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National Value Orientation of Slovenian Citizens and Their Trust in the Armed Forces

Introduction

The people's self-determination to form their own state with all the attributes necessary for its functioning was a free decision by free individuals expressed at a referendum. The individuals, citizens of the Republic of Slovenia, independently decided to live and work in a country of their own. This right had a legal basis in the Constitution of 1974, where it is stated that each nation has the right to associate with other Yugoslav nations, as well as the right to secede or dissociate from them.

In this article, I have focused on how Slovenians responded to national self-determination or, in other words, what were the value orientations regarding their nation and which values were most present therein. This analysis based on a cross-section of people also aims to show the connection between national value orientations and actual values, as well as the people's trust in the Slovenian armed forces in the 1990's.

National Value Orientation of a Cross-Section of Slovenian Citizens in the 90's

The right of a nation to play its role in the international community as a sovereign entity equal to all other nations can be examined from various aspects. The most commonly cited one is the legal aspect. However, for the purposes of this study I have chosen the sociological aspect.

Freedom is the value among national value orientations which enables small nations, like Slovenia, to exist in the international community as a free nation. From the point of view of belonging to a community, freedom is one of the basic values which gives all the other values a distinctive shade, color and meaning. This is why we consider it the epitome of the democratic inclinations of an individual, community or nation. Freedom as a value functions as a principle of the social structure of a country, in which the order and functioning of the state are a form of organised and regulated freedom.

The Republic of Slovenia attaches a special significance to the value of freedom. Together with other described values it gives direction to the democratic orientations of a community. Thus, the Slovenian constitution provides every person with equal basic rights and freedoms, regardless of nationality, race, gender, language, creed, political or other convictions, wealth, birth, education, social position or any other personal circumstance. Only free subjects of a nation can fulfil the freedom of every individual. This premise leads to the statement in the Slovenian Constitution that all citizens of the Republic of Slovenia are equal before the law and that all persons shall enjoy the right to personal freedoms. The individual, a member of the nation, therefore reflects, with his/her rights and freedoms, the freedom of the Slovenian nation. Thus the citizen of the Republic of Slovenia is guaranteed the protection of his/her personal freedom. Since Slovenia, in its self-determination, respected the free will of its citizens expressed at the referendum, its legislative acts (Constitution) devote special attention to the rights and freedoms of the individual citizen of the Republic of Slovenia. Special attention is

¹ The article expresses the author's personal opinions which do not represent the official position of the Centre for Strategic Studies.

focused on the inviolability of human life, which inherently rejects the death penalty. Equal attention is given to the prevention of torture and the protection of personal identity and dignity.

Further independence and sovereignty can be considered as part of the national value orientation of Slovenian citizens. Both are values representing Slovenian determination to lay the foundations of its statehood. Independence and sovereignty are values associated with national identity, belief in nationhood and national self-assurance. Both values reflect a high level of national identity and a high level of autonomy both within the nation and in its orientation toward the international environment. The existence of both of these values is justified by the fundamental national achievement, the Constitution of the Sovereign Republic of Slovenia, of December 1991, where it is written that Slovenia is a country of all its citizens founded on the permanent and inalienable right of the Slovenian nation to self-determination. With its declaration of independence and sovereignty, and subsequently with international recognition, Slovenia became an active participant in international relations.

The study of values and value orientations has always attracted social researchers. The topic became especially interesting after the fall of the totalitarian political systems in Europe, which was symbolically preceded by the fall of the Berlin Wall. Value orientations, values, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions became a research topic in many sociological institutions in Western countries, as well as in countries in transition from totalitarianism to democracy.

As in other Eastern European countries, the changes in the political system put Slovenia in a situation where ongoing social changes were accompanied by a process of redefining egalitarian values and value orientations. In the first five years after independence, the role of the individual citizen was strengthened and replaced the hitherto more important collective. Through their understanding of human rights, of a legally regulated state and the division of governmental powers, Slovenians, in their specific "democratic/totalitarian political climate," decided in favour of the individual (...). (N. Toš, 1991). Old value orientations and values were replaced by new ones, a phenomenon which some authors call the "value vacuum" or the "value crisis" (V. Peèjak, 1995).

Values and value orientations have a variable and dynamic structure, but one which changes and takes new forms only gradually. We should certainly not pay heed to the stereotypical claim that the present times are without values. An individual cannot live without a set of values and value orientations, since these have too strong a significance and role in shaping his/her perception. This is also true of the relation to institutions like the police and armed forces. The political psychologist F. Heider (1958) proves this in his recognised theory of equilibrium. He points out that the individual has a balanced value system, which he/she shapes and alters, replaces old with new, and renews the equilibrium of his/her value orientations. Values² and value orientations of the individual are two different matters. In as much as we must differentiate between the actual and the official values proclaimed by a specific society and the values and beliefs of the individual. Often these two types of values will be discordant, opposed or even in conflict. Professional members of the armed forces have professional value orientations, which are also the value orientations of the institutions they represent. At the same time, they still hold their own personal values.

In every social institution the individual is confronted with defined and hierarchically determined values. When joining an institution, he/she brings along his/her own set of values and systems of belief, for good or bad, such as have been shaped in his/her community during

² "Value relates to the specific belief of the individual is a set standard. A person can have a number of values. A specific value will assume a central role in his system of perception, since it represents his views and understanding (...). Contrary to views, values circumvent the object and the situation, while a view focuses on a specific object (...)(M. Rokeach, 1973).

the process of socialisation, within the family, by educational institutions or in the working environment. In this context we can define values as "a type of belief, positioned centrally inside a system of beliefs, about how one should or should not behave, or about the final state of achievement of the existence of something which might or might not be of importance. Values are the positive or negative abstract ideals which are not linked to a specific stance toward an object or position, but represent the belief of a person in ideal forms of behavior and in ideal final goals (...)" (M. Rokeach, 1975: 124).

Each institution, as well as each individual in a society has his/her own system of values³, which he/she also upholds. This system of values is balanced. The individual can shape it independently or it can be shaped by others, e.g.: institutions, propaganda systems, various authorities, etc. At this point, values could come into conflict with each other. Which values will prevail – the individual's or the institution's – depends on the individual's ability to adapt to the system. Value orientation is a broader category than a value. It indicates a specific approach, an orientation of specific values of the individual. Value orientations can shape numerous values of various weights. Value orientations, of course, affect the dynamics of change in individual values. These dynamics and these changes are influenced by many other factors ranging from environmental, cultural, and spiritual factors, to national factors.

In the first half of the 90's, the value orientations of Slovenians in the Slovenian environment were, according to several researchers, influenced by two general dichotomous value orientations: Eastern and Western (J. Musek: 1994). Others claim that among Slovenians there were three or even four general value trends: Northern Protestant, Southern Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Islamic (V. Rus, 1995). The Western value orientation was shaped by such values as: individualism, Catholicism and Protestantism, and the Eastern one by collectivism, mysticism, Orthodoxy and Islam.

In Slovenia, especially during the last five years, we have faced a reshaping of some values, which were present mainly in egalitarian value orientations. With the fall of totalitarian political regimes, collective ideology also became weaker within its own value system. In a unified value system, other non-egalitarian values also weakened it. This caused a value vacuum (disintegration of some specific values) and a value crises. The remaining values simply dropped out of the system. (V. Peèjak, 1995).

Definition of trust in the armed forces and its relation to the most external national values

Trust in the armed forces can be defined as an expression of popular support of the activities of the armed forces functioning within a national security system. This support enters the model of national security, according to M. Edmond's interpretation, as a separate "input." This trust also shows an understanding of the national security model as an equilibrium and harmonisation of security as the means and security as the goal. The balance of values of all structural factors used by M. Edmonds in his model is a fundamental prerequisite for gaining both the popular trust and the trust of each individual citizen in the armed forces and in the entire national security system.

Trust as a category has been thoroughly studied by psychologists (Lewis & Weigert, 1995), political scientists (Gamson, 1994; Hart, 1978; Smith, 1980; Lipset & Schneider, 1983) and

³ "A system of values is a hierarchical organisation – an ordered sequence of ideals or values expressed in relation to their importance. While in one person's system of values truth, beauty and peace may be at the top and safety, order and cleanliness at the bottom of the list, in another person's system this sequence can be exactly the opposite (...)" (M. Rokeach, 1975: 124).

sociologists (Luhmann, 1979; Berber, 1983; Shapiro, 1987). Still, we do not have a consistent definition of trust which would work for these three groups. as shown by the following concepts.

"Trust can be defined as an expectation that an agreement will be respected. The agreement can be expressed as a written agreement or an oral promise, or implied as a social understanding based on the community, an institution, or on social values (...)" (R.L. Goldsteen, 1992: 694). Trust can be personal or impersonal. (Shapiro, 1978). Personal trust is a part of social relations and exists among people with direct contacts. Impersonal trust exists between individuals and groups. (R. L. Goldsteen, 1992: 696).

Research, continuously conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research of Ljubljana, studies citizens' trust in public institutions. Recent results indicate that popular trust in institutions of the political system is declining and settling at a level characteristic of democratic countries. In my analysis I have used some methods of multivariate analysis (factor analysis, regression analysis and multiple regression) for data previously collected from the Slovenian Public Opinion, 1992/3 and 1994/4⁴.

A general overview of trust in the armed forces in Slovenia shows that at the time of establishing statehood and particularly after the war for independence in June and July 1991, Slovenian citizens were rather euphoric in their value attitudes toward Slovenian military institutions, which was expressed by an increased trust. By 1994, trust in governmental institutions had declined. Trust in the armed forces has currently settled at a level comparable to other European countries.

In 1994, on a conservatively positive level. the Slovenian armed forces were among the more trusted entities. Trust in the Slovenian armed forces and Territorial Defenses was a very dynamic and therefore variable process. It required (and still requires) increased attention of the military institutions to this process, if this trust was to be strengthened, rather than diminished.

Factor analysis has allowed the exclusion of the group of values which denote the national value orientation of Slovenians in 1992 and 1994. Results of the factor analysis showed that in 1992 the national value orientation consisted of being Slovenian (0.70), independence (0.69) and belief in nationhood (0.65). All these values were excluded by varimax rotation between eleven values: being Slovenian, independence, belief in nationhood, order and discipline, liberalism, anti-communism, patriotism, employee shares, private property, conservatism, demilitarisation. Comparisons with 1994 indicate that the values of belief in nationhood (0.72) and independence (0.73) have taken on a stronger role in the national value orientation of Slovenian people.

The first year of independent statehood was marked by a disproportionate Slovenian ethnic and national consciousness. After international recognition, Slovenia became an entity involved in international relations. The concept of nationality became an individual value. "Freedom of a nation is intertwined with the freedom of the individual, (the nation's) freedom can only be fulfilled by free subjects" (R, Šuštaršič, 1992; 11). The values of independence and nationality overlapped with the value of being Slovenian and the value of order and discipline. T. Hribar wrote: "For us ("intellectuals", authors note) independence and democracy were indivisibly connected. The difference between us, the opposition and the Party alternative, was that we associated independence with democracy. We considered basic human rights on the level of individuals as well as on the level of nation. In some contexts, we even gave priority to the independence of the nation". The value of being Slovenian gained in significance. All these values somehow overshadowed some of the liberal values characteristic of the seventies and even more so of the late eighties. Thus, we are speaking of a definite shift in value orientation

⁴ The results are part of the conclusions in Beno Arnejčič master's thesis entitled: The relation of Slovenian Citizens Toward the Enforcement Institutions (Slovenian Public Opinion 1968-1994).

(N. Toš, 1995). An individual citizen can implement all these values and value orientations within his/her own nation. However, the Slovenian nation is limited by the size of its territory and the number of its inhabitants. Nationalism is a movement against modernisation, individualisation, mobilisation and differentiation (B. Giesen, 1993). In a big nation the masses are distributed over a large area and people do not live on top of one another. As a small nation in a small area we tend to get in each others way. The smaller a nation is, the more it must be united (A. Trstenjak, 1995).

A comparison of the relationship of Slovenian citizens toward the value of belief in nationhood in the 1992/3 and 1994/4 Slovenian Public Opinion (SPO) surveys shows that from a total number of 2024 questioned persons, 912 (49.1%) expressed a positive reaction to the value of being Slovenian. In 1994, 272 (26.3%) out of 1036 people questioned expressed a positive attitude toward the value of belief in nationhood. The number of people who expressed a positive attitude with regard to this value is also large: 566 (54.6%).

Table 1: Attitude of surveyed persons toward the word **Slovenian in 1992**

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Valid %
very positive attitude	1	735	39,6
positive attitude	2	912	49,1
neutral attitude	3	176	9,5
negative attitude	4	28	1,5
very negative attitude	5	7	0,4
don't know	6	166	Missing
TOTAL		2024	100,0

Table 2: Attitude of surveyed persons to the term **nationhood in 1994**

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Valid %
very positive attitude	1	272	26,3
positive attitude	2	566	54,6
neutral attitude	3	118	11,4
negative attitude	4	29	2,8
very negative attitude	5	7	0,7
don't know	9	44	4,2
TOTAL		1036	100,0

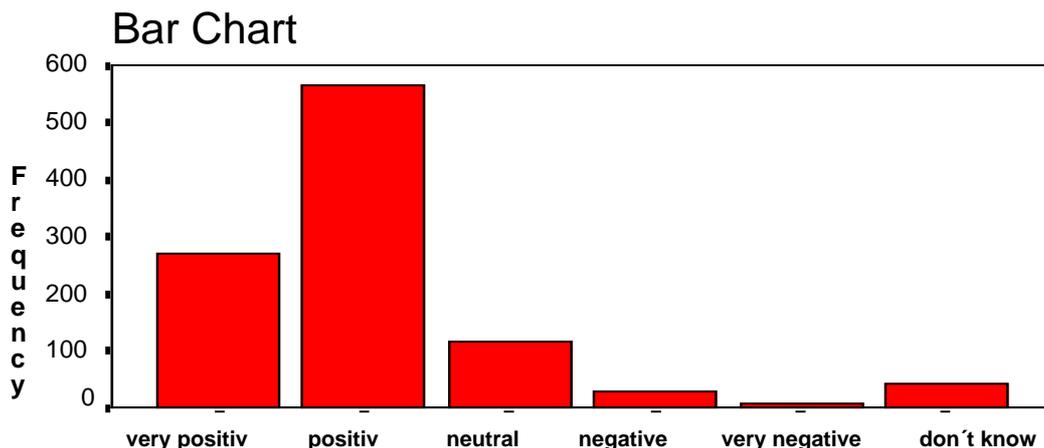


Table 3:

Relationship between the values of being Slovenian and belief in nationhood and trust in the Slovenian armed forces and in oneself (SPO 1992/3, N=2024, SPO 1994/4, N=1036)

TRUST VALUES	TRUST IN THE ARMED FORCES	TRUST IN ONESELF
<i>SLOVENIAN</i> (SPO 1992/3)	0,30 p = 0,000	0,14 p = 0,000
<i>NATION</i> (SPO 1994/4)	0,10 p = 0,000	0,14 p = 0,000

The table shows the relationship between the values Slovenian and nation, and between the variables which express trust in the armed forces and in oneself.

All the conditional and unconditional variables are positively interconnected. When we evaluate the level of connection we must keep in mind that we are operating with a large sample (2024 surveyed persons in the survey SPO 1992/3). We can therefore conclude that the connection between trust in the Slovenian armed forces and the value orientation of Slovenians is considerable (0.30). This can be explained by the reasoning that the attitude of Slovenians toward the armed forces in 1992 was connected to a patriotic perception of that institution.

The largest correlation coefficient between "trust in oneself" and the above mentioned value orientations is between the value orientation "being Slovenian" and "trust in oneself" (0.14).

The correlation coefficient is 0.14. Trust in the armed forces could also be explained by this self-assurance (0.11). A high level of trust is present in the citizens where the issue relates to armed forces and national defense. This supports the theory of patriotic attitude and adherence to the patriotic value of national defense. Self-assurance is also a characteristic of the value of being Slovenian, which can again be connected to the high level of the patriotic value orientation

of the surveyed persons. Multiple regression results from the same data also indicate that trust in the Slovenian armed forces in 1992 can be attributed to the value of "being Slovenian". Regression coefficients between the conditional variable "trust in the armed forces" and the unconditional variable being Slovenian is 0.20.

Conclusion

The citizens surveyed in 1992 made a value judgment on the Slovenian armed forces under the influence of a war for independence in which the armed forces, together with the police, played a crucial role. I believe that in this analysis the concept of trust includes the repressive as well as preventive elements of the military institutions in the young Slovenian state. In the SPO 1992/3 survey, the citizens who were questioned showed a great trust in the Slovenian armed forces (932 or 50.6%). The citizens' trust was subject to the perception of the Slovenian armed forces as a patriotic, national and victorious institution in a war for independence. In this respect the citizens also saw the armed forces as an institution which would, in the case of aggression, confront an enemy attack with force. The preventive aspect was, in this period, connected primarily with a vision of the Slovenian armed forces as the protector of the fatherland, its territory and its borders.

Citizens' trust in the armed forces considerably dropped in the SPO 1994/4 survey. Only 387 (37.4%) of the citizens expressed a fair amount of trust in the Slovenian armed forces. This result was a consequence of the end of both the euphoria and the enthusiastic attitude toward the military institution which were strong in the first two years after the war for independence. In 1994, the armed forces were seen mainly as a preventive agent. Their active role would be supported by the public only in the event of a threat to the Slovenian state from an outside enemy.

From the analysis, I have concluded that the surveyed persons with a positive value orientation to the values of being Slovenian and belief in nationhood place more trust in the armed forces and the police than in themselves. Trust in the armed forces expressed during the 90's is characteristic of citizens who lean more toward fatherland or national values than "being Slovenian" and belief in nationhood.

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