OPINION

By: *Prof. Ergyul Tair, PhD, D.Sc.*
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Regarding: Public defence of a PhD thesis for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", Area of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences; Professional field: 3.2 Psychology (Social Psychology), IPHS-BAS

Doctoral candidate: Yulian Vasilev Haralampiev
Dissertation title: *„Attitudes towards war, social-group identity and personal aggression"*

Scientific jury member's opinion is prepared following Order No РД-6-167, 14.04.2026 of the director of IPHS-BAS

1. General characteristics of the presented dissertation

The dissertation has a total volume of 196 pages (163 pages of main text), including: introduction; three chapters (theoretical, methodological and empirical); conclusion; references and applications. The presented content is illustrated with 46 tables and 12 figures. The reference list contains 298 sources, of which 17 titles in Bulgarian and 281 in English, reflecting principal authors and empirical studies on the problem under consideration.

The presented dissertation work is dedicated to the relationships between identity, attitudes towards war and individual aggression in various social groups (military personnel and/or security personnel, students, etc.). The relevance of the topic is determined by the complex contemporary reality, in which the processes of globalization and universalism oppose nationalistic and patriotic attitudes, the creation of new alliances, associations or calls for unity go hand in hand with alienation and isolation. At the individual level, the breakdown of familiar social models and public relations is a prerequisite for the experience of fear and distrust due to uncertainty, changing values, and an increase in aggressive attitudes and behaviors.

Based on the theoretical overview, the main concepts and theoretical premises for understanding war, nationalism, patriotism and aggression are derived. The existing associations between the studied constructs are presented, outlining the possibilities for expanding one's own empirical study of the relationships between

nationalism and aggression through the prism of social-group identity and by including characteristics such as individualism - collectivism and the experience of anxiety about one's own security. A general assumption is formulated about relationships between national and social-group identity and attitudes towards war and predisposition to aggressive reactions. Specifically, it is assumed that the predisposition to aggressive reactions is related to individualism/collectivism and the level of anxiety about one's own security in the studied social groups. The hypothesis was tested in a sample of 276 respondents over the age of 18, of whom 52,5% were women, distributed in three social groups: military and security personnel; students and others. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to test the influence of sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, education, place of residence, marital status, etc.). The relationships between the studied variables were established through correlation analyses, and the test for the predictive role of patriotism, nationalism and aggression for attitudes towards war among representatives of the different social groups and for the sample as a whole was carried out through multiple regression analyses. The results obtained are interpreted within the framework of the main theoretical approaches and the available empirical research on the topic.

2. Evaluation of the results obtained, the interpretations and the nature of the scientific and applied scientific contributions

Based on the author’s theoretical model and the conducted empirical research, moderate positive correlations are established between national identity, social-group identity and patriotism on the one hand, and nationalism on the other. The level of anxiety about one's own security is positively and moderately related to aggressive predisposition and attitudes towards war. Horizontal and vertical individualism are weakly but positively related to aggressive predisposition, as are aggression and attitudes towards war. Some statistically significant differences are found in the studied constructs depending on the social group. For example, military personnel and security personnel declare higher results in national and ethnic identity, nationalism and attitudes towards war compared to other groups (students and others), while the surveyed persons in the services, administration, education, etc. (others) - the lowest average results in attitudes towards war, and students - higher aggressive predisposition and anxiety about security. The results are interpreted within the framework of available national and international research, with levels of nationalism and patriotism considered as connecting links between identity, attitudes towards war and individual aggression. The results obtained have their limitations, which are due to the random and non-representative sample, the use of short and self-report questionnaires and the design of the study.

The dissertation in consideration has its significant scientific and scientific-applied contributions, among which we can point out: 1) the carried out substantive

theoretical overview of psychological constructs related to identity, social groups and the individual, which expands the field of research in social-group identity, cultural orientation (individualism-collectivism) and personality (concern for one's own security, predisposition to aggression); 2) the applied methodological framework for studying the problem and the adapted questionnaires expand the available psychological tools in the field and can be used in future studies; 3) enrichment of the empirical data on identity (national and social-group), attitudes towards war, concern for one's own security and aggressive predisposition in the Bulgarian socio-cultural contex; 4) applicability of the obtained results for deriving recommendations and policies regarding civic education.

3. **Assessment of the quality of scientific works reflecting the research on the dissertation**

The PhD candidate has submitted a list of three independent publications in Bulgarian in national schools and scientific conferences proceedings on the topic of the dissertation, which ensure publicity of the problem under consideration to the academic community and meet the minimum national requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”. The summary of dissertation has a volume of 26 pages and correctly reflects both the structure and the content of the PhD thesis. Based on my expert assessment and the provided report (Strike Plagiarism), I do not find any incorrect citation or plagiarism.

4. Conclusion

The dissertation of Yulian Vasilev Haralampiev is an original work, including a comprehensive theoretical overview of the research problem, his own theoretical model, adapted methodology and successfully implemented empirical research. The objectives of the study have been met, and results of a scientific and scientifically applied nature have been achieved. I believe that the presented dissertation meets the mandatory requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRB), the Rules for the Application of the DASRB, and the internal normative documents of the IPHS-BAS for awarding the educational and scientific degree “doctor”. All this gives me the reason to give my positive assessment for the dissertation on the topic “Attitudes towards war, social-group identity and personal aggression” and to propose to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to award Julian Vassilev Haralampiev the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in area of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field: 3.2 Psychology.

April, 21st, 2026

Signature:

(Prof. Ergyul Tair, PhD, D.Sc.)