

# REVIEWS

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Review

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## 175 YEARS OF MILITARY EDUCATION

In the year we celebrate a significant jubilee – 175 years of military education, many discussions have been initiated in Serbian society on the topic of education and the education system of our country in general. The contradictions emerging between the holders of political power and the holders of the implementation of educational function – the universities and faculties, the consequences which followed as a result of the inconsistency and mismatch of the motives, interests and goals, as well as the possible methods of fulfilling and achieving them, have cast a shadow on the significance of this big jubilee of ours, and our plans to mark it throughout the entire calendar year in a dignified way. Because of this, we are incredibly grateful to *The Policy of National Security* journal for reserving a position for us among the essential subjects of national security, even in these complex social circumstances. The Editorial team has, thus, shown their ability to truly appreciate the power of deduction and deductive knowledge, no matter the current inductive phenomena and processes. With a deductive approach, it is not difficult to conclude that military education held strategic significance for the

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state of Serbia, and the politics of national security would be only an empty phrase without discussion on institutions of strategic significance and the true desire for their permanent development.

The development of every society, whether we are speaking of the modern society or its predecessors, is impossible without the development of educational and upbringing function/s. In proportion to the above, the development of the military and the defense function is unimaginable without the development of military education and upbringing, which make up the essence of all future development directions, and determine, through their quality, its ultimate reach, and quite often, the fate of states and peoples as well.<sup>1</sup>

Revolutionary events in the neighboring Austrian Empire impacted the foundation of the military school in the Principality of Serbia. As a response to these events, on March 18, 1850, Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević approved the Project on the Organization of the Artillery School, created by Ilija Garašanin. The original name did not reflect its whole purpose. Since its founding, it was a general military academy, which educated the officers of infantry, cavalry, engineering, and artillery (see Đukić 2025).

“With the foundation of the Artillery School in Belgrade in 1850, the most significant chapter in the development of the officer profession was opened. Until then, Serbian officers acquired their ranks by the sword or abroad. Without it, there could be no talk of military professionalism in Serbia. With its foundation, the perspectives of creating a modern army, as a fundamental state institution, by leading opinions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, opened up”.<sup>2</sup>

From its inception until today, military education has been in touch with the educational function of our state and society. It is an important factor, not only a factor of development of both the military and the defense function, but also a factor of development of the state and its significant political functions. Besides officers, four full professors of the Higher School of Belgrade also stood among its first teachers. Later on, even officers taught at the Higher School, and one of the most prominent ones was Colonel Jovan Dragašević (see Jovović i Šuljagić 2016). Less than 30 years later, the complete independence of the Principality of Serbia was

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<sup>1</sup> One of the characteristics of modern society is that essences stand in contrast to assemblies, and that wider application of the assembly theory when speaking of social organization and methods of their organizations can negatively impact the essence of things. More on the relation between assemblies and essences, see Delanda 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Srđan Starčević, in the preface of the reprint of the book Pavlović 2025, 8–9.

recognized in 1878. To this greatly contributed the officers, who made up one-fourth of the highly-educated population of then Serbia. This gave impetus to a comprehensive reform of state administration and the army, and at the suggestion of Colonel Jovan Mišković (see Mučibabić 2004), the Minister of War, Prince Milan Obrenović, approved the Law on the Organization of the Military Academy in 1880. “Enrolling in the Military Academy, at that time, was quite a significant step not only for each young man but also for the Serbian Army and Serbia. The history of this officer school is inextricably linked with the history of Serbia [...]” (Mučibabić 2004).

In the very establishment of the Artillery School, its first director, a Czech by nationality and a lawyer by profession, František Zakh (*František Alexandr Zach*), who only put on an officer’s uniform and epaulettes upon the establishment of the school – the official predecessor of the Military Academy, played an indispensable role. From the rank of captain in 1850 to the rank of general 20 years later, he was one of the strong promoters of the idea that Serbia should become the key subject around which the South Slovenes would unite and a participant in the Serbian-Turkish wars of 1876–1878. Therefore, František-Franjo Zakh left an indelible mark as one of the most significant reformers of the army and undoubtedly the founder of military education in Serbia (see Jovanović 2010).

From the first reform until today, the Military Academy followed the currents of development of military skills and military sciences, valued its capabilities and capacities about current and future needs, measured itself against other European and world academies, changed and adapted to the needs of the time, the army, the state and the society.

From the single Military School, through the established Lower and Higher schools, later branch-specific academics, post-war schools, through seven military academies spread across the former Yugoslavia, school centers, relocations of schools and academies, and their reintegration, the Military Academy shared the fate of our army and our state. Its endurance speaks of the fact that it rests on solid foundations, built on knowledge, skills, feats, thoughts, and ideas, but also the lives of our predecessors, directors, chiefs, commanders, professors, and all the officers educated there. That is why it is our duty to nourish a special form of gratitude to our predecessors.

The Military Academy today is a higher-education unit of the University of Defense of strategic significance. At the same time, it is both a military unit and a higher-education institution, fostering a blend

of the military and academia, traditional and modern, theoretical and practical. Gazing at academic heights, firmly girded, it duly practices the military profession and science. The professor calling in it is performed honorably and continuously, and its essence is the selfless giving and construction of everything an officer needs – knowledge, skill, physical and mental force, experience, fighting spirit, patriotic charge, and a sense of collectivity. Its greatest value is hardworking and honorable people.

Besides completing regular tasks, noteworthy results have also been achieved recently. For the first time, master's and doctoral studies in military sciences are accredited.<sup>3</sup> After a break of many years, the Air Defense study program and the Geodesy module, both in the field of military sciences, were accredited again. The number of papers published in relevant professional and scientific journals increased, a monograph, "175 years of Military Academy", was published, a documentary was filmed, a postage stamp was created, and after many decades, the first issue of the magazine *Akademac* was published. The housing capacities were increased, and three newly prepared classrooms have been fully equipped and ceremonially opened – the Radar Engineering and Aerospace Engineering classrooms, and Technological Engineering. We have equipped ourselves with the most modern combat equipment. We have integrated the cadets into the basic training process in the role of instructors and the security system of the *General Jovan Mišković* barracks in the role of guards. We have increased the number of cadets in training, and in the past three years, we have doubled the number of cadets – future pilots. We have conducted a vast number of international activities, exchanged experience, and competed with the most advanced world academies. We responsibly stated that we are at the very top of the world regarding the exit competencies of our youngest officers.

This year, the Military Academy will graduate the largest generation of officers in the last ten years. These young people are equally familiar with the weapons and tactics of their branch and service, which they confirmed at a recent demonstration of their capabilities. They speak one world language and understand at least another foreign language. They are computer literate, physically fit, hardened by long marches in all weather conditions, tempered through martial arts sections, and adorned with sports medals and awards from various competitions: knowledge, culture, and skills. Brave, motivated, dedicated. They participate in many media

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<sup>3</sup> See more on the problems existing in the previous period, when military sciences were not recognized in the science system in Serbia, in Blagojević, Starčević i Zogović 2019.

and public appearances and are confirmed humanitarians and voluntary blood donors. They represent the most nationally educated segment of the younger population of our society. They are ready for the challenges of the current times and the future. They are our pride and our hope.

We are grateful to all subjects of the defense system who contributed to fulfilling educational and upbringing results – to the Rectorate of the University of Defense, commands and units of the Serbian Army, and all educational and scientific institutions with which we foster long-term cooperation.

I acknowledge and congratulate the members of the Military Academy on this great jubilee. Be proud to be a part of a historical record almost two centuries old.

I would also like to use this opportunity to message our future officers. *Dear cadets, wherever your boot steps, whatever military and academic heights you reach, never forget your origin, family, and the Academy. The Military Academy persisted and developed all this time because whatever it gave, the Serbian officers always gave back to it as well.*

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