AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF RELIGIOSITY IN THE IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESS OF PROFESSIONAL SOLDIERS IN THE ROMANIAN ARMY

Master's student MALINA VARTOLOMEI, ass.prof. PhD VICTOR STOICA
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Universitaty from Iaşi, Romania.

ABSTRACT: *This sociological study investigates the influence of religiosity on the socialization process and group cohesion within the Romanian Armed Forces. In an environment defined by rigid hierarchy and existential risk, religion often functions as a critical "social fact", offering psychological stability and a shared group identity. Anchored in the theoretical frameworks of Structural Functionalism and Symbolic Interactionism, the research examines how religious symbols, rituals, and pastoral care are integrated into the professional habitus of military personnel.*

The methodology employs a qualitative case study focused on the 15th Mechanized Brigade "Podul Înalt" in Ia i, Romania. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews with 14 active-duty combatants from Battalion 198. The analysis centers on how soldiers utilize faith to navigate the cognitive dissonance between Christian pacifist values and the lethal requirements of their profession, as well as the specific social role of the battalion's on-site church.

Results demonstrate that religiosity serves as a potent agent of secondary socialization. Participants viewed collective prayer and liturgical participation not merely as spiritual acts, but as primary drivers of camaraderie and psychological resilience. The military church acts as a central hub for social interaction, transforming individual belief into collective solidarity. The study concludes that religiosity is not an anachronism within the modern state apparatus but a functional necessity for the moral and operational efficacy of the unit, reinforcing the concept of the "military family" through spiritual legitimacy.

Keywords: *Military Sociology; Religiosity; Socialization; Unit Cohesion; Romanian Armed Forces; Qualitative Research.*

Introduction

The relationship between the military and religion represents an intersection of two of society's most enduring and total institutions. Both entities demand a high degree of commitment, adherence to hierarchy, and the cultivation of values that transcend individual self-interest. In the contemporary landscape of global security and defense, the psychological and social dimensions of military personnel have become focal points for sociological inquiry. While modern societies are often characterized by a trajectory toward secularization, specific professional subgroups, such as the military, continue to rely heavily on religious structures to maintain morale, cohesion, and ethical clarity in the face of existential threats. This article investigates the dynamics of religiosity within the social life of the military, analyzing how faith acts as a pivotal agent of socialization.

Sociologically, religion is not confined to the theological relationship between the individual and the divine; it is, as Émile Durkheim (1995) posited, a "unified system of beliefs and practices... which unite into one single moral community". Within the high-stress environment of the armed forces, this communal aspect becomes operational. Religion functions as a source of legitimacy for authority and a repository of coping mechanisms for the trauma and uncertainty inherent in the profession of arms.

The specific context of this study is the Romanian military, an institution deeply embedded in a national culture where the Orthodox Church holds significant social capital. As noted by Cuciuc (2009), even in varying degrees of modernity, the underlying religious substrate often shapes the moral compass of the individual. This is particularly relevant in the socialization process defined by Zamfir and Vlăsceanu (1998) as the assimilation of attitudes, values, and behavioral models necessary for social integration. For the soldier, this process is

continuous, transitioning from primary socialization in the family-where faith is often first encountered-to secondary socialization within the military unit, where religious symbols and rituals are repurposed to foster esprit de corps.

However, the integration of religious values into the military sphere is not without internal conflict. The central tension lies in reconciling the Christian ethos of peace and love with the military imperative of lethal force. This cognitive dissonance necessitates a robust framework of "religiosity" that can interpret warfare not as a violation of commandments, but as a defensive, sacrificial duty. Theoretical perspectives such as Structural Functionalism suggest that religion in this context works to minimize "anomie" and maximize solidarity (Merton, 2010), while Symbolic Interactionism highlights how shared religious symbols (the cross, the chaplain, the military church) facilitate interaction and shared identity among diverse personnel (Willaime, 2001).

This research aims to identify and analyze the impact of religiosity on the socialization process among active-duty soldiers. By examining the 15th Mechanized Brigade "Podul Înalt" in Ia i-a historic unit situated in a region with deep religious roots-this study seeks to answer how religious values influence social relations, professional identity, and the management of critical decision-making. Through this investigation, we provide an empirical understanding of how the military chaplaincy and intrinsic faith contribute to the "moral resilience" required in modern defense structures.

1. Religiosity and Socialization in the Military Context: A Conceptual Framework

1.1. The Institutional Symbiosis of the Military and Religion

In the architecture of the modern nation-state, the military and the church operate as two distinct yet deeply interconnected "total institutions", each responsible for maintaining specific dimensions of order and security. While the military apparatus ensures the physical defense and territorial integrity of the state, religious institutions provide the "moral security" and spiritual framework necessary for coping with the existential crises inherent to human conflict. Historically, these entities have functioned in a symbiotic relationship; the state utilizes the legitimizing power of the church to validate its use of force, while the church relies on the stability provided by the state to propagate its moral community. Within the Romanian context, this relationship is particularly robust, as national identity and military organizational culture are historically intertwined with Orthodox Christianity. As Cuciuc (2009) argues, even within secularizing societies, religion continues to function as a subconscious substrate of the collective moral conscience, influencing behaviors and decision-making processes even among those who do not strictly practice theological rituals.

The concept of religiosity, therefore, must be defined sociologically rather than purely theologically. Following the classical perspective of Émile Durkheim, religion is understood not merely as a private belief system but as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things... which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim, 1995, p. 44). When applied to the military environment, the battalion unit mirrors this "moral community," where rituals-both martial and religious-serve to reinforce solidarity and separate the "sacred" duties of the soldier from the "profane" world of civilian life.

1.2 Socialization as a Mechanism of Integration

Central to the understanding of military life is the concept of socialization, the mechanism through which the institution integrates individuals into its unique subculture. This process transcends technical training, requiring the deep internalization of specific ethical codes, values, and behavioral norms. According to Zamfir and Vlăsceanu, socialization is defined as a "psychosocial process of transmission-assimilation of attitudes, values, conceptions, or behavioral models specific to a group... with a view to the social integration of a person" (1998, p. 546).

For the military recruit, this integration is not a singular event but a continuous trajectory comprised of distinct stages. Primary socialization occurs within the family unit, where the individual is first exposed to religious symbols and moral basics. This foundation is subsequently built upon during secondary socialization within the military

unit. Here, the "battalion family" acts as a new agent of socialization, re-contextualizing early religious and moral lessons to fit the demands of professional duty. Religiosity acts as a stabilizing variable across these stages; the innate human inclination toward the transcendent-described by Cuciuc (2009, p. 111) as a "genetic reality"-does not vanish upon conscription or enlistment but is repurposed to support the psychological resilience of the combatant.

1.3. The Sociological Functions of Religion in the Barracks

To understand why religion remains persistent in a technocratic military, one must examine its utility through a functionalist lens. Drawing on the socio-anthropological framework proposed by Rivière (2000), religion fulfills four specific social functions that are essential for the maintenance of military cohesion.

First, religion serves an explicative function, offering answers to "unanswerable" questions regarding life, death, and suffering. In an environment characterized by lethal risk, empirical knowledge often fails to provide sufficient comfort, necessitating a transcendental explanation for the morality of force and the finality of death (Rivière, 2000).

Second, religion provides an organizational function. Through codes such as the Decalogue or Canon Law, religion proposes an internal moral order that complements external military regulations.

This moral alignment helps maintain discipline not through fear of punishment, but through adherence to a higher universal order.

Third, and perhaps most critical for the active combatant, is the securizing function. Religion operates to mitigate existential anxiety by offering divine protection or the promise of a just afterlife. Religious rituals-such as blessings before missions, confession, or collective prayer-act as mechanisms to reduce psychological tension, rendering the fear of oblivion manageable (Zamfir & Vlăsceanu, 1998).

Finally, the integrative function binds the group together. The joint participation in liturgies or the shared reverence for symbols creates a sense of communitas-a spirit of camaraderie that transcends rank and reinforces unit cohesion, transforming a disparate group of individuals into a unified entity (Rivière, 2000).

1.4. Ethical Dilemmas and Pastoral Care

The integration of these sociological functions is institutionalized through the military chaplaincy. In post-communist Romania, the link between the state and the church was formally re-established to address the spiritual needs of the army, notably through legislative frameworks that reintegrated clergy into military structures. As noted by Niculescu (2012), pastoral assistance extends beyond liturgical services to include essential ethical guidance and morale maintenance. Chaplains act as intermediaries between the civilian and military worlds, assisting soldiers in navigating the profound cognitive dissonance of their profession: the tension between the Christian imperative of "Peace" and the professional requirement of "War."

Filoramo (2003) suggests that in this habitus, Christian values such as love, compassion, and justice are not abandoned but re-interpreted. The concept of Compassion is translated into humanitarian aid and loyalty to one's comrades, while the biblical injunction toward Peace is reconciled with the soldier's role as a "defender" rather than an "aggressor." Consequently, religiosity in the military often shifts from a passive theological stance to an active sacrificial ethic (Maciu, 2022). This ethic facilitates the acceptance of risk not for the sake of violence, but for the protection of the community, thereby reinforcing the operational effectiveness of the group while preserving the individual's moral integrity.

2. Theoretical Foundations: Structural Stability and Symbolic Meaning in Military Religiosity

To fully comprehend the sociological impact of religiosity within the military, it is necessary to move beyond descriptive analysis and ground the research in robust theoretical paradigms. This study utilizes two complementary sociological perspectives: the Structural-Functionalist approach, which examines the macro-level role of religion in maintaining organizational equilibrium, and Symbolic Interactionism, which investigates the micro-level construction of meaning through symbols and rituals. Together, these theories explain how religious practice integrates the individual soldier into the collective ethos of the military.

2.1. The Structural-Functionalist Perspective: Cohesion and Stability

The Structural-Functionalist paradigm perceives society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. Drawing from the organic analogies of Émile Durkheim and the systematic approaches of Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton, the military can be viewed as an organism where religion functions as a vital subsystem responsible for "pattern maintenance" and tension management.

Durkheim (1995) postulated that the function of religion is to assert the moral superiority of society over its members, thereby maintaining solidarity. In the context of a "total institution" like the military, religion is not merely a spiritual preference but a functional requirement for social order. It acts as a cohesive agent, binding distinct individuals into a unified body capable of coordinated action. However, adopting Robert K. Merton's distinction between manifest and latent functions, we observe a duality in military religious practice. The manifest function is the worship of the divine and the pursuit of salvation (Merton, 2010). The latent function-often more critical for the institution-is the fostering of social networks, trust, and shared values among personnel who must rely on one another in life-threatening situations.

2.1. The Function of Theodicy in the Face of War

A unique challenge within the military functionalist framework is the confrontation with "the problem of evil". Functionalism must explain how a system maintains stability when its members are exposed to the chaos of war. Here, the sociological analysis intersects with theological coping mechanisms used by soldiers to rationalize violence and suffering.

Drawing on the theological philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and, more recently, Richard Swinburne, soldiers often adopt a worldview where the existence of evil (war or death) does not negate the existence of a benevolent Deity. Swinburne (1997) suggests that an ordered universe-even one containing evil-implies a divine design, where human free will necessitates the possibility of moral choices between good and evil. For the soldier, this provides a functional

narrative: war is not proof of God's absence, but a consequence of human moral failure, in which the soldier plays the role of a restraining force against chaos. Furthermore, thinkers like John Hick argue that "soul-making" requires a world where challenge and suffering exist to allow for moral development (Hick, as cited in Brian, 1997). Sociologically, this belief system functions as a shield against trauma, allowing the military apparatus to function even when its agents face "dysfunctional" events like death or injury.

2.2. The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective: Constructing Meaning through Ritual

While Functionalism addresses the "why" of military religiosity, Symbolic Interactionism addresses the "how." Based on the works of George H. Mead and later interpreters like Herbert Blumer, this perspective argues that social reality is constructed through interactions mediated by symbols. In the military, where uniformity is enforced, religious symbols become potent markers of identity and communication.

As noted in the research, the soldier interacts with specific religious artifacts-the cross, the icon, or the military uniform itself-which are imbued with "sacred" meaning. Clifford Geertz defined religion as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men" (Geertz, as cited in Willaime, 2001, p. 150). In the barracks, an ordinary room is transformed into a sacred space through the introduction of liturgical symbols (a portable altar or icon), changing the behavioral norms of the soldiers within that space.

2.2.1. Rituals as Communicative Acts. Religious rituals in the military-such as the blessing of troops or confession-are essentially communicative acts. Melford Spiro views religion as an institution consisting of "culturally patterned interactions" with postulated superhuman beings (Spiro, as cited in Willaime, 2001, p. 153). When a military chaplain performs a ritual, it creates a "symbolic communication" that validates the soldier's status. The ritual does not just convey theological grace; it socially integrates the soldier into a lineage of "warrior-believers."

Crucially, as Mead argued, humans act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them. If a soldier perceives the "protection of the cross" or the "blessing of the brigade flag" as

real, the psychological effect is real. This perception reduces the sense of isolation on the battlefield. The individual is no longer acting alone but is supported by a network of symbols that link them to their unit, their nation, and the divine. As Willaime (2001) suggests, these symbolic systems depend on the distinction between empirical reality and transcendent reality; in the high-stress environment of the military, the transcendent symbols often hold more weight for the individual's mental stability than empirical facts.

3. Research Methodology: Investigating the Lived Experience of Faith in a "Total Institution"

3.1. Research Design and Strategic Approach

Given the complexity of the sociological phenomenon under investigation-the interplay between personal faith, professional military identity, and social cohesion-this study adopted a qualitative research design. As opposed to quantitative methods that might reduce religiosity to mere statistical attendance frequencies, the qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the meanings soldiers ascribe to their spiritual practices. The primary objective was to capture the "lived experience" of the military habitus, creating a descriptive and interpretative account of how religion functions as a socialization agent.

The research was structured as an applied case study conducted within the **15th Mechanized Brigade "Podul Înalt" in Iaşi, Romania,** specifically focusing on **Battalion 198 Logistic Support "Prut"** The selection of this specific unit was driven by its significant role in national defense and its operational history, providing a relevant population for analyzing the intersection of high-stress professional requirements and spiritual coping mechanisms.

3.2. Defining the Research Problem

The central problem addressed by this study posits that religiosity affects the lives of military personnel not merely as a private matter, but as a structural variable influencing social interaction. The research questions were designed to isolate the impact of faith on three distinct levels:

1. *Interpersonal Relations:* How religious values shape interactions between colleagues and the command structure.

2. *Social Support:* The role of the unit's church and chaplaincy in providing psychological resilience.

3. *Group Cohesion:* The extent to which shared rituals foster a sense of belonging in a "closed" community.

As noted in the preliminary analysis, the research was conducted against a backdrop of contemporary crises, including the post-pandemic context and proximity to regional conflicts-which heightens the relevance of understanding moral and spiritual support systems in the armed forces.

3.3. Data Collection Methods

To ensure a robust data set, the study employed a methodological triangulation, primarily utilizing semi-structured interviews supported by documentary analysis.

3.3.1. Documentary and Contextual Analysis. Accessing a military institution requires navigating a complex bureaucratic environment. Consequently, documentary analysis was employed as a preliminary method to understand the institutional framework. This involved the study of official regulations, the history of the 15th Mechanized Brigade, and specific legislative texts regarding the status of military clergy. As Chelcea (2001) notes, in sociological research, the "document" serves as a formalized act capable of providing necessary context for the social reality under observation. This step was crucial for establishing the parameters of the study and understanding the official doctrinal stance on the church-army relationship.

3.3.2. The Semi-Structured Interview. The core of the empirical research relied on the semi-structured interview. This technique was selected because it facilitates a "face-to-face" interaction that is flexible enough to explore the sensitive nature of personal belief while maintaining scientific rigor. According to Chelcea (2001), the interview is a technique for obtaining verbal information to verify hypotheses, distinguishable from casual conversation by its directed purpose.

The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to follow a prepared guide while retaining the liberty to explore unanticipated themes that emerged during the dialogue. This was essential given the diverse ranks and experiences of the participants. As Moscovici and

Buschini (2007) argue, this method transforms the interview into a dynamic exchange where the "flow of conversation" and the "reactions of the interlocutor" provide data as valuable as the literal answers themselves. This approach enabled the observation of non-verbal cues and emotional nuances when discussing topics such as fear of death, duty, and divine protection.

3.4 Research Instrument and Procedure

The primary instrument used was an *Interview Guide* consisting of *28 questions* categorized into three thematic axes:

1. *Religiosity and Practice:* Examining the frequency of prayer, fasting, and sacramental participation within the unit.
2. *Social Impact:* Assessing how faith influences relationships with superiors and peers, and whether it aids in decision-making processes.
3. *Professional Life:* Exploring the specific role of the military church located within the base.

Prior to the main data collection phase, a pilot test was conducted with a small number of subjects to validate the clarity and relevance of the questions. This ensured that the instrument was culturally and linguistically appropriate for the military demographic.

The procedure required strict adherence to institutional protocols. Access to Battalion 198 was granted following a formal request to the 15th Mechanized Brigade. Interviews were conducted on-site between November 2023 and July 2024. This coordination with the command structure ensured that the research respected the security constraints of the unit while securing the necessary time slots for in-depth engagement with the personnel. By conducting interviews within the barracks (Cazarma nr. 684), the study maintained ecological validity, capturing the respondents' views within the very environment where their social and professional identities are forged.

4. Empirical Analysis: The Integration of Sacred and Martial Duties in the 15th Mechanized Brigade

4.1. Contextualizing the Case Study: The Garrison and the Church

The empirical research centered on the 15th Mechanized Brigade "Podul Înalt", headquartered in the historic Palatul Oțirii in Copou, Iași. Specifically, the study focused on Battalion 198 Logistic Support "Prut," a unit integral to the operational capability of the brigade. A defining feature of this institutional landscape is the physical presence of the "Saint George the Great Martyr" military church (Biserica Militară Sfântul Gheorghe) within the confines of the base. Reconstructed in its current form through the initiative of military and clerical leadership, this edifice serves as a focal point for the sociological analysis.

In accordance with Symbolic Interactionist theory, the physical location of the church-nestled within the austere environment of a military garrison-imposes a "sacred" duality upon the space. It acts as a tangible reminder of the connection between the "Arm of the State" and the "Soul of the Nation". As detailed in historical archives, the original chapel dates back to 1839, establishing a continuity of tradition that validates current religious practices as a return to historical norms rather than an anachronistic imposition.

The sample population consisted of 14 active-duty military personnel (sergeants, corporals, and soldiers) aged between 20 and 45. All respondents identified as Christian (predominantly Orthodox), with education levels ranging from high school diplomas to postgraduate degrees. The anonymity of the participants (coded R1 through R14) was preserved to ensure candid responses regarding their professional and spiritual lives.

4.2. The "Securizing Function": Coping with Risk and Anxiety

A primary theme emerging from the interviews corresponds directly to the functionalist perspective of religion as a mechanism for security and stress reduction. Military life involves inherent physical risk and separation from family. The data indicates that private prayer and belief in divine providence function as primary coping strategies.

Participant R8 described prayer not as a dogmatic obligation but as a form of "meditation" necessary for psychological stability, stating, "To be with God is sufficient... God is already between us. You feel His presence in your soul." This internalized religiosity provides a psychological shield. When asked about the relevance of faith, R13 employed the motto "Nothing without God", asserting that survival in missions and general well-being are part of a divine plan. This aligns with the "securizing

function" (Rivière, 2000), where faith reduces the cognitive dissonance caused by the unpredictability of military service. The soldier internalizes the belief that a higher power governs their fate, which reduces the anxiety of operational uncertainty.

4.3. Cohesion and the "Military Family": The Integrative Function

The study strongly supports the hypothesis that religiosity enhances group cohesion. Participation in religious rituals-whether official ceremonies involving the whole battalion or individual attendance at the garrison church-creates a shared moral universe. This reinforces what sociologists describe as "fictional kinship," where biologically unrelated individuals bond as a family unit.

Participant R1 highlighted the pride associated with public military-religious ceremonies: "We are trained from the beginning of our careers... to be familiar with the Orthodox Christian environment. It is a pride to participate in ceremonies... the priest is a colleague, alongside us through thick and thin." This sentiment invalidates the notion of a secular divide; the chaplain is viewed not as an outsider but as an essential element of the battalion's support structure.

Furthermore, R8 utilized a potent metaphor referencing the Apostle Paul to describe unit cohesion: "We function like a phalanx. In the case of the military, we already function as a family. A spiritual family means even more." This suggests that the religious layer added to the professional relationship deepens the bond of trust, an essential attribute for logistic and combat units that rely on interdependence.

4.4. The Warrior's Paradox: Theodicy and the Justification of Force

One of the most profound sociological challenges in the military is reconciling the Christian ethos of peace with the professional requirement to use lethal force. The interviews revealed a complex rationalization process among soldiers, often underpinned by a vernacular theodicy.

When confronted with the question of war's compatibility with the existence of a benevolent God (The Problem of Evil), respondents did not reject the divine. Instead, they reinterpreted their role. R7 argued, "If God existed [as a controller of free will], there would be no war... but in the Old Testament, Moses instructed his people to fight for self-defense." By invoking scriptural precedents of warrior-prophets (Moses, David), the soldiers construct an identity of the "Defender" rather than the "Killer."

R13 elaborated on the concept of "Just War," acknowledging the tension but accepting it as a tragic necessity of the fallen human condition: "We treat soldiers as officers, implying they are non-combatants... but we must acknowledge that combatants exist to kill and destroy if necessary". The soldiers resolve this moral tension by viewing their service as a protective duty sanctioned by divine order to prevent greater chaos. As noted by Maciu (2022), this shifts the moral burden from the individual to the existential necessity of defense.

4.5. The Impact of Religiosity on Professional Ethics

The investigation questioned whether religious beliefs influence decision-making and behavior towards subordinates or civilians. The results suggest a positive correlation between high religiosity and ethical conduct. R1 stated, "Christianity determines me to be better". Others, like R13, noted that faith prevents the abuse of power: "We try not to make enemies... it's about not being envious, everyone coping as they can."

While some respondents noted occasional disparities or the feeling that certain colleagues might receive favorable treatment, the overwhelming consensus was that religious holidays and practices are respected within the rigid military schedule. Even when "on watch" during Easter or Christmas, the prevailing attitude is that Laborare est Orare (to work is to pray). The soldiers view the sacrifice of their time during holidays as an offering to the nation, protected by the "service is a prayer" ethos ingrained by the chaplaincy.

4.6. Synthesis of Findings

The qualitative data from Battalion 198 Logistic Support "Prut" illustrates that the "Saint George" church is not merely an architectural anomaly but a vibrant social center. Religiosity in this context functions as a stabilizer. It allows soldiers to:

1. *Manage Fear:* Through the assurance of divine protection.
2. *Unify the Group:* By transforming the unit

into a "spiritual family."

3. *Legitimize Duty:* By framing defense as a biblically sanctioned imperative.

Consequently, religion in the 15th Mechanized Brigade acts as a cohesive agent that aligns individual moral values with institutional goals, proving that the sacred remains a relevant and potent force in the contemporary military habitus.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Synthesis of Findings: Religion as a Pillar of Military Socialization. This sociological investigation into the *15th Mechanized Brigade "Podul Înalt"* confirms that religiosity operates as a fundamental agent of socialization and cohesion within the Romanian military structure. Far from being a vestigial or purely private element of individual life, religious belief functions as a structural necessity that facilitates the transition from civilian to military identity.

The empirical data demonstrates that religiosity effectively bridges the gap between primary socialization (within the family) and secondary socialization (within the unit). As noted by the respondents from *Battalion 198 Logistic Support "Prut,"* the habits of prayer and ritual learned in childhood are re-contextualized in the barracks to serve professional needs-specifically, the management of stress, the cultivation of discipline, and the maintenance of moral integrity. The physical presence of the St. George military church within the garrison validates these values, serving as a tangible symbol of the symbiotic relationship between the State and the Church.

Theoretical Implications: Integration and Meaning-Making. From a *Structural-Functionalist* perspective (Durkheim, 1995; Merton, 2010), the study validates the hypothesis that religion acts as a stabilizing subsystem within the "total institution" of the army. By fostering a "moral community," religious practices mitigate the anomie that might otherwise arise from the rigors of military life. The "securizing function" identified by Rivière (2000) is particularly evident; soldiers utilize faith as a primary coping mechanism against the anxieties of operational risk and the cognitive dissonance of lethal duty.

From a *Symbolic Interactionist* perspective (Mead; Willaime, 2001), the research reveals that military cohesion is significantly bolstered by shared symbols. The cross, the blessing of the flag, and the presence of the chaplain create a network of meanings that transforms a unit of disparate individuals into a "spiritual family" (fictional kinship). This shared symbolic universe provides a sense of ontological security, convincing the soldier that their actions are divinely sanctioned and protected.

Resolving the Paradox of the "Warrior-Christian". A critical conclusion of this study addresses the ethical tension between Christian pacifism and military aggression. The findings indicate that Romanian soldiers do not view these concepts as contradictory but as complementary within a specific theological framework. Through a vernacular theodicy, soldiers interpret their role not as aggressors but as defenders of the peace and the nation, invoking Old Testament archetypes of the warrior-protector. The military chaplain plays a crucial role here, offering the ethical guidance necessary to navigate the "dilemmas of duty" without succumbing to moral injury. Thus, religiosity provides the ethical scaffolding that allows the soldier to function effectively without losing their humanity.

Limitations of the Study. While this research offers valuable insights, it is subject to certain limitations. The study utilized a *qualitative design with a small sample size (N=14)* restricted to a single battalion in the Moldavia region, an area historically known for higher levels of religiosity compared to other parts of Romania. Consequently, the findings may not be strictly generalizable to the entire Romanian Armed Forces. Furthermore, the focus was primarily on Orthodox Christian practitioners; the experiences of non-religious personnel or those from minority faiths remain an area for further inquiry.

Directions for Future Research. To build upon these findings, future research should aim to:

1. Broaden the Scope: Expand the demographic to include soldiers from diverse regions and branches (e.g., Air Force, Navy) to assess if the "securizing function" varies by operational environment.

2. Cross-Cultural Analysis: Compare the influence of religiosity in the Romanian military with NATO allies to understand how

different secular or religious state traditions impact military cohesion.

3. Conflict Zones: Investigate the intensification of religious practice during active deployment in combat zones versus peacetime garrison duties, testing the adage that "there are no atheists in foxholes" through rigorous sociological metrics.

In final summary, this study argues that the Military and the Church in Romania remain intertwined, not merely by tradition, but by functional necessity. Religiosity equips the soldier with the spiritual armor required to face the exigencies of modern warfare, reinforcing the unit's cohesion and validating the soldier's purpose in the defense of the nation.

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