

PATRIOTISM AND MILITARY VALUES

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***Abstract:** Patriotism may be generated by the formation of active and informed citizens and by the development of civic conscience, compassion and tolerance in a world of multiple diversities, which coexist and impose tight observation on extremes. The patriotic behavior, reflected by solidarity, involvement, engagement and identification with general interests, expands and compresses at the same time. To speak of patriotism today is an audacious engagement, meant to reveal tensions between universal and national, or between global and local. The current study aims at identifying the modern configuration of the military young people’s axiological consciousness and the place that ‘country’ occupies in it. This endeavor sustains the necessity of cultivating an authentic patriotism, purified from nationalistic tendencies.*

***Keywords:** patriotism, nationalism, military values, axiological education, military career.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Each individual is born and he develops as a human being in a given socio-cultural context, without having the possibility of choosing it. This very context provides him with an identity while securing the original nucleus through which he starts the dialogue with the world around him and based on which the individual justifies his choices.

2. PATRIOTISM vs. NATIONALISM

From a philosophical perspective, patriotism is perceived as a complex moral sentiment, in tight connection with the sentiment of “being at home”, and associated with parents, forefathers, the native place, mother tongue a.o.. All of these elements contribute to a socio-cultural modeling of personality, the forming of self-conscience and axiological conscience (as a system of beliefs and values), in close relation with their lifestyle. In other words, we witness a “stylistic particularization of the psychic life” by following perceptive models, geographically and culturally conditioned, a specific language structure or value-related

determinations of feelings and goals. Furthermore, such elements reflect one’s “country” at psychological level (Neveanu, 1978:520). Lucian Blaga, the Romanian poet and philosopher, referred to this reality as the “stylistic matrix” of a culture, perceived as hidden spiritual reality, but yet a powerful one, the “secret mechanism” that administers our conscience.

Within the sociological psychology, Abram Kardiner introduced the concept of “basic personality” (1939), considered to be “that configuration of personality which is shared by most of the society members as a result of their early common experiences” (Allport, 1981:179).

The concept of basic personality leads to the concept of national character, analyzed by Alex Jukeles and D. J. Levinson (Cambridge, 1954). Therefore, patriotism shapes at the level of the basic personality and becomes manifest by a “set of moods and conscience manifestations, including feelings, attitudes and beliefs with regard to integration and belonging to a socio-political community and to a country’s historical and cultural tradition” (DEP, 1979:29). Similarly, the patriotic condition implies not only integration and

belonging but also solidarity, engagement and participation at community's events.

An analysis of the term, from historical perspective, reveals to us its polymorphism and dynamics in time. Patriotism is conditioned socially and historically and each epoch attributes it various significations, in accordance with its targeted social ideals and progress. In this respect, the appearance of state-nations represented a turning point, a fact that caused the gradual conversion of patriotism into nationalism. Thus, ironic remarks to the idea of patriotism are mentioned starting with the 18th century: "patriotism has become a trivial word" (ODP, 2001:329).

In this historical context, nations are promoted as ideal entities, homogenous human collectivities that store specific cultures, traditions and unitary and unique histories. Nationalism, in turn, appears as a "political and cultural orientation that claims the necessity of promoting the nations' autonomous and self-determined development" (EFSU, 2004:733). The negative meaning that we today give the word nationalism is due to its radical forms, but also to intended oblivion of differences between the nationalism's general principles and its particular manifestations, which become dangerous once they promote exclusivist passions and negative feelings toward their exterior world. By exaggeration and ideologization of the aggressive connotation aimed at others, classical nationalism alters and leads to the appearance of totalitarianism, in the 20th century. In the latter half of the 20th century, the overuse of the idea of 'nation' as a form of human ideal cohabitation that denies any other authority, fuels the anti-colonial movement. Consequently, nationalism produces a boomerang effect, contributing to the disintegration of traditional state-structures, which, initially, it consolidated. Deviations of nationalism are caused by a diversity of factors characterizing the contemporary world: an amplification of tensions between They and Us, inequities in the relation reasoning-affection and an affective overloading of various human groups, hidden effects of globalization etc.

The picture of nationalist movements reveals to us a plethora of aspirations: from the fraternity ideal and self-promotion of a nation to ethnical purification and the tendency of "civilizing" other peoples. Accordingly, the perception of nationalism as something good or bad in itself is wrong. Nationalism does not fall under the incidence of ethics, of valuable judgment by itself; but it is judged given the value of its accomplished political projects. Hence, the association of nationalism with chauvinism and xenophobia is still mistaken, once nationalism may animate constructive political projects as well. Starting from this positive perception, contemporary political analysts recommend the use of rational judgment in appreciating each particular case of nationalist manifestation, in turn, and not its definite denial. Within the contemporary world, the destiny of patriotism, nation and nationalism is intimately related to globalization.

According to the modernist viewpoint, supported by the British anthropologist Ernest Gellner (1983), a nation's role, given the current realities, gradually diminishes, at the same pace with the integration of social life in trans-national landscapes, at the planetary scale. Although the tendency of diminishing nationalism is acknowledged by the development of over-state bodies, especially in the fields of economics and communications, there are also claims of supporting the perennity of ethnic communities, as natural entities able to preserve language, religion, ethnicity and territorial connections. As a result, the ethnic origin of nations makes possible for them to continue to exist through cultural, idiomatic expressions, dependant on their language and ethnic spirit. Moreover, "democracy itself generates nationalism and nationalism generates democracy" (Zamfir & Vlăsceanu, 1993:376), because, paradoxically, the democratic character of a regime encourages the demands of ethnic minorities, perceived as groups holding common cultural traditions and defending their identity status as part of society (Smith, 1979).

In conclusion, although the nation that configured the history of the past centuries loses ground, it requires re-definition and re-

analysis as long as the national interest is preserved and it amplifies under the circumstances of global modernity” (John K. Galbraith, 1982). At the same time, although the state-nation, as expression of classical modernity is no longer the main actor of globalization, we have found out that the appearance of an adequate substitute for it is delayed, and this substitute should correspond to global transformations and to finding solutions to social crises that were amplified by globalization.

3. PATRIOTISM AND MILITARY VALUES

The Romanian philosopher, Mircea Eliade published a series of articles in “Cuvantul” and “Vremea” magazines, between 1932 and 1934. These articles were later on included in his work “Oceanography”. The article “Being no longer a Romanian” is relevant for our paper due to the fact that Eliade warned against and denounced a “fashion” manifesting at that time in Romanian young intellectuals, educated at Western universities and strongly influenced by foreign ideals. These educated people, seduced by existential philosophy, came to forget their origin (and adopted a nihilist behavior). Moreover, they became indifferent about the profoundly Christian spirituality of their own people: “these young people understood nothing from the geniality of their Romanian people, haunted by numerous sins, experiencing countless lacks, yet shining with its own intelligence and intuition” (Eliade, 1991:138). In the same social historical context, the refined Romanian diplomat, Nicolae Titulescu, stated at Paris, in December 1929 that it was necessary for the Romanian youth, no matter where they might be, to hold tight to their origins. He continued that openness toward Europe was conditioned by the conscience of one’s own identity: “Europe cannot be loved but as a specific country out of it” (Titulescu, 1985:24).

These extremely actual ideas, by their content and message, encourage us to investigate the existence and manifestation of patriotic feelings among young generations. Such a topic proves to be of great interest

especially when we face the values set of a dignified profession – the military career.

Being an exemplary professional model, in Samuel Huntington’s acceptance, the military career displays to its highest degree the three dimensions of an occupation: expertise, responsibility and l’esprit du corps. The very holding of the armed force imposes a high level of responsibility, based on solid moral education. Approaching the topic of military honor, Henri Carrard noted that, although freedom of action with the modern soldier is greater than of his predecessors, holding force and the good will of accomplishing missions do not allow for quite any type of action and intrusion. Carrard identified three moral limits that should guide military actions, irrespective of the level of combat techniques at their disposal. First of all there must be respect for national laws and international conventions. Secondly, human dignity should be considered by all means. Last, but not least, Carrard set out the interrogation “What does one defend and why?”, thus raising the issue of country and patriotism, by identifying the cause for which one may agree to pay the supreme sacrifice. Should military values stand for general human values, then self-sacrifice, in the name of some noble cause, represents their specific characteristic? The responsible human attitude, in the name of a collective ideal, becomes manifest as patriotism or civism. Military values configure at the crossroads between individual and social values and are impregnated with powerful praxiological valences by their translation into models, standards, actional and behavioral regulations or military rules.

4. STUDY

The study, completed in a military educational institution, revealed the decline of values pertaining to an institutional model of the traditional armed forces, in favor of the occupational model, under the market economical pressure.

The survey was accomplished based on a mixed opinion questionnaire, made up of twelve items. Although the complexity of the investigated topic called for open items, the

items included seven close pre-codified answers for both offering freedom of individualized expression and for making it easier to analyze results.

When asked to what extent they feel animated by patriotism, the respondents generated the following percentages, as shown in Fig.1:

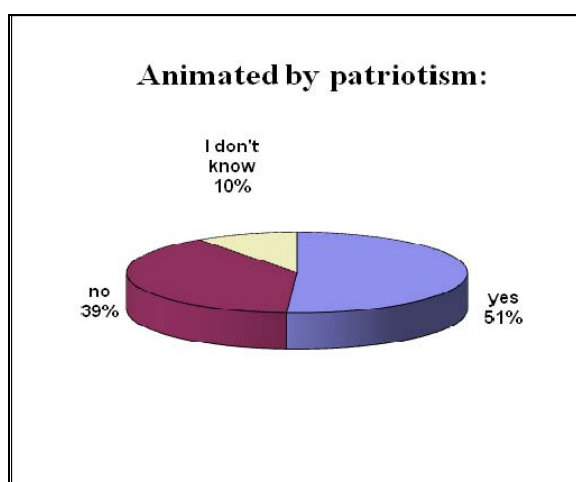


Fig. 1 Animated by patriotism

Apart from 51% of subjects declaring themselves as patriots, 39.2% associated this feeling with their attachment to their country by involvement. The next positions are occupied by appreciation of and respect for their country (Fig.2).

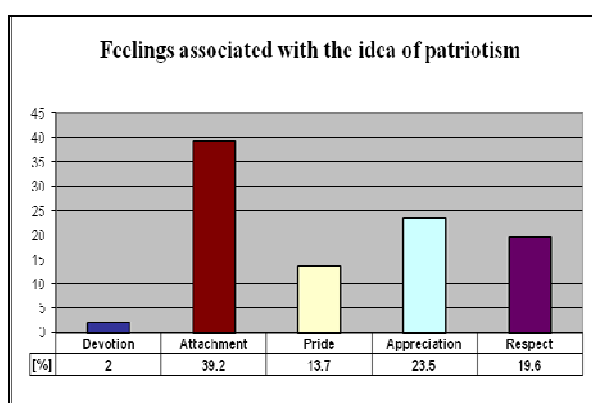


Fig. 2 Feelings associated with the idea of patriotism

Nevertheless, within a personalized hierarchy of military values, only 5.9% of the respondents chose patriotism, thus patriotism comes last on a scale consisting of six values (Fig.3).

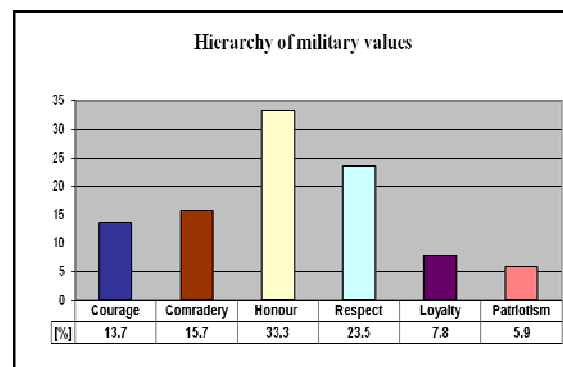


Fig. 3 Hierarchy of military values

On the other side, cadets are aware of the risks involved in their profession, yet only 66% of them are prepared for the supreme sacrifice (Fig.4).

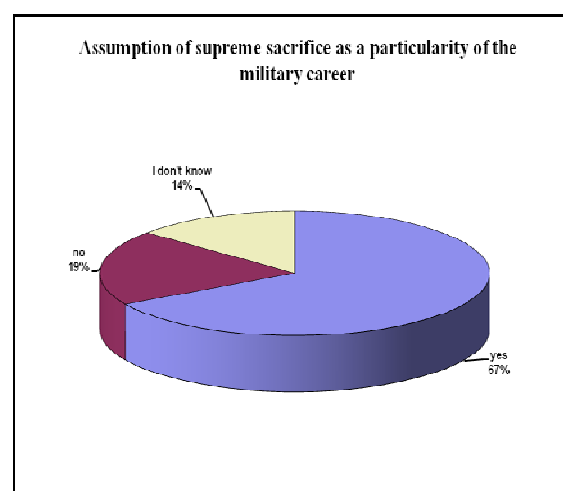


Fig. 4 Assumptions of supreme sacrifice as a particularity of the military career

Statistical differences obtained are explained by various significations attributed to the notion of “country”: native place, the feeling of being at home, parents etc. Although the military education curricula and its specific rituals include as one of their objectives the fostering of patriotic feeling in forming the combatant personality, this finality diminishes under the pressure and invasion of praxiological values (see the model of universal soldier). Furthermore, although the oath of faith to the country explicitly contains the avowal of supreme sacrifice for the country (“I swear to defend my country even at the cost of my life”), its impact is veiled by the physiognomy of the world today, by the excessive formalization of human deeds.

This is the symptom of a society that, in time, eroded the civic spirit in favor of individual interest and transferred the source of attachment to the country and her laws to the area of security feeling, of individual rights and liberties.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of this study warn against the peril of neglecting the axiological education, within the general educational background and, within the military education, in particular – fact that leads to nurturing and amplifying the moral crisis of the social whole. We witness the steady abolition of traditional values within the military institution, thus making room, in a dangerous manner, for the exclusivist manifestation of economical criteria and material values.

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