

The military profession occupies a distinctive place among professions and is of great importance to the security, survival and development of the state and society. Its distinctive character stems from the responsibility for national defence, the protection of vital societal values, and the performance of duties under conditions that often involve a high degree of uncertainty, risk and personal responsibility. For that reason, the military profession cannot be viewed solely in terms of professional competence to perform specific military tasks, but must also be considered within the legal, political, ethical, educational and other societal frameworks that shape it. Changes in society, technology and the nature of contemporary conflicts directly affect the way in which the armed forces fulfil their role, as well as the demands placed on their personnel.

The contemporary security environment makes these demands even more complex. Alongside traditional military threats and armed conflicts, hybrid actions, information and cognitive operations, cyber threats, the rapid development of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, as well as the need to operate in a complex, often multinational and multicultural environment, are becoming increasingly important. Under such conditions, military professionals are required to possess not only physical fitness and professional and technical knowledge, but also critical thinking, cognitive resilience, adaptability, communication skills, professional judgement and a commitment to continuous learning. Taken together, these qualities are a prerequisite for successful command of a unit and for achieving the objectives set and accomplishing the tasks assigned. At the same time, military organisations face challenges in attracting and retaining personnel. Changes in social values, lifestyles and professional expectations, particularly among younger generations, necessitate a reassessment of how the military profession is presented, valued and developed, without calling into question the particular demands and responsibilities it entails.

The need to consider these and related issues on the basis of scientific knowledge prompted the preparation of a special thematic issue of *Vojno delo* devoted to the theme "Military Profession in the Contemporary Security Environment", with contributions from Serbian and international authors. The thematic issue also makes a scientific contribution to the project of the same name, implemented at the Strategic Research Institute of the University of Defence in Belgrade. The published articles approach the military profession from different but interconnected perspectives. They address the place and position of the military within the legal and institutional order, civil-military relations and democratic control, human resources and the reserve component, as well as the development of competencies that the new environment requires of armed forces personnel. Particular attention is devoted to cognitive resilience, communication, command and organisational adaptation, thereby presenting the military profession as a dynamic field in which professional knowledge and capabilities are inseparable from military education and training. This confirms the need for continuous learning and professional development that keeps pace with changes in

contemporary warfare and enables members of the military profession to identify new forms of security endangerment in a timely manner and respond to them appropriately.

Some of the articles in this thematic issue focus more directly on the transformation of the operational and technological environment. They highlight the importance of improving the command system, information security and organisational resilience, as well as the profound implications that the development of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies may have for the decision-making process. At the same time, experience gained from operating in complex peace and conflict settings points to the enduring importance of military professionals' ability to understand the environment, re-evaluate initial assessments and adapt their actions to specific circumstances. The diversity of these approaches demonstrates that the military profession today stands at the intersection of traditional professional values and new institutional, cognitive and technological demands. For this very reason, this thematic issue of *Vojno delo* seeks to contribute to the academic and professional debate on the contemporary meaning of the military profession, the challenges it faces and the directions of its further development.

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