Attitudes of Military Academy Cadets on Code of Honour of the Serbian Army

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Introduction

The modern officer corps is a professional group; a modern military officer is a professional. Huntington is but one of the authors who highlighted the uniqueness and difference of the modern officer to warriors from previous eras. Every profession, and especially the military one, demands in addition to high professional standards, no less than a high ethical value system. Frequently, a given profession develops its own code of honour, which is partly based on total cultural tradition of society, and partly based on the specific requirements of the profession concerned. Thus, judicial ethics adopted the virtue of justice, medical ethics are based on the ideas of humanism, and religious ethics are based on spiritual love, and in military ethics adopted the military honour.

The importance of ethics and morality is emphasized by Anthony E. Hartle in his book, Moral issues in military decision-making. He writes that professional ethics serve at least three purposes: ‘(1) they protect other members of society against abuse of the professional monopoly of expertise; (2) they “define the professional as a responsible and trustworthy expert in the service of his client”; and (3) in some professions they delineate the moral authority for actions necessary to the professional function but generally impermissible in moral terms’.3

The topic of this article concerns the development of the Code of Honour in Serbia; we will review pertinent attitudes of the students of the Serbian Military Academy about the Code of Honour of the Army of Serbia.

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2 Војни информатор мај-јуни 2000, Генералштаб Војске Југославије.
The Case of Serbia

A momentum for reform in the Republic of Serbia was launched after October 2000, and more specifically for the Ministry for Defence in 2003. Until 2006, reform was mainly associated with creating an environment for organizational changes. This, in turn, achieved the newly integrated organization of the Ministry for Defence (2004), and subsequently, the new structure of the General Staff and the Army of Serbia (2006–2007). This process was, however, burdened by political differences which concerned both the perceived speed as well as the quality of the reforms. By 2010, the National Security Strategy, Defence Strategy, Law on Defence and Army, was adopted. The Army of Serbia became subsequently professionalized (2010), the military education was reformed, the University of Defence as well as new concept of military health care were developed and established, resources for emergency response were integrated. Additionally a number of other tasks necessary to establish a coherent and orderly system of defence were implemented.

The new organisational environment raised a number of issues that were not cast in regulations. Thus, a need emerged for a new ethical value system as well as a modernisation of the code of conduct for the members of the military. Existing regulations were not fully able to cover the ethical conduct of members of the military. The Army subsequently received a request for the codification of conduct and ethical standards in the modern Serbian Army.

Viewed from a historical perspective, a document detailing a Code of Honour did neither exist within the Republic of Serbia until 2010 nor within the states that, like Serbia, constituted the former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. Until the Second World War, Serbia (Yugoslavia) has developed the privileged status of the officer corps, and the cult of loyalty to the king as a wartime commander, and in the period of socialism, until the disintegration of Yugoslavia (1991) and to Josip Broz Tito.

Although soldiers’ oaths are not part of the Code of Honour, some of its aspects can be identified in the oaths of the Principality of Serbia, The Kingdom of Serbia and Kingdom of Serbs Croats and Slovenians and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the socialist period. The oath of soldiers in particular brought out a number of problems, since it referred to the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which contained a provision and protection of the constitutional

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4 Occasional disputes arose in 2007 and 2008 in order to 2009. There was an open disagreement with Minister of Defence and Chief of General Staff of the Serbian Army, which as a result had a succession of Chief General Staff by the president.