

“MILITARY ORATORY” 150 YEARS LATER: THE NEED FOR RHETORIC IN CONTEMPORARY MILITARY EDUCATION*

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Exactly 150 years ago, Major Jovan Dragašević, a professor at the Artillery School in Belgrade, published *Military Oratory*, the first book in Serbia devoted to military public speaking. Dragašević laid the foundations of military oratory in Serbia by outlining the characteristics of the military speaker, the forms and occasions in which military oratory is practiced, as well as the means through which it is expressed. From that time to the present, rhetoric in Serbian military educational institutions, and military oratory more generally, has experienced periods of both advancement and decline. Rhetoric, like few other subjects taught at the Military Academy in Belgrade, has periodically appeared and disappeared from curricula and syllabi. The uneven status of rhetoric in military education therefore provides an additional reason to raise the question of the justification for its study and the importance of oratory for the contemporary officer profession.

Answering this question is the central aim of this paper. Its theoretical and methodological framework is grounded in leadership theory, the theory of military morale, and the dialectical theory of the military. The central hypothesis that the authors seek to demonstrate is that rhetoric is needed by contemporary officers primarily as a practical instrument that assists them in performing their roles within command relationships and in creating and sustaining military morale, while also enabling the development of leadership capacities and the effectiveness of leadership.

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The paper describes the development of military oratory and explains its significance from a broader socio-historical perspective. It then offers an outline of the historical development of rhetoric instruction at the Military Academy in Belgrade, with particular attention to the needs that motivated its inclusion and the effects it produced. Finally, it provides an answer to the question of whether contemporary officers require rhetorical knowledge and skills.

Keywords: rhetoric, military oratory, officer profession, military education, leadership, military morale

Introduction

Rhetoric is an invention of ancient Greece. It emerged from the art and skill of speaking in the mid-fifth century BCE as an attempt to reflect theoretically on the practice of oratory and to establish the rules of eloquent speech (Tadić, 1995, p. 20). Frequently studied and celebrated as a powerful technique of persuasion and exhortation, yet at times criticized and rejected as a dangerous technique of manipulation and deception, rhetoric nevertheless succeeded in maintaining a long-standing place in gymnasium and university education, primarily as both the theory and practice of persuasive speech (Perović, 2009, pp. 11–13). In the twentieth century, however, it gradually receded, first from secondary-school curricula and subsequently from study programs at many universities, in some places leaving room for courses in the field of communication studies.

Oratory is the practice of public speaking in which the principles of rhetoric are applied (Avramović, 2018, pp. 21–23). It is certain that oratorical practice predates rhetoric itself, but over time the two became closely intertwined. The ancient Greeks distinguished among forensic, political, and ceremonial oratory, while later classifications also came to include religious, academic, and military oratory.

The most important academic setting in Serbia in which military oratory is studied is the Military Academy in Belgrade. The tradition of its academic study there extends back 150 years. Rhetoric, however, has not always been a subject studied by the cadets, students, and officer candidates of this higher education institution. Nor is it today. The question nevertheless remains: do contemporary officers still have a need for it? Any attempt to answer this question must begin with the specific features and historical practice of military oratory and conclude with an examination of the possible role of oratory in the contemporary duties of officers.

Types, Characteristics, and Development of Military Oratory

Military oratory is of great antiquity. Although it is not possible to determine with certainty the exact moment when the first military speech was delivered, it may reasonably be assumed that the creators of the earliest proto-military speeches were the leaders of clan- and tribal-based armies in primitive communities, who used words to encourage their warriors before battle. Already in the *Iliad*, one finds remarkable examples of military speeches delivered in councils of commanders, before soldiers, and before the people (Homer, 2015, pp. 30–35, 37–40, 147–148, 183, 343).

From a chronological perspective, one may speak of ancient, medieval, early modern, and contemporary military oratory, since the socio-historical circumstances of each of these periods decisively shaped not only the content of rhetorical skill itself, but also the substance of speeches and the modes of their dissemination (Milinković, 2020).

Throughout history, the practice of military oratory was shaped primarily by rulers and military commanders, but also by officers at lower levels of command. Rulers generally addressed their troops at the beginning and at the end of war, whereas military commanders and other officers most often spoke before, during, and after battle. Military oratory during battle was particularly important: in dangerous and life-threatening situations, a commander would, through speech and gesture, display courage, determination, and composure in order to transmit these qualities to subordinates and thereby restore the fighting spirit of the army and secure victory. These were not lengthy speeches, but rather brief utterances—short outbursts of a mind wholly focused on combat—from which a distinctive form of military oratory developed, namely, military witticisms or battlefield repartee.

In addition, military oratory often intersected with ceremonial oratory, most commonly in connection with military celebrations, tributes to distinguished warriors, or the needs of funeral and commemorative discourse. There are also influential classifications of oratory in which military speech is treated as part of ceremonial (epideictic) oratory, alongside festive and funeral speeches (Avramović, 2018, pp. 408–440).

Roganović divided military speeches into three subtypes: ceremonial, occasional, and martial speeches (Roganović, 1995, p. 263). It would appear that there is no substantive difference in kind between ceremonial and occasional military speeches, but it is certainly justified to speak of distinct subtypes of military oratory. Three such subtypes may be identified: military-political oratory, situational military oratory, and ceremonial military oratory. Military-political oratory includes speeches concerning the political meaning and purpose of war, ultimate victory or defeat in war, as well as speeches through which the army and its activity are represented within an ideological narrative. Situational military oratory is a broader concept than martial speech, as it encompasses not only combat-related speeches, but also military witticisms and speeches delivered in peacetime, including within military missions that do not involve armed conflict. Ceremonial military oratory includes speeches delivered on various ceremonial, festive, and commemorative occasions—namely, formal, welcoming, laudatory, and funeral military speeches.

The military speaker and military speech possess distinctive characteristics of their own. A capable military orator must possess specific qualities. Nušić pointed out that

military spirit, knowledge of the soldier's psychology, knowledge of one's own people, and authority are of the greatest importance for the military speaker. When an officer addresses the troops, they must perceive in him a personality imbued with military spirit and a sense of duty. A military orator, perhaps more than any other kind of speaker, must enjoy authority in the eyes of the audience (Nušić, 1938).

Without an understanding of the military mentality and knowledge of the psychological profile of the contemporary soldier, a modern officer cannot achieve the desired effect through speech. This claim is illustrated by General Sherman's letter: "There is a soul to an army as well as to an individual man, and no general can accomplish the full effect of his army unless he commands the souls of his men as well as their bodies and legs" (Department of the Army, 2006, pp. 7–8). An officer, therefore, must know what motivating and driving force, once conveyed through speech, can produce a targeted effect. Above all, these include patriotic duty and service to the homeland, collective spirit, solidarity and military honor, awareness of the importance of the task or mission, as well as integrity.

According to one study on values conducted among professional and non-professional members of the Serbian Armed Forces, patriotism represents the most significant dimension in the value structure of the professional military cadre. However, the findings also suggest that young people perceive patriotism in broader terms, "not only as selfless sacrifice for the defense of the homeland, but also as one's personal contribution in various segments of social development (in the fields of work, sport, science, and every other domain), as confirmed by the results of some other studies" (Marček & Alargić, 2008, p. 138). It is precisely this broader understanding of patriotism that may introduce additional elements into contemporary military narrative and modes of address. Military speech often serves the function of gathering and motivating. In that context, the homeland, even in contemporary oratory, remains a moral framework that gives meaning to hardship and sacrifice; it appears as an ideal that transcends personal interests, while also serving as a means of discipline and mobilization so that the soldier remains committed to the mission.

Roganović notes that addressing troops in peacetime is not the same as addressing them in wartime conditions, and that military speeches also differ according to the level of address. Specifically, distinctions may be drawn between speeches delivered from superior to subordinate, from subordinate to superior, and from equal to equal. If a speech arises immediately before battle, during war, or amid an ongoing armed conflict, then, according to Roganović, it is a martial speech. Such speeches have always had two aims: "to remind both oneself and the soldiers what is more terrible than death, or to emphasize what it means to act heroically upon life even after death!" (Roganović, 1994, p. 153).

Military speeches are the shortest of all forms of speech and often consist of only a few powerful sentences. Some of their key messages—or even entire speeches—continue to live on, such as Mišić's statement, "He who dares, can; he who knows no fear moves forward," or Major Dragutin Gavrilović's address during the defense of Belgrade in the First World War. In more recent times, the message of General Božidar Delić, wartime commander of the 549th Motorized Brigade, is particularly noteworthy: "There is no retreat; behind us is Serbia." This was the command then-Colonel Delić

issued over the radio at a critical moment during the Battle of Paštrik in 1999, a phrase that may now be said to have entered legend (Galović, 2022). In addition, the very presence and gesture of the military commander reinforce the authority and effect of the words spoken.

In addition to being logically structured, precise, clear, and unambiguous, military speech employs the language of military science. Terms are not used randomly; rather, they follow rules that confirm their consistency and conceptual precision within military discourse (Antonijević, 2025, p. 7). According to Roganović, “the clarity of a speech excludes any doubt on the part of the listener regarding the meaning of a word or sentence; the force of a speech, in turn, awakens an unforeseen energy of perseverance and courage” (Roganović, 1995, p. 155). Clarity refers not only to the clear structure and logic of the content itself, but also to the very manner in which the speech is delivered. It is important to emphasize that there can be no good or proper speech without good diction, which represents a complex characteristic of speech grounded in the articulation of sounds and words, accent, rhythm and tempo, as well as the intonation of words and larger units of discourse.

The force of speech is also conditioned by the application of the norms and rules of the standard literary language, as well as by nonverbal communication. “A good speech implies harmony between content and form, or coherence between inner and outer beauty, under which both the spiritual and physical qualities of the speaker may be subsumed. Such a speech evokes in listeners not only an ideological stance and a rational relation to the content of what is spoken, but also an emotional reaction proportionate to the aesthetic values of the speech” (Milinković, 2020, p. 48). Military oratory, precisely for the sake of forcefulness, is imbued with “rich shades of expressiveness” (Dochinoiu, 2009, p. 71).

The development of military oratory followed its own distinct dynamics, shaped by the socio-historical development of the military and warfare, as well as by the technical and technological development of society. It is certain that the earliest military speeches were delivered before armies that were relatively small and arranged into homogeneous units or combat formations. With the increase in the number of soldiers and units, and with the growing dispersion of battle formations, a commander could no longer address the entire military contingent; instead, he would speak only before certain units—for example, the guard, another elite formation, or a unit assigned a decisive task. If it was desired that all soldiers become acquainted with the content of the speech, it would be written down and copied into multiple versions, which messengers would then distribute.

Printing enabled the faster reproduction of speeches and proclamations, whether issued by rulers or military commanders. These were read before assembled troops and displayed in suitable places within military camps. In this way, the commander’s ideas, wisdom, knowledge, and style reached every soldier, but there was no direct personal contact between them, so voice, diction, memory, and gesture—as conditions of effective oratory—could not fully come to the fore or influence the emotions and attitudes of soldiers. The invention that largely resolved these limitations was the radio. To the wisdom, knowledge, and style of the statesman or military commander were once again added voice and diction, while radio waves and receivers made possible the wide

dissemination of meaning produced in one place, in the studio of a radio station. Subsequently, the camera, film, cinema projector, and television enabled the transmission of gesture as well. Technological progress primarily made possible the transmission of military-political speeches and ceremonial military addresses, whereas situational military oratory remained more or less within the limits of the speaker's biological capacities.

The bureaucratization of the military in the twentieth century also affected the bureaucratization of the speech of military personnel, as a result of which military oratory—and style more broadly—lost a significant degree of aesthetic value in the second half of the twentieth century (Životić & Jovović, 1990). The social changes that occurred at the end of the twentieth century, which transformed contemporary societies into liquid modern societies (Bauman, 2009, p. 9), together with the unipolar moment marked by U.S. hegemony and strategic reflection on the need to adapt armed forces to new missions following the decline of the threat of major war, also contributed to a reduction in the perceived need for rhetoric. In the broader social context, the need for classical, general education diminished, while narrow specialization became the imperative of higher education (Starčević, 2022, p. 64). Consequently, rhetoric shared the fate of philosophy and disappeared from the curricula of many faculties. In the narrower military sense, the professionalization of armed forces also reduced the need for rhetoric, because the motivational basis for military service changed. Professional militaries consist of permanent, salaried personnel whose motivation derives primarily from professional loyalty and remuneration, unlike earlier national standing armies, in which citizens performed military service and formed the reserve component on the basis of legal obligation and patriotic sentiment.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, the world has entered a phase of turbo-globalization and, at the same time, an information-technological revolution that has elevated the significance and value of information and information-related activities (Starčević, 2022, p. 190; Castells, 2018, pp. 89, 495–533, 650). Technological breakthroughs in electronics and digital signal processing have most profoundly transformed the technical means of communication. New communication channels have also altered the very modes of communication, significantly influencing contemporary culture and politics. Political speech, for example, has changed substantially: it was first adapted to the logic of mass media and later to multimedia and social networks. Changes in culture and in the modes of communication in contemporary society have undoubtedly also reshaped everyday communication between officers and soldiers. In this sense, the need for classical rhetoric has diminished, while space has opened for newer communication-oriented subjects and for the preparation of officers for public appearances.

An Outline for a Historical Overview of the Teaching of Rhetoric at the Military Academy in Belgrade

It is generally considered that the true history of Serbian military education began with the establishment of the Artillery School in Belgrade in 1850. Its beginnings were modest. The institution had four professors and a small class of 22 cadets (Đukić,

2025, pp. 13–14). Its ambitions, however, were considerable: to educate officers for all branches of the armed forces whose level of education would be comparable to that of the most modern European armies of the time. To achieve this, the Artillery School offered a large number of general education subjects. Cadets studied higher and lower mathematics, descriptive geometry, mechanics, physics, chemistry, arithmetic, advanced and elementary surveying, construction, geography, general history, military history, service regulations with drill, tactics, strategy, general staff duties, artillery, fortification, military administration, Christian doctrine, French, German, drawing and penmanship, fencing, gymnastics, hippology, driving, and travel (Đukić, 2019, pp. 130–131). Somewhat later, stylistics was added to the curriculum, certainly because of the need to improve the quality of general staff duties and official correspondence (Starčević, 2025, p. 12). After the reform of military education in 1880, office administration and stylistics became one of the 24 subjects taught at the Lower School of the Military Academy (Đukić, 2025, p. 30). It is here that one should seek the beginnings of the study of rhetoric in Serbian military education, and its initiator in the person of Jovan Dragašević, professor of stylistics (Jovović, 1998, p. 141).

In Belgrade in 1876, General Staff Major Jovan Dragašević—later an honorary general, academician, and professor at both the Military Academy and the Great School in Belgrade—published *Military Oratory*. This was the first book on rhetoric published in Serbia devoted exclusively to military public speaking. The book represented a continuation of this officer’s efforts, as a professor of stylistics, to produce sound literature on the expression of thought for the needs of his students. Nušić claimed that the discipline “which teaches us to express our thoughts beautifully in writing” is stylistics, whereas rhetoric is the “discipline which teaches us to express our thoughts beautifully in speech” (Nušić, 1938, pp. 15–16). Dragašević considered military oratory to be reflected in the art of leading an army through speech, while he equated stylistics with the rules of style, that is, the ways of expressing thought. Hence, *Military Oratory* may be understood as a continuation of *Military Stylistics* to the extent that the oral expression of thought builds upon the expression of thought in general (Dragašević, 1876; Dragašević, 1871, p. 4). In this way, the study of military oratory in Serbia began from stylistics, although it is usually held that stylistics developed from rhetoric (Milinković, 2020, p. 49; Burke, 2023).

There is no doubt that *Military Oratory* laid the foundation for the systematic study of military oratory in Serbia. It directly set out the qualities of the military speaker—including courage, knowledge, determination, seriousness, justice, humanity, familiarity with one’s soldiers, and honesty—briefly explained the forms and problems of military oratory, classified the occasions on which military oratory is employed (at the beginning of war, at the beginning of battle, during battle, after battle, and after war), identified the key problems of military morale against which military oratory is used (disobedience, exhaustion, homesickness, and fear), and specified the principal means employed by the military speaker (faith, greed, ambition, love of glory, patriotism, humanity, honor, and discipline). Dragašević supports each of his claims with an abundance of examples drawn from the history of military oratory. No fewer than 61 military speeches found their place in *Military Oratory*, and the author took care to situate each one in its appropriate practical context and to explain briefly the force with which it influenced soldiers (Dragašević, 1876).

The second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century in Serbia were marked by a period of national enthusiasm, the achievement of independence, the organization of the national state and its institutions, and the liberation of compatriots and other Balkan peoples. During this period, the army was perceived as one of the most important state institutions, entrusted with a decisive role in the realization of the national mission, while officers were regarded as “superiors and teachers” whose task was to instruct all able-bodied citizens in military skills and in the moral duties connected with the defense of freedom and the fulfillment of the national mission (Pavlović, 1904, pp. 1–2; Starčević & Blagojević, 2020, pp. 88–94). Officers were therefore expected, through speech—that is, through the oral expression of thought—to instill in soldiers a conviction in the justifiability of future struggles for freedom and the justice of the ultimate aim of those struggles. It follows that rhetoric was of considerable importance for the education of officers, while military oratory produced exceptional results of aesthetic, intellectual, and military value (Mišković, 1889; Dragašević, 1889; Nušić, 1938, p. 510).

After the First World War, the Military Academy resumed its work in 1919, but rhetoric was not included among the subjects studied by cadets. Somewhat later, however, it reached its peak: Branislav Nušić himself was responsible for teaching the subject in the 1930/1931 academic year, and his celebrated Rhetoric grew out of those lectures (Nušić, 1938).

In the period following the Second World War, rhetoric once again disappeared from curricula and syllabi, although the history of Yugoslav literature and, later, Serbo-Croatian language were introduced (Đukić, 2025, pp. 86, 152). The teaching staff were expected to deliver theoretical lectures in truthful and clear speech, expressed “freely, fluently, and naturally.” In lecturing, instructors were required to speak “without books or notes,” to adapt “their speech to the subject being discussed and to the audience, while constantly bearing in mind that the cadets were of different social and national backgrounds and cultures ... and that their general education ranged from elementary schooling to completion of secondary education.” Speech, moreover, was to be brief and clear, while the instructor was expected “to observe the impression produced by his words upon the listeners, as reflected in their faces and posture,” and accordingly “to vary, supplement, expand, or shorten his speech.” “The instructor should speak loudly enough (but not shout), in a measured manner (neither too quickly nor too slowly), pronounce sounds and words correctly, apply proper stress, and vary tone and expression in accordance with the connectedness of individual parts of the content, while making appropriate, natural, and thoughtful use of facial expression and other movements ...” (Đukić, 2025, pp. 90–94). These and other instructions were issued to instructors in an order dated January 30, 1945, by the first postwar commander of the Military Academy, Lieutenant General Savo J. Orović, and were drafted by Political Commissar Mirko Kalezić.

Although instructors could serve as role models for cadets, the systematic study of rhetoric did not exist. This absence, together with the growing bureaucratization of the military, may also have contributed to the fact that the language and style of the art of war became burdened with linguistic errors, while spoken discourse came to exhibit numerous deficiencies (Životić & Jovović, 1990, pp. 65–71, 153–170). It was only in 1994 that cadets of the Military Academy of the Ground Forces in Ban-

jica and the Military Technical Academy in Žarkovo were introduced to rhetoric as a compulsory subject (Đukić, 2025, p. 206, 2020). The textbook used in instruction was that of Božidar Roganović (Roganović, 1995), while the last instructors of rhetoric at the Military Academy were Božidar Jovović and Nada Dikić. Following the reform of military education and the accreditation of the Military Academy's study programs after 2007, rhetoric was omitted from the curricula (Marček et al., 2014, pp. 133–171). Under these new conditions, communication-oriented subjects emerged as a kind of modern substitute for rhetoric, appearing as elective courses in certain study programs, primarily in defense management and military science, across all three levels of study. These courses cover selected contents of rhetoric and stylistics, but they are nevertheless structured in a substantially different manner.

The Need for Rhetoric in the Contemporary Officer Profession

The need for contemporary officers to study rhetoric may be considered from several relevant perspectives.

The first perspective is provided by Clausewitz's theory of war and the dialectical theory of the military. War is, namely, a collision of forces and a conflict of wills (Starčević & Milenković, 2023, p. 6). Since the defeated side in war is only the side that has accepted defeat and submitted to the will of the opposing side, will takes precedence over force. Collective will in this case is not a mere abstraction, but rather manifests itself in the politically articulated aspiration of a society to achieve a particular goal. The political mobilization of society is realized in practice through the military mobilization of its members and subsequently through the process of command. In the narrower sense, command is a relationship of functional coordination within the military. In the broader sense, command is a political relationship that connects the political leadership with mobilized citizens and ensures the transmission of political decisions, that is, generally binding decisions concerning the goal and the means of its realization (Starčević, 2022, pp. 228–229). Understood in this way, the command relationship is a mechanism for the realization of collective will, the functioning of which is ensured precisely by officers, who continuously inscribe the meaning of the politically chosen objective into the microsocial relations of military collectives throughout the entire hierarchy of commands and units. It should not be forgotten that soldiers who do not accept the aims of their own side in war are the most difficult to integrate into the military collective. Accordingly, it is the duty of officers to persuade their soldiers of the legitimacy of those goals and to eliminate the danger that disaffected soldiers might impose their attitudes toward the aims of war on other members of the force. Officers do this, inevitably, through direct communication with their subordinates—that is, through speech. The more cultivated and effective the speech, the greater the officer's influence on subordinates will be.

The second perspective is provided by the theory of military morale. The activity of officers has always implied the creation and maintenance of military morale, primarily in the sense of strengthening soldiers' readiness to bear the risk of death and injury in combat for the sake of victory. In this respect, officers have never been merely

managers of organized armed violence or experts in military technique, but also political advocates of the general interest. Indeed, a significant part of an officer's work concerns the management of emotions and the use of symbols, and this work is to a considerable extent carried out through speech.

The third perspective is provided by leadership theory. In the contemporary context, oratory is viewed not merely as a means of public performance, but as part of a broader system of leadership and communicative competence. The art of contemporary public speaking, together with all the rules governing its successful preparation and delivery, is widely applied across professions, including the military. Whereas traditional command for centuries represented strict hierarchy, discipline, unconditional obedience, and authority derived from rank and position, leadership introduces an important shift. The first modern reflections on leadership began to emerge in military academies at the beginning of the twentieth century, when it became clear that it was not enough merely to issue orders; commanders also had to motivate, communicate, and manage people. Scholars examining the role of communication in military leadership point to the transformation of traditional command structures (Lewińska, 2015, p. 39). "Successful leaders improve their communication abilities by developing advanced oral, written, and listening skills. Commanders use clear and concise mission orders and other standard forms of communication to convey their decisions to subordinates" (Department of the Army, 2006, pp. 3–4). Communication in the military, however, is not possible without speech, and speech can be improved through the study of rhetoric. It is precisely rhetorical skills that should enable officers to articulate objectives clearly and with logical consistency, to connect with their audience and its virtues, and to demonstrate the depth and importance of task execution and goal attainment (Hinck, 2003, p. 74). "The power of speech in professional discourse should be used with the intention of maximizing leader development and nurturing the ideas that make the military better" (Fust, 2024, p. 86). Instruction in rhetoric enables the analysis of discourse, the understanding, construction, and critique of narratives, which is why it remains highly relevant in the education of officers (Hagen, 2022). Indeed, Isocrates once pronounced his celebrated praise of speech: "Speech is the leader of all actions and all thoughts," while Gorgias added: "Speech is a mighty ruler which, though small and invisible, accomplishes the most wondrous deeds" (Mićunović, 2010, pp. 19–23).

Gorgias's words introduce us to the perspective of effectiveness, within which rhetoric provides techniques and tools for achieving success in the transmission of messages and ensures that verbal expressions are materially comprehensive, logically ordered, linguistically shaped, and properly articulated. Since military organization rests upon clear, precise, and hierarchical communication, the officer's ability to convey effectively an order, a motivational message, or a strategic vision directly affects the operational effectiveness of the unit. In preparing a speech, a speaker must always keep in mind those being addressed by assessing how they are likely to respond to what will be said and by paying particular attention to adapting the message so that it is as clear, appropriate, and persuasive as possible (Lucas, 2020, p. 110). High-quality, professional, and thus content-rich and effective internal communication within the military is of decisive importance for the functioning of the system itself. "Properly planned, implemented, and appropriately evaluated internal communication at all levels of command and management enables time efficiency and is directly connected

with the decision-making process, the quality of achieved results, and the effectiveness of military-organizational systems in both peacetime and wartime conditions” (Kljajić, 2018, p. 12).

From the perspective of communication theory, contemporary officers require specialized knowledge and skills across all forms of communicative practice, from interpersonal and group communication to public appearances in the mass media. Officers are expected to speak in a manner that is informative, clear, concise, unambiguous, and free of cynicism, while at the same time unifying and motivating their audience. In addition, the information-technological revolution has made possible the widest imaginable dispersion of spoken messages. “The unprecedented development of technology and modern mass media now enables commanders and rulers to address not only participants in major battles, but also a broad audience” (Milinković, 2020, p. 168). Technology, therefore, provides the possibility, but it is the speaker who realizes it. After all, one should not forget that technology is merely an extension of human senses and powers.

In short, contemporary communication is both a tool and a fundamental precondition for effective military leadership and for the maintenance and strengthening of military morale, because it enables clear command and the construction of motivation, trust, and commitment within the unit. To the extent that communication is realized through the function of speech, rhetoric remains significant for the officer and for the successful performance of the officer’s duties. Its vitality, moreover, is eloquently expressed in the words of Ljubomir Tadić: “This ancient skill (art)—for it is precisely a skill that is at issue—has that rare quality of being successfully rejuvenated, so to speak resurrected, even when it is thought to have been consigned to eternal oblivion, forever denounced” (Tadić, 1995, p. 19).

Conclusion

The long history of military oratory has produced three types of military speech: military-political, situational, and ceremonial military oratory. The occasions on which these speeches were delivered still exist today, while technological progress has expanded the possibilities for the transmission and dissemination primarily of military-political and ceremonial military speeches, whereas situational military oratory remains more firmly tied to human biological capacities and the human speech apparatus. By studying and mastering the principles of effective and eloquent speech, officers may acquire oratorical skills and practice them not only on special occasions, but also in everyday communication with others, with the intention of influencing their attitudes and behavior.

The importance of rhetoric in the education of the contemporary officer rests on the indisputable and primary role of speech in interpersonal communication, and is demonstrated through the functions of speech in command relationships, in the creation and maintenance of military morale, in the development of leadership capacities, and in the effectiveness of leadership.

Rhetoric, of course, does not necessarily have to return to the Military Academy’s curricula as a separate subject, but it is important that its essential contents be

represented within other communication-oriented courses attended by future officers. Oratorical practice is particularly important and deserves special attention, because in direct communication with others the officer necessarily employs the power of speech and expresses thoughts through speech. The degree of success and persuasiveness with which those thoughts are articulated determines not only the officer's personal and professional authority, but may also affect the effectiveness of command and the morale of the unit under the officer's command.

Keywords: *rhetoric, military oratory, officer profession, military education, leadership, military morale*

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Summary

Exactly 150 years ago, a professor at the Artillery School in Belgrade, Major Jovan Dragašević, published “Military Oratory”, the first book dedicated to military oratory in Serbia. Dragašević laid the foundations of military oratory in Serbia, presenting the characteristics of a military orator, the forms and occasions in which

military oratory is practiced, as well as the means used by orator. Dragašević's special contribution was a collection of examples of military orations, more than sixty of them, classified by the occasions in which they were delivered and the means used. From then until today, rhetoric in military educational institutions, and military oratory in general, in Serbia, have had their ups and downs. Rhetoric, as a subject studied at the Military Academy in Belgrade, has periodically appeared and disappeared from the curricula and programs. The pulsating fate of rhetoric in military education, however, is one more reason to ask the question of the justification for studying rhetoric and the importance of oratory for the modern officer profession.

The answer to this question is the goal of this paper. The theoretical and methodological framework consists of the theory of leadership, the theory of military morale, and the dialectical theory of the military. The basic hypothesis that the authors seek to prove is that rhetoric is needed by modern officers, primarily as a practical tool that helps officers in performing their roles in the chain of command and creating and maintaining military morale, enabling the development of leadership skills and the effectiveness of leadership.

The paper describes the development and explains the importance of military oratory from a general socio-historical perspective, then provides a sketch for a historical overview of rhetoric teaching at the Military Academy in Belgrade with a focus on the needs for it and its effects, and finally offers an answer to the question of the need for rhetorical knowledge and skills among contemporary officers.

The long history of military oratory has given rise to three types of military oratory: military-political, situational, and ceremonial military oratory. The occasions in which they were delivered still exist today, and technical and technological progress has increased the possibilities of transmission and distribution of military-political and ceremonial military oratory, while situational military oratory is more closely tied to human, biological capabilities and the human speech apparatus. By studying and adopting the rules of rhetoric, officers can master oratory skills and practice them on special occasions, but also in everyday communication with other people, with the intention of influencing their attitudes and behaviors.

The importance of rhetoric in the education of a modern officer rests on the undeniable the primary role of speech in interpersonal communication, and is proven by the functions of speech in command relations, creating and maintaining military morale, developing leadership skills and leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: rhetoric, military oratory, officer profession, military education, leadership, military morale

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