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Military Social Work: An Essential Factor in War Readiness

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The statement in the title may seem provocative at first glance, but the arguments presented below aim to highlight the complexity and necessity of military social work in ensuring the human component in conflict situations.

If we start from the established definition in dictionaries, we find that social work, in a broad sense, is an academic discipline and a practice-based profession. From this perspective, the existence of the training system in this field is justified through the specialized faculties within the country's universities. At the same time, specialized institutions in this sector implement, under state coordination and funding, the principles and objectives specific to this definition.

Thus, social work is concerned with individuals, families, groups, communities, and society as a whole, in an effort oriented toward meeting basic needs, improving social functioning, stimulating self-determination, assuming collective responsibility, maintaining optimal health, and promoting general well-being.

From this definition, I consider it important to focus on the idea of **"improving social functioning."** Social functioning can be understood as an individual's capacity to fulfill their social role in relation to themselves, their immediate social environment, and society as a whole.

Military social work, consolidated and developed within the West University of Timișoara, represents an important academic achievement. While it initially focused on developing the concept by analyzing the situation of veterans from theaters of operations, military retirees, and their families, in the future it is necessary to expand it so that it becomes

a relevant component in mobilizing and motivating human resources for preparedness in the event of an armed conflict.

A brief clarification is also required regarding the use of the term "defense" in this field, which, in my opinion, is gradually losing its adequacy in the current context. Developments after 1990, including transformations in the sphere of armed conflicts, geostrategic strategies, and the military policies of European states and NATO structures, have substantially reconfigured the meaning of this concept. From a historical perspective, it is worth recalling that before World War II, many states had ministries of war—institutions explicitly oriented toward preparing for conflict.

The Evolution of Defense and Human Resources Post-1990

After the year 1990, war readiness underwent an accelerated process of downsizing. In Western European states, and subsequently in other European regions, measures were adopted to reduce active military personnel and the volume of combat equipment, with effects also felt in former socialist countries.

The successive reduction in the number of military personnel, especially officers and non-commissioned officers, significantly affected the state's military potential. To this was added, toward the end of the last decade of the 20th century, the abolition of compulsory military service, a fact that profoundly altered the traditional mechanisms for organizing mobilization, which must be activated under the threat of war.

The abolition of compulsory military service also meant transforming the relationship between the citizen and the state regarding preparation for defense and mobilization, up to a certain age limit established by law. The transition to a fully professional army and the suspension of compulsory military service generated important structural challenges regarding the creation, training, and maintenance of the operational reserve.

Currently, through participation in NATO structures, the Romanian Army operates within an allied framework, and joint training with the armies of other states, participation in theaters of operations, and the redeployment of certain military units are carried out in line with the commitments assumed within the organization.

In the current system, a portion of the reservists called up for training already exceed the age of 50. Recently, exercises involving the recall and retraining of some reservists to

familiarize them with new equipment and procedures have been presented in the public sphere. This situation raises legitimate questions regarding the actual mobilization and adaptation capacity of the available human resources.

This results in the need to develop a legislative and institutional framework that allows, under clear and predictable conditions, the preparation of young people to fulfill their legal obligations regarding national defense. This is not a simple task, and the way the topic is addressed at the strategic and administrative levels deserves increased attention.

The war in Ukraine, the reconfiguration of security priorities in Europe, and the relaunch of the defense industry have prompted numerous states to adopt measures to strengthen defense capacity and human resource preparedness. In this context, preparing the human force for conflict situations becomes a major concern.

Since the problem transcends national boundaries and implies cooperation among allied states, the military social work system must be designed in a form adapted to new realities. It must preserve national specificities but also be integrated into a European and allied framework. The complexity of the subject requires interdisciplinary research, with the participation of both military and civilian institutions, to build a coherent model of military social work under conflict conditions.

In parallel, investments in weaponry and combat equipment are already visible at the European level. Budget allocations and available financial instruments are increasingly directed toward defense contracts, with unequal economic effects from one country to another. In Romania's case, the direct industrial and technological benefits of these processes remain limited for now.

Strategic Variants for War Readiness Systems

Depending on the international context, the system of preparing for war can be structured into several variants:

Variant 1: The Status Quo

The state maintains an active army funded by the budget, and the preparation of civil society is oriented toward defense. In this framework, the Romanian Army operates as part of NATO forces, and training is built on equipment and procedures compatible with alliance

standards. Under such conditions, national security decisions are strongly influenced by European and Euro-Atlantic political commitments and mechanisms.

In this variant, military social work remains, in essence, a specialized component of the national social system, without major substantive transformations.

Variant 2: Human-Centric Mobilization (Recommended)

This approach is much more complex and, in my opinion, closer to the actual requirements of mobilization for defense. In this logic, the human component must be considered essential: equipment and weaponry have no operational value without trained, instructed personnel capable of using them effectively. In the recruitment and training process, young people have a priority role.

Combatants who have exceeded the age of 50, even if they can be mobilized based on legal obligations and the military oath, integrate more difficultly into the requirements of the modern fighter.

- **First limitation:** Many of them were trained on military equipment and weaponry that no longer correspond to current operational standards.
- **Second limitation:** The physical and social constraints specific to this category of personnel.

In this context, young people represent the primary human potential for building the war readiness system, which requires at least two distinct stages:

1. **Military Training:** This stage is general in nature, similar to compulsory military service, and is indispensable. Success in an armed conflict cannot be built on untrained troops sent to a theater of operations without the necessary preparation. Young people must be motivated not only through financial incentives but also through military social work measures. The legislative framework related to this component must be sufficiently clear and attractive to support the willingness to enlist and participate in training. Until now, as professional options have diversified and interest in military careers has changed, traditional motivation based exclusively on patriotism can no longer be considered sufficient. In the context of European integration and globalization, classic motivation mechanisms must be supplemented with concrete socio-economic incentives and credible institutional

guarantees. While the state can identify other forms of support, military social work remains a pivotal element.

2. **Mobilization for War:** This is an extremely difficult stage. If the first stage succeeds in creating an attractive framework for young people, then the state can obtain the necessary legal and moral willingness for enlistment and training. Without this foundation, mobilization becomes much more difficult. Therefore, facilities and support measures must be developed and diversified, a process where military social work plays an important role both legislatively and organizationally.

Variant 3: The Contractual Framework

This option is costly and uncertain from the perspective of the social cohesion required in an armed conflict. It involves supplementing the regular army and mobilizable reserves with contractual personnel from private security sectors. At first glance, this option would alter the structure of military social work relatively little. In reality, however, it could generate high costs and additional difficulties regarding cohesion, institutional loyalty, and the collective spirit necessary in a defensive war. For this reason, such a solution must be evaluated with caution.

Historical Context and Conclusion

Romania's history offers relevant examples regarding the relationship between military sacrifice and the state's social promises. King Ferdinand's promise to appropriate land to soldiers returning from World War I remains a significant benchmark for how the state can build trust and willingness for military service.

I conclude with a simple aspiration: more truth, more responsibility, and more lucidity in relation to the present.