

PR Impact on Public Confidence in Military and Police in Serbia

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Presented in this paper, resulting from years of work experience in the armed forces is the impact of public relations on citizens' confidence in the military and the police of the Republic of Serbia. The army and the police, as most essential elements of statehood, have an important role in society. The role of public relations in these organizations is crucial when it comes to understanding the importance of their work and gaining public support. In addition to investment and progress in the technical sense, training and study of new tactical actions and procedures, the modernization of army and police training involves the application of public relations (both internal and external). Public relations as a theory, practice and profession have a non-negligible impact on the modernization and operation of the organization. Weak and inadequate training of managerial staff in these organizations lead to significant misunderstanding of "PR" as a profession and science as well as of its impact on the social environment. Only after the acceptance, adoption and implementation of scientific achievements important for these organizations in Serbia will we be in a position to talk about the professional structures of defense, namely the Army and the Police.

Keywords: public relations, military, police, education, professionalism, modernization

1. Introduction

In a democratic country, every business organization begins their work with public permission and exist only by public approval. While industrial organizations' job is to produce and find markets for their goods, business organizations provide specific services achieving a financial return. They actually provide services for a certain compensation.

Governmental authorities and politics are responsible for leading and progress of the state. They are also responsible for its status and position in the international environment. It is the machinery of government which leads a state.

Non-profit organizations deliver services of social care and educational, public, cultural and other services which are of vital importance for the society. The non-profit sector is engaged in taking care of the social needs neglected by profit-oriented corporations and state establishment. The definition of the non-profit sector that can be applied in many countries, include five different characteristics of such organizations. They are: organized, private, non-profitable, self-directed and voluntary.

According to Hudson, "The concept of a business or professional association is a very civilized concept. It implies something that people are doing, subjecting their own interest to the general improvement of society." The task of business associations, professional societies and labor unions is to promote the progress and status of their members. They are doing it in three ways: by organising their members' information and services, promoting high standards of self-discipline and presenting their members' cases to important public and government bodies.

The problems and pressures of the society increasingly burden the state machinery. The state must provide services that individuals are unable to provide, such as defense of the national territory, police protection, civil defense, fire service etc. The organizations responsible for these services are special-purpose organizations (military, police). Their main task is to provide a secure life for the citizens. They are accountable to citizens and authorities, but must be independent and impartial. No matter who is in power, they serve citizens and therefore they cannot be classed as either government or political organizations. On the other

hand, they do not make a profit, but cannot be classed as non-profit organizations because they have all the characteristics of non-profit organizations. Some of the features of special-purpose organizations are:

- They ensure the safety of citizens;
- They have a social responsibility to the citizens;
- They are legal and are accountable to the state system;
- They have a statutory authority for their actions;
- They are part of the state apparatus (state institutions);
- Formationally, they are organized to operate on the entire territory of the national territory;
- They are held responsible in terms of the international law;
- They do not make a profit;
- They can engage in international activities in accordance with international regulations;
- They have a right and obligation to cooperate with each other and pursue contacts with other organizations;
- They can be coordinated and work involved.

The mission of the armed forces is to serve the state to ensure its sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and international personality, and promote its foreign policy goals, meet international obligations and protect the citizens. The mission of the armed forces is to train in peace and when needed, to be ready to stop a war, to fight and control wars that have begun at a time convenient for national goals and interests. They are subordinated and accountable to the MoD. The Serbian Army is an organized and armed force whose goal is to defend the country from external armed threat and perform other missions and tasks - in accordance with the Constitution, laws and principles of the international law which regulates the use of force.

Police forces perform police duties, which include: operational and technical activities which ensure the protection of life, personal security, human rights and freedoms, the protection of constitutional order and the protection from the violent threat, the security of the State in accordance with the law, the protection of all forms of property, preventing the commission of criminal part, finding, capturing and surrendering of the authority perpetrators, maintenance of public order, protection of persons and facilities, control of public meetings, events, cultural and sporting events and other permitted forms of mass meetings of citizens, security and traffic control on roads, certain security jobs in other areas of traffic and providing help eliminating the consequences which are threat to the safety of persons or property, stay and movement of foreigners, business assistance and the provision of assistance to other authorities, civil protection, as well as protection from fire, prevention and storage of hazardous materials.

The Police are part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs which is established as the Police Department. The Police carry out the statutory and other police duties, uphold the rule of law in a democratic society and are responsible for providing security, in accordance with the law. The police job description includes the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms. Though in serving to ensure citizens' protection police can be restricted, individual rights and freedoms can be restricted only under the condition and in the manner prescribed by the constitution and law. In addition to police duties, the Ministry performs other tasks determined by law.

2. Public relations

Public relations, or simply "PR" (public relations) are more pervasive and more present day by day. It seems like they are everywhere around us. Night and day, the media write and talk about the practice of "PR" work and "PR". Many understand this abbreviation as something that involves fraud, corruption, theft, exhibition, ostensible representation. Just the mention of public relations is increasingly causing cynicism and disbelief about all what they represent. Today's lifestyle requires a better and more complete information to people about what happens in the their environment. Information has become an integral and increasingly common part of human life and its daily needs.

Public relations, in general, are an activity to develop a favorable public opinion about an organization and about public relations activities in the strict sense. It can be defined as a set of actions of an organization directed towards specific groups (employees, shareholders, consumers, customers, suppliers and business partners) in order to gain confidence, create goodwill and a favorable opinion on the work of the organization as a member of the community. Keywords that describe public relations are: reputation, image, identity, perception, credibility, trust, harmony, mutual understanding, truthful and complete information.

2.1. Activities of public relations in the military and police

The Departments of Public Relations in the army and the police (Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Internal Affairs) focus their activities in two directions to achieve the best results. Lobbying as a tool of public relations is used by governments, political elites, social organizations and the media. It is used by authorities, the political elite and community organizations in order that these institutions receive more support in realizing their projects by making them more close to citizens. It is also used as a support to projects that contribute to these organizations that are really in the service of citizens. The highest level of the authorities must be familiar with the work and responsibilities of these organizations in order to propose new concepts of their work and participate in their work. Based on the information they receive from these organizations they can change the security policies, reorganize their functioning in order to be effective, and approve of the funds for these organizations and their further work. By supporting the government, army and police will be better organized - better equipped, more professional, more efficient, with a better image and will gain authority and respect of the local authorities and citizens, and also at the international level. The current state position in the world in terms of security requires that these organizations be effective, and this will not be achieved by their size, but rather by knowledge, training, using the most modern technical means. Serbia is a country which is not exposed to any danger of a large force threatening its territorial integrity and state sovereignty. The greatest danger is coming from terrorist and separatist groups operating in smaller units. For this kind of war it should develop security and intelligence agencies, army and police units specialized in this kind of war. They are smaller units, organized into teams, trained to operate in all weather and situational conditions, technically well-equipped and mobile. Such units exist in the army and in the Serbian police and they are very effective but under-approximated to the public. Another danger for the citizens are natural disasters. Earthquakes, floods, droughts and so on, cause great damage, panic and fear among citizens. The police and the army can help overcome these situations to a large degree. Help would be provided from all the resources of the army and police - both technical and in personnel. The army and the police already have well-organized teams that are mobile and fast moving. They need to provide assistance in material and technical resources and training. Thus the teams are ready to leave as soon as possible for the field and engage in a particular situation. They are tools that need a bond to authorities from which they require support. Of course, governmental authority would certainly benefit from these projects - surely gain more confidence among the citizens - not only do they pursue humane politics but that they are also prepared to respond to all hazards that can harm the citizens' security. Acting in that way they would certainly show that they are concerned about the welfare of their citizens and care about their security. Of course, there is no need for lobbying in the media in favour of the army and the police as regards their engagement in civil protection, but surely it is necessary when it comes to natural disasters.

Lobbying in the media plays a crucial role in order to gain the necessary support from the media, spark the media interest in their work and improve themselves in relations with the media. The media must be a friend of the organization, not only to be interested in this organization when they are involved in some unfavourable affair or a crisis situation. Greater involvement in transferring media flow of information to citizens will increase the citizens' interest in these kinds of organizations. Lobbying is there to ensure greater media coverage, and also that the army and the police would be presented and promoted in the best light possible and a good image of them would be built. When the image is well-constructed, the citizens' confidence increase as does their understanding in cases of crisis, especially if the military and the police have well-crafted plans for emergency response. The fact is that the citizens of Serbia are not too interested in the army and the police. The media landscape is turning from the issues of politics and security, including military and police over to Spanish, Latin American and Turkish series. The army and the police are responsible for their safety, which should lead to an increased interest in their work. Another important thing is that the police and the army are financed from the budget, and the budget is filled through the taxes that citizens pay. Therefore people must be interested in what they pay for. This vital role is played by the media and service of public relations. The media are in fact agents of communication between the army and the police on one hand, and citizens, on the other. The army and the police put their facilities at the disposal of the citizens, causing interest and the job of the media is to mediate between these two parties.

The army and the police will establish their relations with the media using the tools that are at their disposal. The subject of relations with the media is monitoring and analysing the media contents and their impact on the organization of important groups of people and public opinion in general, creating, planning, implementation and evaluation of various activities with whom the organization informs and persuades the

public to discuss and negotiate with journalists and their audiences; responding to journalists and to any other public questions and also preparing and practicing for providing aid in crisis situations, and, finally, depending on the circumstances, expressing gratitude to the journalists, editors and media for their work that significantly affects the people in the organization, and help them recognize what is important and / or problematic. Media relations do not only serve the interests of the organization; in a certain way they view the organization and its role in the environment in which they operate, and that therefore includes socially responsible management organizations. Generally, well known people are more loved than the unknown things and people. The most important stakeholders of the army and the police are the families of their employees, government, parliament, local community, not only the international community. Journalists interested in such a map have a dual role: once information between the company and stakeholders is transmitted, it will be understood as their own stakeholders'. Access to public information is free. As well as their sources are obliged to transfer such information in an organized and planned manner, journalists have an obligation not only to what they attempt to accomplish, but also to organize their relations with the media and the person who manages them. In the military, as well in the police, there are legal acts as regards the manner of providing information to the public. In addition to legislation, there are various policies of the media presentation of the organization, policies and guidelines for implementing the policy of media presentations, i.e. regulations. The army and police may withhold the provision of information:

- If the requested information in the prescribed manner is designated as state, military, official secret,
- If it would mean a violation of confidentiality in accordance with the law, unless the disclosure would prevent a serious criminal offense or immediate danger to human lives and their property,
- If it would cause prejudice to judicial or criminal proceedings.

Refusal to provide the required information must be written to explain all the reasons. The first step the military and the police have to take in order to successfully manage their relations with the media is to analyze the situation. In the process, the benefits that are available are analysed and the weaknesses that prevent successful work with the media, as well as what the opportunities the environment offer and also threats are identified. Analyzing the situation in relations with the media organizations get the basic insight into the media space, given that the state provides an opportunity to work to improve (advance) the situation, and on that basis to develop plans for media relations. In these analyzes, the external and internal factors are analysed. The analysis of internal factors gives an overview of internal strengths and weaknesses as regards organization and prepares the organization for a successful implementation of media relations. Its task is to discover what the effect of previous investments in relations with media comparing to earlier investments is, and how this relationship can be raised to an optimum level. To obtain a complete and realistic picture, we need to create a full range of tasks. The analysis of external factors is an exercise in relations with media that provides an overview of opportunities and threats that come from outside. Its task is to discover what the effect of previous investments in relations with the media is in comparison with other similar organizations. Through planning their relationships with the media, organizations are able (after they have realized what is expected from them) to know what to do at any particular moment - in case of future similar expectations. The plans, which should contain precisely defined objectives, schedule people, resources and time. Since the implementation of relations with media requires the cooperation of personnel in various fields, plans are useful for coordinating the operations with the people in charge. Media relations plans are made simultaneously, in parallel and aligned with other plans that are prepared in the organization. Planning of relations with the media in the organization is aligned with the overall planning cycle. Planning a stem for the relation with the media is planning from the viewpoint of the organization that collaborates with media. The need for the right image in the stems made for the media results from the awareness of the importance that the media play in the contemporary society. Planning relations with media generally involves three stages: defensive, strategic and crisis. The army and the police need to plan relations with the media in a crisis at a strategic level. Particular attention should be paid to the crisis level. The army and the police need to develop a vision and strategy of relations with the media. It could be the vision of the desired view of the foreseeable future, or a current story of the expectations in the future based on the present, containing a brief overview of the strategy and the position of the organization at the moment, where it is going and how to get there. The vision of relations with the media has to be a story with "the story of the organization" and the role of the media in it, as well as the story about the role of relations with the media. The vision gives the story, the strategy is established. Stems of strategy with the media comes from reality and is based on reality. The vision and the strategy get a concrete form in the plan and in the budget. The plan breaks down the strategy into individual phases, which are classified according to the temporal order and determine how many people and resources are needed for their implementation. Everything becomes credible only when a plan for implementation of the budget can

be made. Then, the media organizations choose tools that will be used in achieving the set goals. The most common tools used in the relations with the media are:

- Print and electronic review of media coverage (clippings);
- Analysis of media coverage;
- Written media facilities and editorials;
- Written presentation materials, brochures, maps and so on.;
- The sound and picture materials (photos, videos);
- Written and electronic press releases;
- Presentations on the Internet;
- Conferences;
- Interviews;
- Statements and the like.

Media plans include not only the part that is directly related to the implementation of strategic relations with media - relations that have to be realized following the initiative of the organization which needs the media trying to create the desired image of itself. Media plans are classed as long-term and short-term projects. Media plans contain four basic elements from which the media contents arise: news, stories, performances, and events. In addition, the media and the military and police are in contact and cooperate directly with all organizations and citizens. The Office of Public Affairs is responsible for that cooperation. As noted in the study of the Belgrade Center for Security Policy, the people do not have too much confidence in this organization believing that they are corrupted, but the reason for such thinking should be investigated. In this study it was concluded that the citizens were not informed or had irrelevant information based on "hear-say".

The greatest impact on changing and increasing the citizens' trust towards the army and police has direct contact with citizens and organizations. The tool that can be used for this purpose is the organization of various events. It could be a direct participation of citizens in activities such as renovation of schools, bridges, roads, etc.. Also, it could be organizing and participating in the voluntary blood donation ,etc. Living in a democratic society requires that troops and the police be open to the society to the maximum, or to the highest extent possible. Participating and organizing their own fairs (security fair, education fair, technique fair) is ideal for promoting opportunities of the army and the police. Organizing visits of educational institutions, NGOs, producer organizations and army and police institutions is also a way for these organizations to be closer to citizens. Demonstration exercise for the citizens shows the ability of the army and police to respond to all tasks, especially dangers and threats.

The army and the police must have a close cooperation with NGOs and religious services whose influence in the society is high. These organizations deal with various topics and have different frames of interest, different views and different policies, but also have a great influence on public opinion on various issues, including security issues. NGOs range from ultra right-wing to ultra pro-European. Therefore the army and the police need to balance in the relationship between each other but look for a chance for its promotion. The Office of Public Affairs must have a good plan of its activities so that their activities give importance to traditional values of the military and the police as well as of the Republic of Serbia. All the important events of the past need to be marked and observed, especially the tradition and pride which are the highlights in preserving national identity. On the other hand, the aim is not to be a slave of the past but to also stand for European norms and standards, particularly in terms of technique and tactics. An example that should be looked into and analyzed is the Baltic Military College of Science in Estonia, which has a long tradition, but is respected in recent years and attracts a lot of staff for training and further education, in case of the military. The Military Academy in Belgrade also has a long tradition and has trained most famous generals in the recent history who fought for the survival of the Republic of Serbia and its citizens - said the famous sentences on the battlefield that are still taught, undertook impossible ventures and won many battles. Thus, a major goal is attracting foreign students to training and education by building a regional center for training and education. This will be one way to promote the military, the army and the state - by bringing people from other regions, showing them the hospitality of the Serbian people, the beauty of Serbia and all its values and the wealth it has. It is time to change the image of Serbia in the world, and to slowly build the country's new image. Serbia is a small country and the Serbs are a small nation, but with a long and rich tradition. They seek a new opportunity, and yet prove that they possess and cherish both Serbian and European values and standards.

There is a need for cooperation with all the structures of the society by promoting the military and the police, and providing another option. There is opportunity in the future to hire personnel and establish cooperation in terms of the security policy. These relationships can help identify threats to national security and take

steps to anticipate their actions. The important thing is the acceptance of the European standards for safety. The current attitudes of the citizens, as surveys show, in terms of the membership in the NATO are not encouraging. In most major cases the citizens do not have a positive opinion about this alliance, for several reasons. Events from the past still arouse no trust, rather repulsion among people. Information, or lack of information, also affect and build an opinion and attitude of each individual to something about which he does not know enough or knows nothing. No information is another reason of the citizens' distrust in the NATO alliance, even though the media do not talk much about it, due to their viewership ratings. Certainly, there is a fear among the media that they would lose their audience, and that they would be characterized as traitors among citizens if broadcasters would push Serbia's entry into the NATO.

Citizens are not informed of either the positive or the negative consequences of the possible accession of Serbia to the Alliance.

There is no reason why citizens should not be acquainted with the standards and the norms that will be the benefits from the alliance and the advantages of adopting these standards and norms. The task for the public relations service is to study these standards and norms and to find objective reasons, and to lobby for their implementation.

3. Citizens' trust

Based on the research conducted by the Belgrade Center for security in 2011, it was concluded that the majority of Serbian citizens enjoy personal security, but they do not think that the state authorities have contributed to that feeling. Less educated and poor people have more confidence in the institutions of the security sector in comparison with younger and better educated middle class.

According to the survey, based on such responses, it was concluded that Serbia's citizens are poorly informed about the security aspects of the Republic of Serbia, and that they are poorly informed about the work of the army and the police.

Research has shown that the majority of Serbian citizens think that the future will be marked by economic problems, people will have nothing to eat and believe that such situation will consequently increase the level of crime in the country. Their opinion is that many people will be "forced to rob and, kill" and then everyone will be affected.

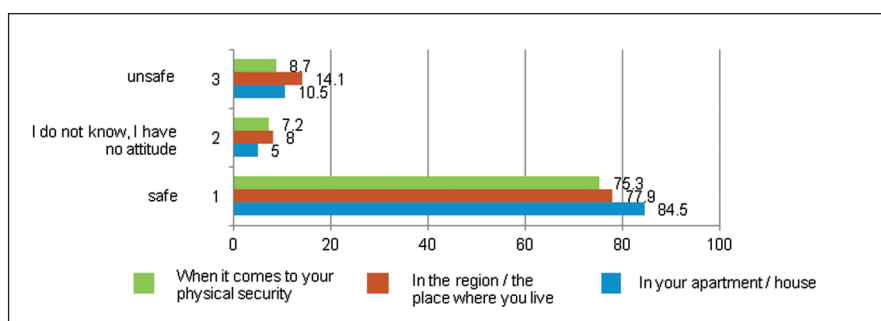


Figure 1: Feeling of personal security

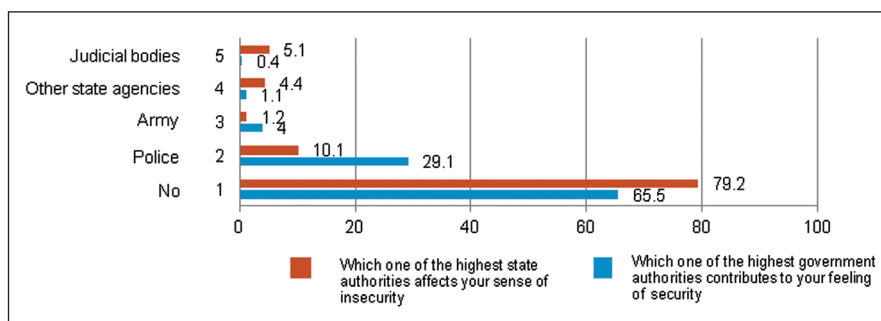


Figure 2: The institutions that contribute to the feeling of insecurity

This study did not take into consideration the citizens' opinion on the issues of trust in state institutions when it comes to the aid provided by these institutions in case of natural disasters, assistance to the population in terms of building infrastructure facilities such as roads, bridges, etc., - where the military could significantly improve its image.

Natural disasters that have befallen the citizens of Serbia in the recent past, an earthquake in Kraljevo, floods in the western part part of Serbia, have violated the safety of the citizens, but also showed the willingness of the state and institutions to respond effectively to such situations.

Every democratic and socially responsible organization must implement public relations, and their activities, both for the functional and organizational purpose and as an element of respect.

Conclusion

Currently the situation is not satisfactory in terms of public relations, though in teaching professions and occupations there is good will for forming positive views on these types of organizations. Experts in this field should exist in the army, either by the education of their senior executives and management personnel or through employing new ones that will present case studies from other countries. It is only in this way that good public relations for the military and the police can be established. When the military and the police accept that as a need, experts will be engaged to analyze the situation, make plans and take planned actions. An aggressive policy of outreach and inclusion of all public relations tools and resources available in the army and in the Serbian police will reveal that there are security forces that are open, humane, democratic and in the service of citizens, and that their main purpose is to oppose all forms of threats that attempt to undermine the security of the Republic of Serbia.

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Gratitude to: My wife-Jelena Soldatovic, PhD.MD.