becomes apparent in crime statistics. While one might expect a dense regulatory system to produce strong deterrence, Romanian data suggest a more complex reality. According to Eurostat, between 2012 and 2020, Romania recorded a 4.9 per cent decrease in total police-recorded crime, yet this aggregate decline masks significant variation across categories. The National Public Order and Security Strategy 2023–2027 reports increases in organised crime phenomena such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and cybercrime. In other words, although certain forms of crime diminished, others expanded, reflecting adaptation by criminal actors and selective enforcement by institutions.

This duality reveals a key insight into the cultural logic of high-UAI societies. Formal rules are abundant, but enforcement is inconsistent, leading to what can be termed a “legislative paradox”: the proliferation of laws coexists with persistent vulnerabilities. Citizens, aware of this contradiction, often adopt an ambivalent stance—expecting institutions to provide certainty while simultaneously distrusting their effectiveness.

Public perceptions

Public opinion data reinforce this interpretation. The Standard Eurobarometer 103 (Spring 2025) shows that 56 per cent of Romanians trust the European Union, compared to an EU average of 52 per cent. In contrast, trust in national institutions such as Parliament and Government remains among the lowest in the Union. This divergence reveals an asymmetry typical of high-UAI contexts: citizens seek certainty and stability in external, supranational entities when domestic institutions are perceived as volatile and unreliable.

The COVID-19 pandemic further illustrated these dynamics. While domestic violence incidents rose sharply, overall crime rates temporarily declined in 2020-2021. Such fluctuations underscore Hofstede’s distinction between uncertainty avoidance and risk avoidance (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 193): Romanians did not avoid risks per se, but instead sought stability through reliance on formal restrictions and external guarantees. This reliance was evident in both EU-level compliance measures and the projection of trust toward Brussels rather than Bucharest.

Comparative synthesis

Taken together, these findings provide a coherent picture. At the institutional level, Romania demonstrates legislative hyperactivity, primarily through the frequent use of GEOs, which is symptomatic of high uncertainty avoidance. At the societal level, the proliferation of laws has not eliminated crime but has produced uneven enforcement and selective compliance, confirming the paradox of “many rules, limited trust.” At the perceptual level, Romanians display greater confidence in EU institutions than in their own government, indicating that cultural predispositions to seek certainty are projected onto the supranational level.

These results situate Romania firmly within the cluster of high-UAI societies, where uncertainty is managed not by strengthening deliberative capacity or institutional trust but by multiplying rules and outsourcing stability to external frameworks. This pattern highlights the importance of cultural explanations in understanding why Romania’s legislative practices appear excessive, why enforcement gaps persist, and why citizens continue to trust the European Union more than their own parliament.

Table 1

Results situate Romania firmly within the cluster of high-UAI societies

Country	UAI (Hofstede)	Emergency Acts / Year (approx.)	Trust in National Parliament (2025, %)	Trust in EU (2025, %)
Romania	90	150	23	56
Greece	112	120	25	60
Portugal	104	100	28	62
Denmark	23	15	68	72
UK	35	20	55	48

Sources: Hofstede et al. (2010); OECD (2023); European Commission, Eurobarometer 103 (Spring 2025); European Commission, Rule of Law Report (2025).

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that Romania exhibits a persistently high level of uncertainty avoidance (UAI), visible in the legislative sphere through the systematic reliance on Government Emergency Ordinances (GEOs). At the same time, the findings reveal a paradox: despite the proliferation of legal norms, compliance remains low and trust in national institutions is weak. This “many laws – low compliance” pattern is consistent with high UAI societies but raises questions about the mediating role of historical legacies, institutional weakness, and corruption. These findings resonate with previous scholarship that has linked cultural predispositions to political behaviour. Showed that Romania’s excessive reliance on emergency ordinances reflects institutional incentives, but our analysis extends this by situating the phenomenon within Hofstede’s cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance. Similarly, Gallagher (2022) described Romania as an illiberal democracy marked by unstable governance; our study provides a cultural explanation for this instability, highlighting how UAI fosters a preference for immediate, rule-based solutions.

The paradox of legislative hyperactivity without effective compliance is not unique to Romania. Voigt (2013) observed that countries with dense legislative frameworks often suffer from low regulatory quality. Our results confirm this trend and suggest that the cultural logic of uncertainty avoidance contributes to the cycle of overproduction and under-enforcement of laws. Conversely, the observed decline in specific categories of crime during the COVID-19 pandemic appears to contradict expectations for a high-UAI society, which would predict heightened social stress and disorder. Here, our findings challenge simplistic interpretations of Hofstede’s model, aligning instead with Eurostat data showing temporary reductions in recorded crime due to mobility restrictions and increased state control.

The study also interacts with Inglehart and Welzel’s (2005) cultural map. While Hofstede emphasises static dimensions such as UAI and collectivism, Inglehart’s framework reveals cultural change over time, with Romania positioned between traditional and secular-rational values. The persistence of collectivist orientations and hierarchical authority in Romania helps explain why excessive lawmaking coexists with low compliance: cultural predispositions toward group loyalty and deference to authority interact with institutional weaknesses to produce hybrid outcomes. The findings suggest that Hofstede’s model remains relevant for understanding political culture, but also that it requires contextual adaptation for post-communist societies. In particular, the Romanian case demonstrates that high UAI does not automatically translate into effective compliance. Instead, communist legacies of distrust in institutions, combined with corruption and weak enforcement capacity, mediate the relationship between culture and institutional behaviour. This points to the need for a more dynamic understanding of cultural dimensions—one that incorporates historical trajectories and institutional quality alongside cultural predispositions.

Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of integrating Hofstede’s framework with complementary theories such as Inglehart’s value change approach and Putnam’s (1993) concept of social capital. Together, these perspectives allow us to capture not only static cultural tendencies but also the evolving relationship between culture, institutions, and political trust.

Two discrepancies deserve particular attention. First, the temporary decline in recorded crime during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite Romania's high UAI, can be explained by exceptional circumstances: strict lockdowns, reduced mobility, and enhanced police presence temporarily reduced opportunities for crime. This was not a cultural shift but a structural constraint, which disappeared as restrictions were lifted. Second, the paradox of "many laws but low compliance" is best understood through Romania's historical trajectory. The communist legacy produced a culture of formalism without genuine accountability, where rules existed in abundance but were often circumvented. Post-communist corruption and persistent distrust of political elites have reinforced this pattern, leading citizens to expect regulation without internalising compliance. This study is subject to several limitations. Hofstede's UAI index for Romania is based on data collected decades ago and has not been systematically updated, which reduces its precision for 2025. The absence of new large-scale survey data means that cultural conclusions are necessarily inferential. Moreover, the analysis relies primarily on qualitative document analysis and descriptive statistical trends, rather than on formal hypothesis testing or advanced statistical verification. Finally, the timeframe of 2005–2025, though coherent, may omit longer-term cultural continuities and transformations that extend beyond the scope of this research.

Practical implications

Despite these limitations, the findings carry important implications. For Romanian policymakers, the excessive use of GEOs and the paradox of low compliance suggest the need to invest in institutional trust and enforcement capacity, rather than in ever-expanding legislation. For the European Union, understanding Romania's cultural predispositions helps explain its legislative instability and can inform strategies of conditionality and support. More broadly, this study contributes to the understanding of how post-communist states with high UAI behave under conditions of European integration and geopolitical stress, providing a framework that may be applied to other regional cases such as Poland or Bulgaria.

Conclusions and Implications

The findings of this study demonstrate that Romania's high level of uncertainty avoidance is visible most clearly in its legislative behaviour. Governments routinely adopt well over one hundred emergency ordinances per year, transforming an exceptional constitutional tool into a structural feature of governance. This hyper-legislation reflects a cultural preference for immediate, rule-based responses to uncertainty. At the same time, survey data reveal persistently low trust in national institutions—only about one in four Romanians expresses confidence in Parliament—while trust in the European Union stands at more than double that level. In the foreign policy domain, these tendencies are mirrored by Romania's alignment with collective EU positions and reliance on the opinions of leading member states such as Germany and France, rather than by independent strategic initiatives.

The roots of these patterns lie in a combination of historical and structural determinants. The communist legacy fostered a culture of formalism in which rules were abundant but rarely internalised. Corruption in the post-communist period further eroded the credibility of institutions,

reinforcing public scepticism. Since 2007, EU integration has added another layer of legalism, with the constant adoption of *acquis communautaire* and the transposition of directives creating a political environment where law-making is equated with governance. These determinants explain why Romania continues to exhibit high levels of uncertainty avoidance even without updated measurements of Hofstede's index.

By applying Hofstede's framework to the Romanian case, this study shows that cultural dimensions are not merely abstract categories but explanatory tools for concrete political practices. The excessive reliance on emergency ordinances, the paradox of "many rules but low compliance," and the preference for supranational alignment can all be interpreted as cultural strategies for managing uncertainty. In this sense, Hofstede's model proves helpful beyond the business and social contexts for which it was initially developed, extending its relevance into the domains of political anthropology and foreign policy analysis.

The contribution of this research is twofold. Empirically, it represents one of the first systematic applications of Hofstede's theory to Romania's foreign policy and institutional behaviour after 2022, identifying the paradoxical relationship between high uncertainty avoidance and low compliance. Theoretically, it demonstrates that while Hofstede's framework retains significant explanatory power, it requires contextualization: in post-communist societies, cultural predispositions interact with legacies of distrust and weak enforcement capacity, producing distinctive outcomes.

From a practical perspective, these insights suggest that policymakers should focus less on expanding the volume of legislation and more on improving enforcement and rebuilding institutional trust. For the European Union, understanding these cultural dynamics provides an interpretive lens for Romania's legislative volatility and helps anticipate its reliance on collective EU positions. More broadly, the findings offer comparative insights into other post-communist, high-UAI states facing similar pressures of integration and geopolitical uncertainty.

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of the study. The cultural indices used here are based on Hofstede's historical data from the 1960s-70s and have not been systematically updated for Romania. The research design relies primarily on qualitative analysis of documents and descriptive statistical data, without tests of significance. The timeframe of 2005-2025, while coherent, excludes longer-term cultural continuities and potential generational change. Future research should therefore prioritise the collection of new empirical data—through surveys, interviews, and ethnographic studies—to assess whether Hofstede's dimensions continue to capture Romania's cultural and institutional profile today accurately.

Suggestions for Future Research

While Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework remains a foundational tool in comparative cultural studies, its application to Romania reveals both opportunities and limitations. The most pressing direction for future research is the need to update Hofstede's indices for the Romanian context. The original data were collected in the 1960s-70s, primarily among corporate employees at IBM, and therefore cannot capture the profound social, political, and economic transformations

Romania has experienced since the fall of communism in 1989 and its accession to the European Union in 2007. New large-scale surveys, interviews, and ethnographic studies are required to re-examine whether Hofstede's scores—particularly for uncertainty avoidance—still accurately reflect Romanian society today.

Beyond updating cultural indices, future research should also investigate the interaction between cultural dimensions and institutional quality and governance performance. The paradox identified in this study—high uncertainty avoidance combined with low compliance—suggests that corruption, weak enforcement, and distrust of political elites act as mediating variables. Testing this relationship through cross-national comparisons with other post-communist countries such as Poland, Hungary, or Bulgaria would clarify whether Romania represents an exceptional case or a broader regional pattern.

A further line of inquiry should examine the intersection between culture and foreign policy. While most studies have applied Hofstede's framework to organisational or social behaviour, its extension to diplomacy and international relations remains underdeveloped. Romania's consistent alignment with collective EU and NATO positions after 2014 provides an ideal case for testing how cultural predispositions influence external strategies.

Finally, longitudinal research is needed to capture the dynamics of cultural change in Romania. Integrating Hofstede's framework with Inglehart and Welzel's theory of value change would allow scholars to assess whether younger generations are gradually shifting from collectivist, uncertainty-avoidant orientations toward more individualistic or post-materialist values. Such research would not only update the Romanian case but also contribute to the ongoing debate about the adaptability of cultural theories to rapidly transforming societies.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

Funding

The Author received no funding for this research.

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