

## The world of Polish Army officers' values

Marek Bodziany\* , Małgorzata Hałas 

General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces, Wrocław, Poland,  
e-mail: marek.bodziany@awl.edu.pl; gosia.halas@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

Values are a very complex subject of research not only from an individual but also from a collective perspective. The first approach places them in the culture of the individual and refers to primary and secondary socialisation and cultural participation. The second approach deals with the culture of the organisation and its axiological specificity. The article attempts to identify value systems in a specific organisation such as the army. On the basis of qualitative research (triangulation, source analysis and interviews with former officers), fixed and variable elements of the organisational culture canon and values recognised by representatives of the officer community were exemplified. The analysis of the content of the literature on the subject and the results of author's own research indicate that the systems of individual values among officers, although differing significantly, have sets of constant universal values that are acquired under the influence of time in service and experience and the culture of the organisation. The variable differentiating values among officers are individual aspirations and environmental factors shaping the worldview and attitude towards the reality around them. The article attempts to identify the factors shaping the axionormative order of Polish Army officers and to define the values shaping their social pattern.

### KEYWORDS

\* Corresponding author

values, officers, Polish Army, elite, social position



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## Introduction

The semantic concept of “value” (Latin *valor*) is derived from the verb “to be valuable” and means “anything valuable, worthy of desire and constituting the goal of human endeavour; a person’s attitude towards a given object, associated with the conviction that this object is capable of satisfying his or her needs” (Sagan, 2011, p. 8 after: Reber, 2000). It is worth noting that defining the interpretative framework of a concept is not easy and it became the focus of thinkers already in ancient times. The leading figure of this period was Plato. He identified values with the concept of the “good” treated as universally recognised ideas. However, the pioneers of the scientific framework of axiology were the modern philosophers who laid the foundations for the current understanding of values in various scientific disciplines.

Despite the common semantic denominator of the individual’s “good”, values have had many definitions rooted in different scientific perspectives. They have different meanings in ethics, mathematics, sociology, economics, psychology, aesthetics, religion and philosophy. Their interdisciplinarity became the focus of the 20th century German philosopher Rudolf Herman Lotze’s attempt to construct a single coherent theory for all scientific disciplines (McMullin, 1999). However, the creation of axiological universals has its limitations, not only in terms of discipline, but also in terms of subject matter. This is because it is difficult to create a single valid axiological canon for different social groups and institutions due to their organisational culture and functional specificities, as well as the relative nature of the values themselves. Such institutions include the army understood not only as a formal organisation, but as a social group created on the basis of diverse systems of individual values embedded in the axionormative order of a total institution. For the purpose of identifying semantic and typological foundations, the following section of the article exemplifies classical approaches to values. Taking the cultural specificity of the army as a standard, the cognitive objective was to identify the factors shaping the axionormative order of Polish Army officers and to explicate the values shaping their social pattern. This objective is exploratory and descriptive in nature. Based on the aim, the main research problem was specified based on the question: which social factors shape the officer’s cultural canon and ethos and which values influence their social pattern?

## **1. Values in different concepts of the social sciences and humanities**

### **1.1. The philosophical concept of value**

As already emphasised, the basis for the understanding of values for all scientific disciplines was created by philosophy, in which they are understood as a “concrete object valued by someone, a formal reason for value, an idea of value or an experience of value” (Kowalczyk, 1986, p. 38). It was philosophy that introduced into the systematics of the sciences the concept of axiology based on four main pillars: theology, epistemology, ontology and anthropology, related to realist metaphysics. The basis of this concept is the notion of being, which is cemented by persons and things and the different relationship to them (Bilat, 2018). The primary meaning of values is associated with such features of human experience as personal charm, emotions and feelings. They reveal an emotive function, the basis of which is founded on the subject's feelings rather than in the subject's characteristics (McMullin, 1999). This understanding of values prohibits value judgements and at the same time imposes a focus on the human attitude itself. The classical understanding reveals several important elements. The first concerns the overcoming of indifference towards an object and giving it a significant status, the second the search for valued goods and the third the desire to possess them. Regardless of the concept, values in philosophy refer not only to human desires and aspirations, but also to valued goods, the meaning of which is relativised by a whole range of factors. This relativism is nothing other than the differentiation of (material and/or non-material) attitudes towards the good. At the same time, one should very strongly emphasise, following Johannes Hessen, that the good is constituted by value, which makes the latter superior (Kowalczyk, 1986).

In the philosophical concept of value, the satisfaction and joy of possessing a good or achieving a life goal plays an important role. This approach draws on the Cyrenaic hedonism initiated by Aristippus of Cyrene. This movement is based on the following assumptions: individual egoism, happiness achieved through short-term pleasures, long-term happiness understood as an advantage over pain and suffering, the presentness of sensations and the interdependence of happiness with reason (Wnuk, 2013). The hedonistic concept of value was criticised by Immanuel Kant, the founder of ethical formalism, for whom the moral acts of human beings are of greater importance than the enjoyment of life (Kusak, 2006). This,

in turn, was criticised by Max Scheler, who pointed to the relative nature of values, explicating them into three main types in human life: utilitarian, hedonistic and spiritual, learned during emotional acts (Scheler, 2004) called in literature the rightly ordered loves – *ordo amoris* (Wędzińska, 2013). The highest rank among axiological experiences is given to love, which opens the way for man to know values (Galarowicz, 1997).

The philosophical perspective on values is linked to other figures in the scientific world. These include the representatives of axiological subjectivism, Rudolf H. Lotze and Heinrich Rickert, creators of the division between hierarchical entities and values (Furman, 2013). In opposition to this concept are objectivist approaches such as phenomenology and Thomism. A representative of phenomenology was the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden, who made a division between aesthetic and ethical values. The former are characterised by their intentional nature, while the creator of the latter is the human being at the moment of the realisation of the act undertaken (Makota, 1986; Ingarden, 1998; Furman, 2013; Duchliński, 2020).

Particularly relevant is Thomism, which is represented by St Thomas Aquinas and is based on the assumption that every being constitutes the good and is perfect, while the good constitutes intrinsic value because it is found in being and not outside of it (Andrzejuk, 2012). In the light of this idea, the essence of value is not the satisfaction of man's needs, but the spiritual development of human beings (Kowalczyk, 1986). Another academic figure, a representative of German philosophy, was Dietrich von Hildebrand, whose views include the assumption that values are the "core of being" (Kowalczyk, 1986; Crosby, 2000). His work includes a typology of values based on three main types:

- formal values – pertaining to being *sensu stricto* and standing in opposition to nothingness, emptiness; these include values such as essence and existence;
- created values – existing as a result of the omnipotence of God, who has given creatures a specific dignity and significance;
- ontological values – which reveal the nature of particular entities (Crosby, 2000; Godek, 2015; Kaźmierczak, 2016).

Philosophical concepts have become the basis for building the theoretical foundations of values in other scientific disciplines, such as sociology, theology or psychology.

## 1.2. The sociological concept of value

The sociological perspective, which relates directly to the material and non-material areas of military service, is more utilitarian for the identification of values in the army. One classic definition by Jan Szczepański identifies values as: “any material or ideal objects in relation to which individuals or collectivities adopt an attitude of reverence, attribute to it an important role in their lives, and feel the pursuit of it as a compulsion” (Szczepański, 1970, p. 54). In the author’s view, values are revealed as cultural patterns, i.e. the range of behaviour considered acceptable and socially acceptable (Szczepański, 1970). Values fall within the scope of non-material (spiritual) culture together with traditions, knowledge, art, religion, customs, symbols and language, and material culture related to possessions and existence. In non-material terms, values are passed on from generation to generation independently or in “cultural packages”. In culture, it is values that set the boundaries of right and wrong (Bodziany, 2019).

The sociological context can also be found in the approach of M. Scheler, cited earlier, where values are treated as hierarchical, objective or normative. In addition to the distinction proposed within the philosophical analysis of the concept, M. Scheler made a distinction between the following values:

- utilitarian – they decompose into useful or non-useful;
- hedonistic – they are sensual in nature and affect the level of pleasure;
- vital – describe social and demographic characteristics such as health or age;
- spiritual, including: cognitive, legal, aesthetic, as well as the absolute entering the realm of the sacred (Scheler, 2004; 2014).

According to M. Scheler, the most essential place in the hierarchy is occupied by absolute values, i.e. values that constitute intrinsic value and are the highest good – a kind of *sacrum* (Bodziany, 2019). The author included religious values as those that stand at the top of the hierarchy. Thus, absolute values represent something that a human being values above all else, something that no material thing can replace. They represent an individual and unique ethos created and recognised by a particular person or social group. William G. Sumner’s approach understands ethos as a normative style – a complex of distinctive customs and moral rules (Sztompka, 2007) – and is ideally suited to the nature and specificity of military service by virtue of the existence of norms and rules that stand above legislated law; and, in fact, the law should be aligned with the norms and rules

and fundamental values of a nation (Sumner, 1995). Ethos is treated as an absolute value in specific cultural fields – organisations with a relatively hermetic structure and a specific organisational culture. These undoubtedly include total institutions such as the army, whose immanent feature is, among other things, the soldier's ethos enshrined in the organisation's cultural canon, understood as "a particular part of the tradition, which, in the common belief of the members of the collective, is binding on all its participants and, moreover, is to be inherited from one generation to another" (Szpociński, 1991, p. 26), or is to be "an expression of the collective identity of the nation and relatively the most enduring part of the culture, as arising in the historical process and drawn from various sources of the society" (Kłoskowska, 2007, p. 65).

In most sociological approaches, values are a component of non-material culture. They also often appear as material values associated with national heritage and cultural assets, or with artefacts valued by a social individual or collective. One of the authors indicating their cultural framework is John H. Turner, assigning an important role to values not only in relation to the nation, but also to the social group and the individual. In his understanding, values refer to ideas about what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, ultimately what is important and what is unimportant (Turner, 1998, p. 43). Their essential feature is that they form systems, which in sociology are called axionormative order. Values are also referred to in the work of Florian Znaniecki, who introduced a humanist factor into the systematics of concepts, relating values to the structure of cultural systems created and reproduced in the active experience of people (Hałas, 1991). He emphasised the importance of material values for human existence and for human development.

An approach to values based on the rationality of actions was represented by Talcott Parsons. In his theory, values and motives are the main determinants of human actions aimed at building human bonds (Parsons, 2009). According to T. Parsons, values are nothing more than imperatives that dictate to an individual to pursue and endorse certain courses or types of action towards the collective and towards one's own role in the collective (Parsons, 1991, pp. 10-11). Other sociological concepts of values are associated with the work of Geert and Geert Jon Hofstede (Hofstede, Hofstede, 2007) and Roland Inglehart. The latter was the first to point out the importance of materialist values linked to scarcity economies and post-materialist values relevant to societies embedded in free market economies (Inglehart, 2000; 2007). However, it should be emphasised that

in the Polish literature the most significant contribution to the study of values was made by Antonina Kłoskowska. In her work, she distinguished two types of values: autotelic and instrumental, embedded in symbolic culture. Autotelic values are supreme and central values, occupying the most important place in the hierarchy of values. Their fulfilment is a good in itself. Instrumental values, on the other hand, are subordinate values, of lower importance, but they are helpful in achieving the highest values. They are executive in nature and serve to fulfil higher goals (Kłoskowska, 2007; Świtała, 2015). The presented concepts of values represent only a fraction of theoretical considerations of the axiological areas of social life, including in such specific organisations as the army. At the same time, they provide a basis for understanding the essence of psychological approaches to values.

### **1.3. Psychological concepts of values – selected trends**

The founders of psychological concepts of values were Gordon Allport and Philip E. Vernon, who in 1931 undertook pioneering research based on a proprietary tool for the analysis of values (Cieciuch, 2013). It should be noted that at that time there was not even a definition of values defining their psychological framework. Their interpretation was reduced to two areas: values as interests and values as attitudes (Cieciuch, 2013; Liberska, 2017). The approach of G. Allport and P.E. Vernon drew on the empirical experience of Eduard Spranger's personality study, which fits perfectly with the study of the individual and collective values of specific (and non-specific) collectives such as soldiers. The aforementioned Study of Values (SoV) tool was developed for the research (Oleś, Hermans, 2002). This tool was designed to measure the six personality types distinguished by E. Spranger, corresponding to six main values:

- "theoretical – the main value is truth, intellectualism, criticism, individualism;
- economic – focus on utilitarian values, frugality, practicality, utilitarianism;
- aesthetic – the main value is form, harmony, striving to give behaviour an appropriate beautiful form;
- social – the main value is love of another person, who is shown respect, rendered help;
- political – striving for power, strength, directing other people, not necessarily in the purely political sphere;

- religious – the chief value is a sense of unity with the totality of reality and striving for it through spiritual development” (Cieciuch, 2013, p. 21).

The most general psychological definition describes value as “the property or quality of a thing, making it useful, desirable or highly valued or a general, abstract principle that determines patterns of behaviour in a given culture or society, which members of a given society are inclined to value highly” (Reber, 2000, p. 810). Another definition states that values are “beliefs about desirable goal states or behaviours that transcend specific situations, guide choices and evaluations (of events, behaviours) and are ordered according to relative importance” (Wojciszke, 2012, p. 546), are long-lasting, continuous and universal (Molesztak, 2012). The author argues that every human being uses a system of values that he or she has created and makes decisions and choices on this basis. In her opinion, values are everything “that a person loves, longs for, strives for, and is capable of satisfying their needs” (Molesztak, 2012, p. 264). Values in psychology describe a person’s relativised relationship to a particular object or subject (Sagan, 2011; Cieciuch, 2013; Liberska, 2017).

An important contribution to the study of values was made by Milton Rokeach. His concept focused on the assumptions of cognitive psychology and treated cognition as a system of beliefs composed of 10 hierarchical subsystems. The central system is a set of beliefs about one’s self, and the next two systems are concerned specifically with values (Parsons, 2009; Cieciuch, 2013). According to his concept, values appear as enduring beliefs that are also the unit of personality description (Kościuch, 1983). According to M. Rokeach, values and attitudes are closely linked to beliefs. The author distinguishes three types of such beliefs:

- “descriptive or existential beliefs, which can be both true and false;
- evaluative beliefs, which concern judgements of right and wrong;
- prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs, in which certain courses of action are judged to be desirable or undesirable” (Kościuch, 1983, p. 87 after: Rokeach, 1973, p. 7).

And he divides values into:

- instrumental – based on the belief that a single belief is personally and socially preferred in an unconditional way, these include moral and competence values;
- terminal – i.e. those worth fighting for (e.g. peace, life) or rewarding values, which are divided into personal and social (Kościuch, 1983; Liberska, 2017).



Another researcher studying values in psychology was Shalom H. Schwartz, who in 1987 proposed the innovative method of multidimensional scaling (MDS). Values, as defined by S.H. Schwartz, are understood as a cognitive representation (usually a belief) of a motivational, desirable, supra-situational goal (Ciecuch, 2013). The greatest contribution of S.H. Schwartz is the circular model of value measurement, which was initially divided into 10 values or four so-called higher order values. The current version of the model consists of as many as 19 precisely ordered values, and the empirical basis is formed by:

- the Schwartz Value Scale (SVS) consisting of 57 items in the form of value names;
- the Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ), based on abstract value names from the SVS converted in the PVQ into items describing different people in terms of their goals, aspirations and beliefs about what is important in life (Schwartz et al., 2017).

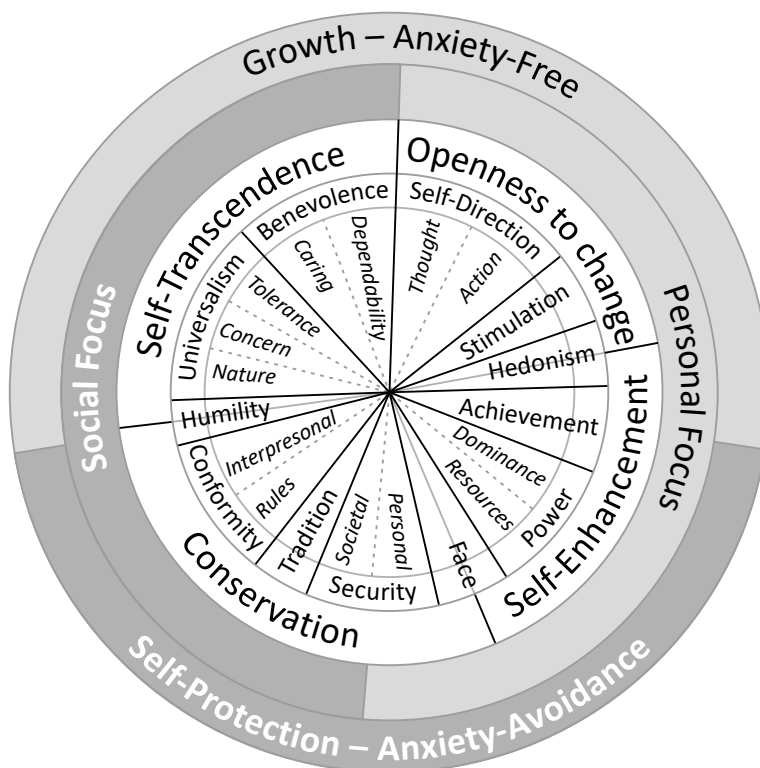


Fig. 1. Value model by S.H. Schwartz  
Source: (Schwartz et al., 2017, p. 242).

## 2. Values in the army – overview of sources and methodological assumptions

The value systems present in the army have been the subject of many domestic and international academic publications. The basis for the analysis are publications on the specifics of the profession of a soldier, including an officer. One of the researchers of this issue is Jan Maciejewski, who points out that the essence of the axiological sphere of the functioning of the army is the professional ethics of the soldier. Its basis is the moral dilemma contained between the order and the soldier's own individual values (Maciejewski, 2013). The ethics of the soldier's profession have been extensively discussed by Malwina Wach, who addresses her considerations to the canon of the army's organisational culture enshrined in *Kodeks Honorowy Żołnierza Zawodowego Wojska Polskiego (The Code of Honour of the Polish Army Soldier)* (Biuro Konwentu Dziekanów, 2018). Its essence is the motto "God, Honour, Fatherland", which is followed by the soldier in accordance with ethical principles and norms within the framework of tasks performed at home and abroad (Wach, 2018).

An important role in the analysis of values recognised by Polish officers is played by *Kodeks Honorowy (The Code of Honour)*, which is a set of rules of conduct based on ethics, honour and dignity. It is also a "package" of moral principles and at the same time guidelines covering the entirety of regulations concerning the ethical and legal dimension of a professional soldier's service (Kulesza, Niziołek, 2010). *The Code of Honour* is also a set of fundamental values and virtues describing the ethos of a soldier. These include, in addition to honour, patriotism and devotion to the homeland, honesty, fairness, truthfulness, valour, as well as professional solidarity (Biuro Konwentu Dziekanów, 2018). The author draws attention to two spheres of a soldier's morality – code (formal) and situational (personal), between which there is often a serious dissonance (Wach, 2018).

Significant data on values among Polish soldiers is provided by a research by S. Teclaw and W. Nowosielski (Teclaw, Nowosielski, 2010). Their results indicate the importance of, among other things, good relations with and trust in superiors. Interesting from the point of view of the subject under consideration is Małgorzata Spychała's research undertaken as part of her doctoral thesis entitled *Świat wartości żołnierzy Marynarki Wojennej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Studium socjologiczne (World of values of the Polish Navy soldiers of the Polish Republic. Sociological study)*. In this paper, the author presents the social role model of the navy soldier based on the

results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted in 2018 among military students at the Polish Naval Academy and professional soldiers – seaman recruits. The most significant conclusion emerging from the research clearly indicates that the specificity of values recognised by soldiers is also shaped by the culture of the organisation, in this case by the ethos of the seaman recruit, which is part of the so-called “culture of the sea” (Spychała, 2018).

Values in the army have also been given much consideration in the foreign literature. Particularly relevant to the analysis have been departmental publications and NATO army research reports, as well as academic articles in this area. One of these, by Jonn Kusch, points to values such as loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honour, integrity and personal courage (Kusch, 2011; ADRP 1. The Army Profession, 2015; Values and Standards in the British Army, 2018). The historical context of the values of the US Army can be found in the publication *A Brief History of the Army Values* (Licameli, 2015). Its essence is to provide an account of the formation of the prevailing values from 1775 to the present day. In contrast, a newsletter on values in the British Army points to: courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity, loyalty, selfless commitment, adherence to legal standards, acceptable behaviour and professionalism (Mileham, 1996; Values and Standards in the British Army, 2018). The broader context of the research on values in the British Army is presented in an article by P.J. McCormack, who draws on a philosophical concept of values to reconstruct views on the sustainability of values in the British Army. He bases his reflections on his observation of the dysfunctions shattering the axiological canon of the British military tradition (McCormack, 2015). A research report on values in the Pakistani army published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars provides interesting insights (Smith, 2018). The report was produced as a result of US officers' surveys of foreign personnel serving in the Pakistan Army. The research covered a period of 37 years (from 1977 to 2014) and involved different groups of Pakistan Army officers. It examined the impact of demographic changes and security threats on the value systems of the army.

As the research is qualitative and exploratory in nature, a research hypothesis was deliberately not formulated. For their purposes, a triangulation of qualitative methods was used. The primary and also the inspiring method for the research was author's own observation (passive and participant observation) conducted over several years as part of work experience. At its core was the acquisition of information from family members

and those in the immediate professional environment about career aspirations, motivations for entering the officer profession and levels of satisfaction with military service. The triangulation of qualitative methods was also based on source analysis and the comparative analysis, abstraction and synthesis of source material. The main research method was qualitative interviews conducted using a semi-structured interview technique with 5 respondents – former officers representing different military occupational speciality (mechanised infantry – 2, defence against weapons of mass destruction – 1, military engineering – 1 and artillery – 1), aged between 48 and 58, with an average length of service of 29 years.

Two of the respondents started their military service at the end of the 1980s i.e. still during the Cold War. The others in the 1990s, at the threshold of the political transformation. This observation is important for the analysis of value systems shaped either in the period of the shortage economy (until 1989) or already in the period of the emerging free market economy (from 1990). The aforementioned variables have important implications for the analysis of materialist value systems associated with the shortage economy and post-materialist value systems shaped in the free market economy (Inglehart, 2000).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face, live, in accordance with all standards and rules. Respondents to the interviews were informed of the topic and purpose of the study. The subjects of the interview shared the same issues, but due to the high level of freedom of expression of the respondents, their order was often disrupted. In many cases, the answers evolved into short narratives containing answers to subsequent questions. Each respondent consented to the interview, its recording and publication of the findings. The interviews were anonymous and recorded using a voice recorder. The findings were transcribed and then subjected to narrative analysis.

### **3. The axiological dimension of the army and the social pattern of a Polish Army officer in the light of own research**

The research was set in the interpretive paradigm, the essence of which is the diagnosis of constructed social reality. Its canons were governed by the study of the values inherent in the social construct of such a specific organisation as the army. The paradigm is inscribed in the study of values understood as a component of culture, a basis of being and a social

attitude and need. This means that the study of values among soldiers requires an interdisciplinary approach – in this case a sociological, philosophical and psychological perspective. The rationale for this approach stems from the fact that there is no single specific typology that meets the requirements and needs of such a socially specific institution as the army. The background for the identification of values among soldiers was M. Scheler's typology, explicating them into: sensible, vital, spiritual and religiously relevant values complemented by hedonistic and utilitarian values. Of particular relevance to our own research were spiritual values (known in another typology as autotelic) and hedonistic values describing broadly defined enjoyment and satisfaction with life (service) and utilitarian values (related to professional development), i.e. values that have a practical dimension and are a bridge to hedonistic and spiritual values. Equally important for the research proved to be the ethos of the officer, the formal dimension of which is presented by *The Code of Honour of the Polish Army Soldier*, especially the section entitled *Żołnierz zawodowy poza służbą (Professional Soldier Off Duty)*, as well as publications relating to the "Esprit de Corps" – morale and a set of ethical principles in the army (Gronek, 2015). The army's ethos is embedded in its organisational culture and forms the collective identity of its members (Kłoskowska, 2007). Sociological concepts of values have given rise to the identification of values understood as a component of culture (individual and group).

The study of values in the army falls into two levels. The first refers to the specificity of the army as inscribed in Erving Goffman's classical theory of total institution, the second to the social pattern of a soldier (in this case an officer) in the Polish army. The theory of the total institution draws attention to the specificity of the culture of an organisation characterised by a relatively hermetic structure and a unique system of norms and values. Its specificity is also underlined by a number of cultural attributes, which include the symbolism enshrined in uniformity (the variety of uniforms depending on the type of armed forces), military ranks (defining merit and place in the military hierarchy), decorations (emphasising merit), insignia for military occupational speciality, i.e. corps badges, as well as banners and pennants, insignia and patches of military units (emphasising identification and group identity). The organisation's culture is also described by internal relations based on a system of punishments and distinctions sanctioned in regulations and internal rules, as well as military traditions and holidays, heroes and patrons of units, monuments and memorials, values, informal customs and a specific language and style of being (Zbiegień-Maciąg, 1999).

An officer's social pattern, on the other hand, is a set of unique and required qualities for an officer that characterises a representative of an organisation that is held in high regard by the public. The social pattern consists of the values respected in society, the legal norms and customs in force and the goals of social groups (Maciejewski, 2013). Physical and psychosocial characteristics are important for identifying the boundaries of an officer's social pattern. These boundaries are defined by the following components:

- physical appearance;
- scope of professional authority;
- moral attitude, i.e. the objective principles of a soldier's behaviour not only concerning professional but also private life (Maciejewski, 2013).

The basis for the analysis of the army's social pattern is the concept of the chivalry, which was transformed into the ethos of the soldier in the 18th century. It is with the ethos that moral values remain linked, which in the case of the army are absolute and unconditional. These include fatherland and honour, sacrifice, loyalty and discipline. In many publications, fatherland and honour appear as the supreme values of the soldier's profession. They are superior to the other values that constitute the canon of the army's organisational culture. The social pattern of a Polish army officer is also shaped by formal qualifications, such as:

- comprehensive general and specialist knowledge and skills;
- interpersonal competences, necessary to establish and develop official and informal relations with subordinates and superiors;
- social science knowledge and experience of working with people.

The psychological perspective on values prescribes looking at an officer's social pattern from the perspective of personality, understood as a source of constancy of behaviour and building authority among subordinates, and as a set of attributes that include: needs, interests, abilities, intelligence, temperament and personality. An unquestionable value and at the same time a variable describing an officer's social pattern is the aforementioned authority (formal and informal), the basis of which is recognition, respect and prestige, built on very different qualities:

- social standing;
- knowledge and professional skills;
- initiative;
- organisational skills;
- foresight;
- persuasive skills;

- ability to formulate tasks clearly;
- ability to integrate the group;
- ability to represent the group externally (to superiors and other groups).

Although authority in the army is one of absolute value, it has two important features. The first is its relative nature related to the varying perceptions of subordinates and their individual values, and the second is its unambiguousness – for one cannot have partial authority, either one has it or one does not.

### 3.1. Analysis of test results

Interviews were conducted in 2021, among retired officers. For the purpose of conducting the interviews, the following questions were adopted, which were not subject to the canon of order and had a high level of freedom.

The content analysis of the interviews shows that each respondent indicated different reasons for deciding to serve in the military. Motivation, which is based on material (instrumental values) and non-material

Table 1. Interview questions vs dependent variables

Questions	Values/dependent variables
How long have you served in the army? What factors determined your choice to become a professional soldier? Has anyone in your family served in the military?	Hedonistic and officer ethos – motivation for service and expectations
Was the choice of university and military occupational speciality deliberate or was it due to other factors?	
Does military university prepare you to serve in your first position within the army structure?	
What is important to you in life? What values describe you today as a soldier (officer) and a human being (social individual)?	Individual, group recognised/absolute values and officer ethos and vital values
What formal values (embedded in the organisation's culture) are important to you? How have they influenced your world view and your private life?	
Have you been involved in helping people (the vulnerable, the poor, the excluded) and to what extent?	Autotelic values – altruism and philanthropy

Questions	Values/dependent variables
Has your military university education shaped your world view and the values necessary for further service, and if so, how?	Utilitarian values – attitudes and view of the world
Does military service cause you stress? Please discuss instances that shaped your vision of yourself in the army.	
What situations were the most stressful?	
What do you think about interpersonal relations in the army? Does promotion change people, is it a source of negative attitudes and behaviour from colleagues, if so, how?	Autotelic and instrumental values – interpersonal relations and relationships
Do you consider yourself to be a responsible and trustworthy person?	Utilitarian values and officer ethos – leadership and authority
Please describe your relationship with your subordinates. Did you find it difficult to give orders?	
What factors contributed to your leaving the army?	Instrumental, autotelic and hedonistic values – off duty activities and vision for the future
What interests did you have outside of military service?	
Do you still feel the need to participate in the “culture of the organisation”? - Do you still identify with the military service?	Autotelic values – group identity and identification with service
If so, how does your identification with the military community manifest itself?	

Source: own elaboration.

(autotelic values embedded in the organisational culture canon), plays an important role. The basis for the analysis here are the two types of factors presented in the two-factor theory of F. Herzberg. These include the hygiene factors largely constituting organisational culture (pay conditions, working/service conditions, sense of security, interpersonal relations, social position and leadership style) and the motivators (including recognition, sense of responsibility, achievement, promotion and personal development) (Bodziany et. al., 2021a; Bodziany et. al., 2021b).

A content analysis of the interviews shows that two respondents declared a history of serving in the military among their family and economic conditions as a motivator for taking up military service. The three remaining respondents did not declare a history of serving in the military among



their family, and the main motivators appeared to be passion, patriotism, the chance of development, job stability and the financial conditions offered by the army. One of them started his career in the military as early as secondary school – at a military high school. This is what he says about studying at a military high school: “high school was difficult and hard, there were 20 candidates for one place, it was elitist, generally there was WAT [Military University of Technology], WAM [Military Medical Academy], doctors were admitted, I chose Wrocław because I had not been here and I did not have an exact plan, only that I was going to Wrocław” [Respondent 4].

However, it is noteworthy that each of them made the decision to serve in the military while being in different social conditions. Each of them represented a different social group and declared different interests. They came from working-class, intelligentsia or mixed families. The main factors motivating the choice of a military university, and consequently a military occupational speciality, were the advice of family or friends and the distance of the university from home. Only in one case was the choice dictated by a clear vision of the future and subject knowledge about the military. One account indicating two types of motivators to enter the service (vocation and vision of development) is noteworthy: “the choice to join the army is actually a result of several ideas, already during the middle of high school I started thinking about the army, however, it was a big unknown, because none of my friends or family had been in the army and it was due to a desire to test myself, the other thing is that the beginning of the 90s was a time of high unemployment and this job offered a guarantee of development, but also, frankly speaking, financial guarantees and in those days it was very important” [Respondent 3].

One respondent emphasised the importance of the officer ethos and service to the state and society. Another emphasised the importance of hedonistic values and self-fulfilment combined with family traditions. This is evidenced by the statement: “it’s my life’s passion, as children, my friends, with whom I was most often hanging out, thought about being firemen, policemen, I have dreamt of being a professional soldier since I was a child, I was drawn to it, nothing has changed and nothing will change, because I already know that I am at such a stage that it will last [...] I come from a military family, and I had to deal with this uniform all the time and every day I was actually in a military unit [interlude... yyy...], we lived in a block of flats housing military personnel, also the military was always there and I couldn’t imagine being anything other than a soldier. I only thought about

one alternative, which was just to feel safe in case I didn't make it to military university... I thought about becoming a surgeon, but the desire to take up a career as a soldier was strong enough that I made it happen" [Respondent 2]. The statements show that the ethos of a soldier (officer) was instilled in the respondent through primary and secondary socialisation and shaped his value system almost from the beginning of his life.

A different approach to taking up the profession of soldier is contained in the already quoted statement of Respondent 3. On the one hand, it reveals a passion and a challenge: "already during the middle of high school I started thinking about the army, however, it was a big unknown, because none of my friends or family had been in the army and it was due to a desire to test myself", and on the other hand, a vision of professional stability: "this job offered a guarantee of development, but also, frankly speaking, financial guarantees". The respondent's statements therefore indicate that the decision to serve in the military was an individual choice and not the result of motivation by the parents.

Another statement shows that passion, family traditions and one's own aspirations became the rationale for undertaking military service. Respondent 5 indicates: "ever since I was a kid it was my dream, but I was just interested in the military in a sense that as a boy I ran around the backyard with a gun. Later on, as a teenage adolescent boy who had to define specifically what he would eventually like to do in his adult life, the only right profession that would be relevant to my aptitude was the military. Besides, I come from a military family, willingly or unwillingly, I grew up in the reality where someone served, no doubt there was no situation of a parent influencing a child, but since I was a child I had the opportunity to observe how a person who wears a uniform works. I had material to analyse, but my father did not make it easy for me because he told me to decide for myself. He never imposed it on me".

The enlistment itself and the course of service involves several issues that often create cognitive dissonance between what is shown in the media and told by colleagues or family and the reality. These include expectations, worldview and, of course, individual values, which may or may not change when confronted with the reality of service. This dissonance is revealed in Respondent 3's statement: "I pictured it differently and the first days, weeks, in terms of the basic training course before the oath, were maybe not hard, but rather not very comfortable and I asked myself a dozen times a day what I was doing here and I had thoughts that it was a bad idea". Other accounts indicate that, to a greater or lesser extent, respondents felt

dissonance, particularly in relation to the physical and mental burdens of the service. In many cases, stress related to the burdens and dynamics of the service, as well as separation from family, was a key issue. In most cases, however, stress related to learning and the amount of study material to be mastered was indicated. One account also points to another source of stress [Respondent 4]. One of these is the fear of sanction and accountability for decisions made. The respondent dealt with issues of people's ability to get used to difficult and stressful situations in a rather general way.

An integral part of military service is promotion and career, which many times represent the highest (often absolute) value and shape the vision of "oneself". Often, advancement and career are subordinated to service and autotelic values become only a background for promotion. There are cases where career becomes the cause of the pauperisation of other values, even values such as family life, peace, health and psychological security. Career and social position lead to two types of conflict: values and social roles, and these cause interpersonal conflict. All interview respondents achieved professional fulfilment. Each is a commissioned officer – from the rank of major to colonel – and their careers have taken a variety of paths. Each knows the value of the education and qualifications required for the next military position and rank. Each has experienced negative feedback and jealousy from colleagues after being promoted. They themselves also indicate an aversion to opportunism and so-called rapid promotions often not justified by qualifications and competence. Respondent 2's account suggests that one's own qualifications often lose value when confronted with the realities of personnel. When asked about the jealousy associated with rapid promotion, he provides this answer: "whether jealousy..., i.e., certainly kind of discouragement when one has seen someone do little and get promoted". Another respondent stated: "I have encountered jealousy too, from others. I didn't feel envy towards anyone, I don't have such a negative attitude, envying someone. [...] It drives me, someone got a promotion, so maybe it would be nice to do something to get one too. But jealousy is destructive, there is no point in being jealous" [Respondent 2]. In other accounts there are phrases showing the negatives of a career supported by expressions: "the rat race" [Respondent 3] or another: "If you grow, the more successful you are in life, the more enemies will come" [Respondent 4].

The content analysis of the interviews shows the diversity of values recognised by the respondents. In addition to such instrumental values as economic stability, social position and material possessions, the activities and passions developed while still in service are important. All mentioned

sporting activity (vitality values): “sport is essential, at the moment I go to the pool, cycle and sauna every day, cycle 30-50 km. My hobbies are books, a good film. Going somewhere spontaneous... mountains, sea” [Respondent 3]. Respondents also mentioned different kinds of hobbies, often expensive and demanding (e.g. motorbike rallies or collections of valuables). Each of the respondents listed family and time devoted to it as part of their daily life or tourist trips as the highest value. Another value emerging from the interviews is education and qualifications, which the respondents believe are the basis for professionalism and building authority.

In one account [Respondent 4], an opinion on the qualities of a young male soldier candidate stands out. He points out, among other things, the necessity for every young man to be trained for the defence of the state – the Israeli model in which the training basis is a three-month military course. He justifies this by saying: “History shows that it is a matter of time before there is another war. A mother would want to defend her children, a wife would want to defend her husband, a husband would want to defend his wife and in general I think everybody should be trained, they should not neglect it, there should be a core, we should have a large military reserve force. The military teaches life, you can see the differences, it teaches boys, boys are boys in too tight jeans and they will never be good husbands and fathers from a real point of view, because they haven’t gone through anything, they don’t know what is required of them, they won’t go beyond their limits, so that they know that there is something in life that from their perspective will be difficult to achieve, which is submission, regime, patience, things that come in handy later on in the family” [Respondent 4].

## Conclusions

Values in the army are a very complex and at the same time interdisciplinary subject of research. They can be examined in terms of different research perspectives or holistically, based on a combination of philosophical, sociological and psychological perspectives in relation to values declared at the individual level or values embedded in the culture of an organisation. The research presented in this article presents fragments of accounts from former Polish army officers serving at military universities. The rationale behind the selection of the sample for the research was based on two considerations. The first relates to the own experience with the military environment of the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military

University of Land Forces. The second from the specifics of service at military universities, diametrically opposed to service in operational units or military insitutions. The selection of the sample was heavily burdened by quantitative limitations. Many potential respondents showed no willingness to be interviewed. By their very nature, the results of the research cannot provide a basis for building analogies – their qualitative and partly exploratory nature prohibits generalisation. Therefore, they should be regarded as foundations for new lines of research.

The study aimed to identify the factors shaping the axionormative order of Polish Army officers and to explicate the values shaping their social pattern. The research shows that hedonistic values (enjoyment and satisfaction with life) dominate among respondents – almost everyone left for the military reserve fully satisfied with their choice of profession and service. They treat service itself as an almost absolute value – the meaning of their life and vocation and the intricacies of service as a natural consequence of the specifics of the soldier's profession. All respondents indicated values related to a sense of responsibility for vulnerable people and pointed to the importance of altruistic and philanthropic behaviour. Their individual axionormative order is the product of three types of values:

- instrumental – position, standard of living and social (economic) security;
- hedonistic – satisfaction and enjoyment of life's achievements and passions (hobbies), as well as family affirmation;
- autotelic – pride in belonging to the elite (officer corps), a sense of mission and patriotism, altruism and attachment to the uniform and military occupational speciality, integrity and honour, and family and loved ones.

The research is evaluative in nature and sets the direction for further research in the area of axiological determinants concerning the functioning of the army.

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### Świat wartości oficerów Wojska Polskiego

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#### STRESZCZENIE

Wartości stanowią bardzo złożony przedmiot badań nie tylko w ujęciu indywidualnym, ale również zbiorowym. Pierwsze ujęcie osadza je w kulturze indywidualnej jednostki i odnosi się do socjalizacji pierwotnej i wtórnej oraz uczestnictwa w kulturze. Drugie ujęcie dotyczy kultury organizacji i jej aksjologicznej specyfiki. W artykule podjęto próbę identyfikacji systemów wartości w specyficznej organizacji, jaką jest armia. Na podstawie badań jakościowych (triangulacji biernej, analizy źródeł oraz wywiadów z byłymi oficerami) dokonano egzemplifikacji stałych i zmiennych elementów kanonu kultury organizacyjnej oraz wartości uznawanych przez przedstawicieli środowiska oficerów. Analiza treści literatury przedmiotu oraz wyniki badań własnych wskazują, że systemy indywidualnych wartości wśród oficerów choć różnią się znacząco, posiadają zestawy stałych wartości uniwersalnych, które nabywane są pod wpływem czasu służby i doświadczenia oraz kultury organizacji. Zmienną różnicującą wartości wśród oficerów są indywidualne aspiracje i czynniki środowiskowe, kształtujące światopogląd i stosunek do otaczającej ich rzeczywistości. Artykuł jest próbą identyfikacji czynników kształtujących



ład aksjo-normatywny oficerów Wojska Polskiego oraz identyfikacji wartości kształtujących ich wzór społeczny.

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**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE** wartości, oficerowie, Wojsko Polskie, elita, pozycja społeczna


### **Biographical note**

**Marek Bodziany** – Colonel, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Management and Leadership, Security Studies, including social and cultural security, population processes, sociology of military and war, social inequalities and social science methodology. Editor-in-Chief of the Military University of Land Forces Publishing House from 2013 to 2023.

**Małgorzata Hałas** – MA, psychologist and teacher, vice principal at a secondary school. Research interests: military psychology, addiction and dysfunction in children and adolescents, gender psychology. Graduate of a long-cycle Master's degree programme in psychology and postgraduate studies.

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### **ORCID**

Marek Bodziany  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8030-3383>

Małgorzata Hałas  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3206-8686>

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All authors declared no conflict of interests.

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### **Author contributions**

All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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### **Ethical statement**

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.