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Patriotic education and civic culture of youth in Russia: sociological perspective

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Abstract

High level of patriotic consciousness is supposed to be an important factor of civic consolidation and enhancement of competitive ability of Russia in geopolitical schedule. In the meantime, multinational character of Russian society, specifics of its territorial and administrative division, difference in political and socioeconomic situation of its regions challenge the existing system of patriotic education which no longer responses to modern social reality and doesn't take into account peculiarities of mentality of modern youth. Today in Russian society there is an apparent need for development of ideas of active citizenship, initiative behavior and practical civic co-participation among youth. Evaluation of the patriotic education system was made in four border regions of Russia: Altaysky krai, Krasnoyarsky krai, Omskaya oblast and Republic of Altai (n=2400, from 15 to 75 years). Indicators of evaluation included patriotic education definition, subjective perception of patriotic education efficiency, assessment of the role of different social institutions in patriotic education, obstacles and restrictions in youth policy. Our research showed that patriotic education in public conscience means not only evident inculcation of values such as love and respect for the country, but education in the whole, battle against drugs and alcohol, labor for the welfare of the state, care of people, military service, youth leisure organization. Besides the family as the main social institution responsible for youth socialization and upbringing, mass-media and Internet become the most important information resources, while political parties and civil society organizations don't have a real weight, attributed them in governmental programs. The main causes, blocking patriotic feelings, are low standards of living, lack of institutional trust, social inequality and incertitude.

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1. Introduction

Patriotic education in today's Russia represents an affair of state importance; few aspects of moral education have recently gained so much attention from government officials and practical educators. The priority of this kind of education was underlined by specific state patriotic programs with serious budget financing and elaboration in 2001 of the 'Conception of patriotic education of citizen in Russia', serving as an ideological base for all-level patriotic programs.

As it is noticed in the Conception, patriotism is the particular form of self-realization and social behavior of citizens, which main criteria are love and service for the Fatherland, provision of the integrity and the sovereignty of Russia, of its national security and sustainable development, responsibility and duty, the priority of community and state interests above personal intentions. Notably this sentiment should be the highest sense of the life for all social groups and strata. The social construction of the modern Russian patriotism is made on the base of historical roots; it is represented as a principle feature of peculiar Russian national character, which main traits are – humanistic directivity, religious tolerance, conciliarism and orderliness, primacy of collective principles, particular love for Russian nature. Being a part of the general educational process, patriotic education represents a systematic and goal-oriented activity of state and civil society institutions, including social, functional, organizational and other facets, running through all spheres of life – social-economic, political, spiritual, legislative, pedagogical and all generations, having impact on education, culture, history, state and nation. As it is declared by state authorities the patriotic education penetrates in all social and state institutes.

The patriotism in its civic form is strictly related to civic political culture (in the sense of Almond and Verba), in the common sense they are complemented and uniordinal things. Nevertheless, unlike patriotism, which essence is love for the country, civic culture supposes active participation in political life, conscious inclusion in democracy building, provision of law supremacy, free elections, faithful political concurrence, informational openness of state authorities, public control and effective dialogue of civil society with regularly renewed power structures.

Rapoport (2009) in his well-argued analysis demonstrates that the actual development of patriotic education in Russia is characterized by the maintenance of the old tradition to oppress and silence critical rationalization of patriotism in educational discourses in favor of a more traditional concept of State Patriotism. The re-institutionalization of the policy of State Patriotism is no longer just symbolic, but is a real departure from the liberal democratic changes of the 1990s that contradicts the stated objectives of educational reform and might eventually hamper the development of a democratic school system in Russia and slow the creation of Russia's civil society. Golunov (2012) echoes him, revealing some disturbing trends in the patriotic education: too little focus on developing honesty and fidelity to one's principles as socially important qualities of a successful person; disability to convincingly discriminate between patriotic education and aggressive nationalism; and intolerance towards those who express 'insufficiently patriotic' views on Russia's past and present. A similarly pressing problem is posed by the soaring degradation of the national education system and by the threat of further deterioration of moral authority of teachers and officials acting as agents of patriotism (Golunov 2012). According to these critical points it becomes questionable whether Russian youth will share civil values and demonstrate high civic culture after they have received patriotic education in its modern variant. This paper is devoted to analysis of modern state of patriotic education in Russia on the base of its evaluation by different groups of population, their opinions and representations.

2. Research background and methods

In today's Russia the discussion on patriotism became very prominent, the rise of patriotic consciousness is declared by the state government as a necessary condition for civic consolidation of Russian nation and an integral part of the emergence of a cohesive and self-confident Russia which could enhance its competitiveness on the world stage (Blum, 2006). As it is mentioned by Rapoport (2009: 141), apart from its scientific value, debate on patriotism and its rationalization always oscillates between traditionalism and liberalism and appear as principal identifier determining a discussant's loyalty and commitments to either camp.

In the meantime, historically determined multinational character of Russian society, specifics of its territorial and administrative division (several federal subjects are formed on ethnic base, corresponding to so called 'title

nations’), difference in political and socioeconomic situation of single regions complicate the uniform interpretation of patriotism, reveal a complex of intersections of patriotic sentiments and representations with nationalistic ones, underline some important aspects of patriotism problematization in scientific and public discourses.

The first dimension of patriotism discourse is related to ethnopolitical factors including globalization and consequences of national policy of USSR, having national republics in the structure of the state and rather strong local national elites, linked by the ideology of internationalism, collapsed after the state breakdown and abandoned the Russian nation without any uniting idea. On the one hand, multinational composition of the country does not permit to choose a model of patriotism, based on the ‘Russian’ (ethnic) identity that may result to loyalty loss and enhancement of separatist movement in some regions. On the other hand, patriotism division into different ethnic parts could not provide all-nation civic solidarity and find a general ‘national idea’, shared by all population of the country (Abramov, 2004; Deryabina 2005).

At the same time, globalization influence, especially expressed in creation of transnational associations and political, economic and other ‘spaces’ results in destruction of traditional territorial, social and cultural bonds, which had determined before the self-consciousness of nationalities and ethnical groups (Lutovinov, 2006; Khorin, 2005). Integration requirements have stimulated national sovereignty erosion and assertion of more homogenic cultural standards that almost universally have induced nations’ fear to lose their ethnocultural peculiarity, the rise of separatist and nationalistic sentiments and attitudes (Beck, 1998; Ivanov 2002). In the conditions of cultural resistance to standardization people usually use forms of traditional solidarity, especially its religious and ethnic types. Besides, one of the consequences of federalism in Russia is that patriotism appears not a patriotism ‘in the whole’, based on the general civic identity, but a rather specific local patriotism, supposing identification with concrete ethnic group, nationality or a group of people, living in the concrete place.

The second dimension of patriotism is associated with political propaganda. Patriotic rhetoric today represents one of the most used instruments of political struggle, permitting manipulate masses and single social groups by actualizing in their conscience a ‘right’ variant of patriotic attitudes, which are ordinarily correlated with opposition ‘own – alien’ (Omelchenko, 2010). Thus, patriotic activity is described as politically motivated and a peculiar mode of patriotism existing in modern Russia underlines its matching with political loyalty. Evidently, it is the youth that becomes the object of the patriotic propaganda the most frequently, taking into consideration its actual need for identity and group attachment. As Omelchenko (2010) had stated, “young people are seeking for spaces for cultural expression, but the state continue to impose on them political identities”. Here it would be fair to note, that not only representatives of the state power are campaigning for youth patriotism development, but also many political parties, recruiting youth for their goals and interests defense.

The third feature of the Russian patriotic discourse is alternation of periods of patriotism idealization with multiple periods of ‘depatriotization’. Soviet patriotism acquired from people an ultimate self-sacrificingness for state interests and this requirement was sustained by ideological pressure, justified by necessity to fight external and internal enemies (Gudkov, 2005). In fact, the right to be a citizen of the country was measured by a level of state patriotism. Post-soviet liberalization of Russian society and economic reforms consequences had extended the repertoire of life strategies, created a divergence between goals and interests of people and the state, and, as a result of this process appeared a significant transformation of the content of the notion ‘patriotism’ in the post-soviet Russia. Emigration, foreign marriages, foreign products consumption, social offense, military duty evasion qualified in soviet Russia as unambiguously ‘anti-patriot’ today are not correlated with self-identification as patriot (Lebina, 2008).

Social scientists note a change in value content of the notion ‘patriotism’ in youth area. Many young people are ready to demonstrate patriotism virtually or realize their patriotic activity corresponding to market ethics. Empirical studies show that individual goals remain foreground in comparison with local or national problems. The verbally expressed patriotism of the youth is often matched with a desire to leave the country in order to evade life difficulties, misery and ‘unclaimedness’. Thus, patriotism becomes a ‘service’ that young citizen are ready to render to their country for some symbolical or material fee, ‘obligatory’ or ‘free’ form of patriotism such as military service do not gain support among young people.

All above mentioned peculiarities of Russian patriotic discourse find a clear reflection in state patriotic education system, representing a symbolic ideological barometer of the society. The actual reinforcement of the state power

and the civil society interest toward patriotic education, the visible return to previous educational practices justify the necessity of assessment and analysis of patriotic education system, especially from the point of view of its main 'consumer' – Russian people.

This paper relies on original empirical data received from a research, conducted in four border regions of Russia (Altaysky krai, Krasnoyarsky krai, Omskaya oblast and Altai Republic) in 2012 (n=2400). The survey was realized in a form of formalized interview at the place of living in urban and rural settlements of Russian Federation. Sampling was stratified, multistage, zoned with quotas on sex and age. Representativeness of sampling was provided by the observance of proportions between population, who live in different settlements (big cities, average and small cities, rural settlements), demographic structure of adult population of the four regions.

A set of questions was used to study subjective perception and assessment of patriotic education system. Indicators of evaluation included the definition of patriotic education notion, evaluation of modern state of patriotic education, the role of social institutions, obstacles and restrictions in youth policy, devoted to patriotism sentiments cultivation.

3. Results and discussion

In the political culture literature there is a long debate about cause-and-effect relations between people's aspirations, attitudes and actions and political system functioning. We do not make a claim to find the truly priority but it seems incontestable that both processes are interrelated. That means that the state by imposing some ideology influence and form public opinion, but without positive disposition it would be difficult to implement it effectively. So, the analysis of the content of social representations of population of the notion 'patriotic education' may help to understand how well the state strategy and elaborated programs of patriotic education fit the population attitudes and expectations towards patriotism and patriotic education and vice versa, how these programs change public opinion.

The distribution of respondent's answers in all regions of the research had common tendencies, only insignificant statistical variances were found in regional subsamples. For all inhabitants the patriotic education means first of all 'cultivation of love and respect for the Motherland' (71.0%), then 'the education of children and youth' (31.6%), 'battle against drugs and alcohol in the youth area' (31.1%), labor and service for Motherland welfare care for people (28.7%). About fifth part of respondents noted 'military service, Fatherland defense' (20.5%), for 18% of participants this set expression denoted an organization of spare-time of youth and children.

Soviet-like education, Pioneer and Komsomol organizations resemblance were mentioned by 14.2% of choices, some more 13.0% – political and ideological education, patriotic ideas propaganda, about 11% underlined the importance of personal example. Last places in the list by the number of choices were taken by variants 'basic military training lessons, military-patriotic games' (8.7%). Noteworthy that free answers (about 1%) given in the case when closed alternatives didn't fit respondent's position were concentrated around 'citizenship education', 'spiritual and moral education', 'family education', 'human rights education and human rights defense' that from the one hand logically follows state patriotism doctrine, from the other hand corresponded to liberal tradition, which is not much appreciated by the majority of citizen and politicians. Thus, the majority of people perceives patriotic education through the category "love for the Motherland" and sees the youth and the children as the most important object of the educational work, preferring irrational interpretations rather than more concrete deeds, such as practical activities, patriotic games, and military service.

On several positions there were found significant differences by respondent's age. The young people more often chose the meaning of patriotic education as the labor and service for the Motherland welfare, while adult people give more importance to the return to soviet forms and principles of patriotic education, leisure activity, general education of youth and children, implicating collective symbolic practices and strong social control. Hereof results the association and even substitution of patriotic education with other directions, notably with deviance prevention. In the conditions when patriotic education becomes the priority it is supposed to resolve all the problems, including those which are not directly linked with patriotism. Besides, the image of patriot by this way obtains supplemental characteristics and connotations. Thus, to be a patriot as it follows from our respondent's answers means after all not to use drugs and alcohol, to work hard or spend time rationally that reflect soviet patriotic values.

In the frame of the current research we made an evaluation of the system of patriotic education in the representations of inhabitants of different regions. The evaluation was executed by means of nine-point scale which was next summarized into groups of low, moderate and high scores, compared in age groups.

In the whole sample, including representatives of all ages, evaluations were located on moderate and low parts of the scale, the majority of respondents chose from 3 to 5 points, the mean score was $4,1 \pm 0,43$ ($M \pm SE$). Given results witnessed about some problems in the functioning of patriotic education system, which results are not highly appreciated and appear rather vague. From 14 to 21% of respondents had complication to give a definite evaluation that means that in spite of spread of patriotic programs and institutions, their achievements are overlooked or escaped people's attention.

Analysis of patriotism education system evaluations distribution in different age groups showed that older generation tends to express more critic position and invalidate existing patriotic education system. The respondents from 15-29 years aged group had a greater part of high scores (7-9 points) – 12.2% while in the group of 30-49 years aged such scores took a part of 10.2% and in the group of seniors (50 years and older) – 9.8% ($p < 0.05$, chi-square test). This difference may be explained firstly by inclusion in civic and patriotic activities which are usually devoted to young people and take place in school or university. That is why it is the youth who have more information, practically engaged in the patriotic education system functioning and can give an evaluation of its effectiveness. Besides, the life experience matters: older people can compare today's patriotic system with the soviet and post-soviet ones, so, the criticism of modern situation reflects an implicit nostalgia of 'the good old days'.

In order to reveal the potential of possible subjects of patriotic education, respondents were asked to evaluate the role of different educational institutions, executing patriotic education of the population: family; educational establishments; military patriotic organizations, movements, clubs; sport organizations; committees, departments and other youth work authorities; mass-media; non-governmental organizations; movements, political parties and associations. Though the institution of the family had had an incontestable significance for patriotic education of the population (from 82.8% to 91.3% of high scores in regional subsamples), all proposed alternatives were mentioned as playing an important role in patriotic education. Besides the family the educational establishment got a very high appreciation (from 77.4% to 83.5% high scores) as well as military-patriotic (56.9% – 66.1%) and sport organizations (59.5% – 98.4%), the role of mass-media (56.7% – 59.0%). Political parties and associations had the less attractive image as patriotic education providers (only 36.2%–44.4% of choices), the same may be said about youth authorities (от 45.5% до 55.0%) and NGOs (от 44.8% до 53.6%). Thus, in the conscience of research participants the evaluation of subjects of patriotic education results in two dimensions: traditional and innovative. People realize that the goals of patriotic education may be achieved by different subjects of educational activity, including federal and regional state power institutions, local authorities, educational establishments of all levels, social and religious organizations; cultural centers, family, labor and military collectives, mass-media and others. Traditionally it is the family and the education system as substantial socialization institutes that are seen as the most convenient for cultivation of the 'spirit of patriotism and the love for the Motherland'. Nevertheless, our research revealed a comparatively new tendency of recognition by the population of the impact of mass-media in patriotic education of young generation that justify the necessity of larger use of means of communication and Internet as one of the key resource of information for the youth. Unfortunately, neither youth authorities nor civil society institutions became real subjects of patriotic education policy; they could not play the role which was attributed to them by state programs and laws. Especially politicians and political parties do not correspond to the criteria of the true 'patriots'.

Whereas supporters of patriotic education think that it should become the key point in the system of moral-spiritual orientations of young people which stimulate their constructive activity for the benefit of the patria, its contestants were concerned about possible rise of aggressive intolerance in the form of chauvinism, radical nationalism, suppression of dissent and that "official patriotism will stimulate unscrupulous timeserving" (Golunov, 2012). Our data confirmed that not all citizens of Russia perceive patriotic education as incontestably helpful. From 10% to 14% of respondents in different regions have mentioned that patriotism may sometimes be harmful and we can see the age-related specific of this patriotic benefit perception: in the group of respondents aged 15-29 the part of those who had noticed the unconditional benefit of patriotism was 10% greater than in the group of aged 30-49 and 20% greater than in the group of seniors. At the same time young people more often chose a variant 'patriotism may be sometimes harmful' (16.3% in comparison with 11.2% in the middle age group and 10.7% in the

group of seniors, $p < 0.05$, chi-square test). Thus, the understanding of patriotic education appropriate for the young generation was more ambiguous than that of older groups, generally perceiving it as unconstrained and absolutely positive. In the whole, the statements about uselessness or even harm of patriotic education seem to be too categorical because the lack of respect of the youth towards their country and their milieu is a serious problem which can to be ignored and is difficult to resolve without addressing to patriotic values and attitudes. In addition to that, we agree with those who warn against the risky treatment of patriotic education as an all-powerful instrument, a resolution for all possible problems in the education.

In support of this statement we analyzed people's opinions about possible obstacles for patriotic sentiments growing. Three main factors composed the top of the rate: low standards of life and material welfare, social tension and distrust of government. The second place was taken by uncertainty in future, instability of social position and low vulnerability, the lack of clear patriotic idea in the society, bad organization of youth spare time. Among other, less significant barriers blocking patriotic sentiments, inhabitants of four regions mentioned the lack of possibilities of self-realization, unhealthy political ambiance in the country, negative influence of peers, negative image of the country on the world political stage. The age differences in obstacles evaluation consisted in underlying the deficiency of opportunities by the young group of respondents and the threat for human rights, mentioned by older groups. Thereby, the respondents see the main problem for patriotic sentiments cultivation more globally and argue that general social macro-level problems determine the context of the expression of patriotism by the population: the sharper are economic problems, the problems of just distribution of goods, the more visible are the defects of state management, the lower is the level of patriotism in the Russian society. That means that everything is secondary with regard to the social welfare of the society. A fortiori artificial appear personal obstacles, related to personal attitude towards patriotic activity: unwillingness to participate in patriotic activities, public opinion etc. At the same time, we witness the actualized need of youth in generating some unifying idea, reflecting the ideals of patriotism (the fifth part of young people under 29 years notices such a need), the readiness to participate in patriotic and ideological activities, the definite role in these processes is attributed to the family and political institutions.

At the present time many organizations directly related to military and patriotic education of the youth are functioning in Russia. Almost all forms, existed in URSS were conserved or restored, such as Suvorov military and Nakhimov naval schools, Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Fleet (DOSAAF), military-patriotic clubs, and new forms were created.

The main structures, whose mission consists in patriotic education, may be divided in three groups: state organizations, miscellaneous and non-governmental associations. Example of the first group – Suvorov military and Nakhimov naval schools, Cadet corps, of the second – DOSAAF as an organization semi-state, semi-public, of the third – different military-patriotic, search and military sports associations and clubs, scouting and scout-like organizations, patriotic clubs under the Russian Orthodox Church.

The principle administrative structure, devoted to cope with organizational, methodical and informational tasks is the State military historical and cultural center under the Government of the Russian Federation (“Rosvoentr”). This organization was established by the Russian Government in 1997 in order to elaborate and implement of “programs and projects, devoted to fulfil tasks of military-historical, memorial and cultural-educational character, support and consolidation of war military and law machinery veterans’ movements”. Since 2001, the main direction of its activity is related to execution of the State program of patriotic education of citizens of Russia.

Therefore, the modern system of patriotic education conserved several traits and organizational elements, appropriated for soviet patriotic education system but acquire larger variation of subjects of educational activity, including representatives from the third sector. As it was many times mentioned by the researchers of patriotism the main problem is in the lack of systematic work, of coordination of conceptual positions. In soviet period, the system of patriotic education was strictly centralized, matching with the ideological component of political culture and had some distinctive element from the tsarist system. In the whole we can distinguish following backbone elements:

- education in the frame of Little Octobrist–Pionneer–Komsomol movements;
- DOSAAF;
- Suvorov military and Nakhimov naval schools;
- youth military patriotic associations and clubs.

Many of our respondents recognized that existing in the soviet period system of patriotic education had proved its effectiveness and it would be helpful to restore some of its elements, the sum of such answers represented 66.4%–

74.0% in different regions, but the given evaluations varied significantly in age groups. The young persons considered this experience and achievements of soviet education as rather helpless and out-of-date: 38.5% of 15-29 aged found no sense in restoration of soviet system, whereas for those who could compare it appeared unconditionally reasonable (43.4%) or at least worthy of attention (38.4%). The most attractive features of soviet system of patriotic education – free education and care about leisure time of children and youth; assurance of discipline, order and stability, experience of children up-brining, generations continuity; military patriotic education and attention to the youth in the whole; military service and patriotic ideas, expounded in art work. Noteworthy that evaluations of possible elements of soviet system due to be returned, there were no statistically proved differences.

Our respondents noticed main ‘points of tenderness’ where the subjects of patriotic education have to address their efforts. Thus, the first priority task is the radical change of attitude of government and political elite towards patriotism and patriotic education (39.2% of choices), activization at the local organizations and change in mass-media strategy (26.3%), the third priority position – ‘support of patriotic associations, clubs and other organizations of patriotic orientation’ (21.7%), ‘enhancement of patriotic work with youth by Military Forces of the Russian Federation’ (19.6%). Noteworthy, in spite of great influence of the Russian Orthodox Church only 6.5% of respondents agreed that it could be helpful to ‘give to the ROC more opportunities for religious-patriotic influence on the society’.

The revelation of problem zones in patriotic education system had certain variation depending on the age of the respondents. Thus, young people demonstrated much more lower scores on all positions except the alternative of enhancement of patriotic work by Military Forces of the Russian Federation, radical change of attitude towards patriotism was more often claimed by participant aged alder than 50.

Defining first priority measures that have to be taken in their regions, inhabitants have noticed before all the activities, devoted to organize the spare time of the youth (45.2% of choices), improvement of material conditions of life (31.9%), implementation of programs of civic and patriotic education in schools (25.2%), Soviet-like youth organizations creation (23.5%), moral-spiritual education, addressing to humanistic values by means of religion, art (22.5%), real provision of law defense (21.7%), improvement of the image of the country in the world (19.4%), battle against drugs and alcohol abuse (19.2%), national culture and patriotism popularization as a value in mass-media (16.8%), prestige of the army, military service restoration (14.9%), creating opportunities for self-realization (10.6%).

4. Conclusion

The analysis of evaluation of patriotic education, its necessity and effectiveness by the population of four border regions of Russia let us to conclude that population recognize the significance and benefit of the implementation of patriotic education programs, and, in majority, is satisfied with the existing model of state patriotism. According to population representations, educational influence should not to go only from state institutions and establishments, providing youth policy, but also from civil society institutions and primary from the family. The true patriot is described rather through the categories of abstract love and respect, than through active and disinterested participation in the affairs of great and local ‘patria’. It cannot be ignored that Russian people are well conscious about possible threats of radical nationalism and chauvinistic attitudes which may result among others factors from unprofessional and unreasonable youth work.

Population of all regions and of all ages is actively engaged in all sorts of patriotic activities, mainly related to historical dates’ commemoration and its participants’ veneration. This usually superficial activity which does not suppose deep emotions and information rethinking represents a very little part of what may be made in this sphere. Our respondents point out that there are many problems in patriotic education programs implementation, especially related to social-economic problems of the Russian society, the problems of internal and external policies. However, above all these problems stands the problem of development of the main social and human capital translator – the youth whose social problems have to be resolved immediately, particularly the problems of youth spare time.

Hence, the system of patriotic education in the regions of our research exists and functions somehow or other, in spite of salient problems. Even the state project of the next Patriotic education program emphasizes the evidence of inefficiency of used paradigms, methods and forms of education which “could not provide an

augmentation of the role of Russian patriotism as a value-meaning core of personal development, the prosperity of the family and civil society, complicates the innovative development of the country”. There is a well-defined tendency of reduction of number of people who can perceive the values of patriotism. In such condition, there is a clear need for legislation improvement, state support of patriotic grassroots organizations, methodical provision, vocational training of staff working with young people, larger use of Internet and ICTs in educational process, the development new innovative methods and content of the patriotic education.

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