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The Normative Model of the Ideal Type Soldier in Serbia

Serbian Case

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Research Project „The Image of the Democratic Soldier: Tensions Between the Organisation of Armed Forces and the Principles of Democracy in European Comparison“

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1. Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to analyze civil-military relations in Serbia with the aim of identifying the normative model of the ideal type soldier in Serbia. Given that this paper should contribute to a wider research *The Image of the Democratic Soldier: tensions between the organization of armed forces and the principles of democracy in European comparison*, the central question it seeks to answer is whether society in Serbia makes a specific democratic normative input into the organization of its Serbian Armed Forces (SAF).¹ Put differently, the question will be what society in Serbia believes its army should do what should it look like and to what extent democracy influences these expectations. In order to provide answers to the questions asked above, we first need to define the concepts of political and strategic culture and broadly discuss the existing political and strategic culture in Serbia. Here, we will outline two distinct cultural models in Serbia. Their roots, interpretations of history, dominant contemporary narratives and current political resonance will be laid out. Most importantly, the paper will show that the norms they project regarding the Armed Forces significantly diverge. Secondly, the paper will analyze the evolution of civil-military relations since the collapse of communist rule in 1990 with a special emphasis on the period of democratic transition that was jumpstarted in October 2000. The main variables that we have taken into account in this paper as the most influencing ones on the construction of the ideal type soldier in Serbia are: political and strategic culture, the mode of democratic and civilian control over the Armed Forces and external factors such as security threats, alliances and international security integration. Put roughly, the main argument presented in this paper is that the SAF is influenced by a set of norms which cannot be labeled as *democratic* but rather *national-libertarian*.

The broader theoretical framework of the paper is Democratic Peace Theory. (Kant 1795; Babst 1964; Doyle 1983; Russett 1993).² Its main thesis, that democracies don't fight each other, has achieved almost axiomatic value in contemporary International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis. In the words of Jack Levy it is "as close as anything we have to an empirical law in IR (Levy 1988). While some explanations of peace among democracies rely on institutional constraints of democracy, some other explanations emphasize democratic values, norms and ideas (Russett 1993, Dixon 1993). Since the armed forces are an important agent in any conflict, it is of utmost relevance for the democratic peace theory to have a look at the impact that democratic norms and values have on the organization of armed force. This paper will make a contribution to this discussion by looking at the case study of a one of the

1 Vojska Srbije: VS

2 For different criticisms of Democratic Peace Theory see: Singer and Small 1976, Layne 1994, Mansfield and Snyder 1995, Chan 1997, Schwartz and Skinner 2002.

youngest and least consolidated European democracies, Republic of Serbia. In this paper, we will ask the following question: 7 years since democratization has started, what image of 'ideal type soldier' Serbian society has put forward to represent its collective values and democratic convictions. The conceptual framework through which this will be done is the literature on political and strategic culture (Hudson 1997; Johnston 1995; Katzenstein 1995). The main argument presented in this paper is that the normative model of Serbian soldier can hardly be said to be built along the democratic principles but rather along the national-libertarian ones.

The methodology that we will use in this paper is discourse analysis focusing on dominant and current narratives on the desirable model of the SAF. The sources we analyzed are the existing literature on political and strategic culture, constitutional, strategic and military documents, parliamentary debates, survey data and public political discourse. During the next phase of the project (second phase), the findings of this paper should be tested and deepened against empirical material gained from interviews, observation and other primary sources.

2. Analytical Framework: Culture, Political Culture and Strategic Culture

Culture can very generally be defined as a collective construction of social reality (Sackmann 1991). In other definition, culture is a shared system of meaning that shapes the values and preferences of a collectivity of individuals (Hudson 1997). **Political culture** consists of assumptions about the political world (Elkins and Simeon 1979). It is a *product* of and an *interpretation* of history which provides us with axiomatic beliefs (Breuning 1997) of who we are, where we come from and what we value. These axiomatic beliefs, which are usually implicit and taken for granted, shape the political and historical understanding of a political community. They are so fundamental that they cannot be further reduced but instead constitute the basic premises that organize all other knowledge about a given political community. The elements which are the most relevant in construction of its axiomatic beliefs are: the existence of heroic history; the founding of a state; colonizing or colonized experience; and other turning point and formative events in its history. **Strategic culture** is the part of political culture consisting axiomatic beliefs about the usefulness and appropriateness of the use of military force in international relations. According to Alastair Iain Johnston, strategic culture is an integrated 'system of symbols' which act to establish pervasive and long lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious (Johnston 1995). It is a product of discursive construction about one's country's geopolitical position, military history, international relations, military technology and the aspects of its civil military relations. It comprises of two core assumptions. Firstly,

assumptions about the orderliness of the strategic environment, that is, about the nature of the adversary and the threat it poses. Secondly, it consists of assumptions about the efficacy of the use of force, about the ability to control outcomes and to eliminate threats, and the conditions under which applied force is useful (*ibid*). Political and strategic culture shape national security interests in a twofold manner (Katzenstein 1995). They regulate interests through defining the rules of the game and by dictating which moves are allowed and which are not. Also, political and strategic cultures create and reproduce collective identities thus constituting interests.

Another important issue is the question of duration and uniformity of culture. It is important to stress that both political and strategic culture, although 'sedimented structures' constantly evolve under the impact of important new events and through discursive transformations conducted by political elites. Also, political and strategic culture is never a uniform and stable set of beliefs shared by the whole population or its politico-military elites in one given point in time. Although, the dominant narratives shape the 'logic of appropriateness' in political and strategic matters, they also represent the discursive and symbolic context and arena for political competition between alternative meanings and interpretations. In other words, even in one given point in time, beside a dominant political and strategic culture there can be several alternative discourses against which the dominant one has to be defended.

Finally, of what use is the concept of political and strategic culture for social science, whether it is Foreign Policy Analysis, International Relations, Security Studies or any other discipline? As already shown by Max Weber (2001) on the example of protestantism and capitalism, the study of culture can be very useful tool for explanation of institutional development. In addition to that, the concepts of political and strategic culture can be used to explain particular decisions and policies of political agents and outcomes they produce. In this latter case, those concepts can be a very slippery ground and should be always used with the utmost care. More concretely, if used for analysis of particular decisions, policies and outcomes, cultural explanation should always be a second order explanation and a supplementary account, after rationalist explanations have been ruled out (Breuning 1997, Elkins and Simeon 1979). For example, if we try to explain a particular foreign policy decision such as Serbian government's decision not to fully comply with Austro-Hungarian ultimatum from July 1914, a rationalist analysis should first be employed to find out explanations based on material interests and 'logic of consequences'. Only if the rationalist and materialist explanation does not suffice, the constructivist explanations based on the "logic of appropriateness" using concepts of culture and identity should be brought into the equation. Arguably, the decision of the Serbian government to defy demands of much mightier Austria-Hungary can hardly be explained by rational choice and national interest. In order to understand such a decision, which led to death of 20 % of population, occupation and disappearance of state of Serbia from political map for 90 years, culture, identity and

ideology prevalent in Serbia at the time have to be taken into account.³

3. Political and Strategic Culture in Serbia

3.1 Existing Literature

The aim of this chapter is to present and critically assess part of the existing literature in this field. It is important to stress that while the academic literature on political culture in Serbia is very modest (Jovanović 1964; Golubović 1995; Matić 1993, 1998, 2000; Podunavac 1998), to the best knowledge of the author of this paper, there hasn't been any work done on strategic culture of Serbia. Regarding political culture, the work of Milan Matić represents the most comprehensive analysis from the political sciences perspective written by any Serbian scholar. As such it will occupy the most important place in this chapter and will inspire our explanation how culture impacts political institutions, most notably armed forces and different policies especially foreign, security and defence policy of the Republic of Serbia.

Matić depicts Yugoslav and Serbian political culture through tension between two groups of principles, one deriving from tradition and the other from modern age. He argued that deep political divisions of Yugoslav (1993) and Serbian society (1998, 2000) at the time of the writing had deep cultural roots. He analyzes this deep political and cultural split within the Serbian society with the following words:

Apart from the old antinomies of traditionalism and modernization, liberalism, East and West, today we can discern in political parties, among the leadership and within intelligentsia, rifts between Serbness and Yugoslavness, collectivism and citizenship, national and globalist, patriotism and populism (1998: 328).

Even more, according to him, "Serbs are crucified between different, even not joinable patterns of national and state identification" (Matić 1998: 327). The first pattern is what he labels differently as: *national-libertarian culture* (1993: 838), *mythic-libertarian culture* (1993: 839) or *radical popular and ethno-nationalist culture* (1998: 332) while on the other side is *civilizing-social culture* (1993: 839), *democratic political culture* (1993: 839), *liberal, progressive, modernizing* (1998: 332) and *civilizational-participatory culture* (1998: 306). The terminological inconsistency reflects the lack of conceptual clarity in his work. To add to the confusion, Matić often values differently these two opposing political cultures. For example, in his earlier works (1993) he criticized the national-libertarian culture as an impediment to development of civil-society and he glorifies the liberal-democratic culture. In his work from 1998, Matić sits in the middle of the fence and is more careful to take sides or give normative evaluations on these conflicting models in terms of which is desirable and

3 Push factors that led to war at the international (system) level explain why the war happened. But they cannot explain why a small state went to total war with Great Powers against all odds.

which is not. Although national unity and resistance are based on the national-libertarian cultural model, Matić holds that by the “logics of general civilizational changes and progress, this model is doomed to disappear as an element of social integration”(Matić 1998: 308). Finally, in the text from 2000 Matić tried to overcome the gap between the two cultures by arguing that, in Serbia, there is only one *democratic-assamblitory* culture which combines elements of the two previously divided and opposed two models (2000: 105). This culture is unique but ambivalent at the same time because it contains so many contradictory features such as collectivism and individualism, libertarianism and submissiveness, heroism and inertia, unison and division, hospitability and distrust. In short, although Matić’s argument often suffers from essentialism, incoherence, and terminological imprecision, he remains to be, to our knowledge, the only political scientist in Serbia who has extensively dealt with the issue of political culture.

Apart from a political science approach, a wide array of authors has tried to grasp the cultural model in Serbia from anthropological and psychological perspective (To name just a few: Jovanović 1964, Cvijić 1987, Jerotić 2004). They often point out the afore discussed cultural rift between globalists and nationalists, modernity and tradition, between the West and the East, between individualism and collectivism and many other diadic pairs. The Serbian contemporary culture is full of similar diadic pairs such as Latin vs Cyrillic letter, Guča vs Exit music festivals, Vreme vs NIN weekly journals etc. For example, Serbian psychiatrist Vladeta Jerotić argues that “it seems that Serbian Byzantinian remains confused in front of the ever important question: to which Kingdom should I adhere, heavenly or earthly, Eastern or Western?” (Jerotić 2004). As we will see in the further text, this dilemma is not only present as Jerotić argues in individual psyche of a modern Orthodox Serb but at the collective level regarding the strategic identity and orientation of Serbia.

In conclusion, the litterature on political culture in Serbia has been quite modest both in terms of quality and quantity. In addition to that, the strategic culture of Serbia hasnt been touched upon at all. The most interesting argument, presented in the above discussed litterature is that Serbian political culture is stretched between two opposing models, one that can for the purpose of this essay be labeled as *liberal-democratic* cultural model and the other which we will call *national-libertarian* cultural model.

3.2 Liberal Democratic Political Culture

Liberal-democratic political culture is a product of a relatively short period in Serbian history, during which its society was either predominantly oriented towards emancipation from internal (rather than external political dominance) and/or had democratic governance. Although the former is difficult to calculate with exact numbers, it could be argued that social internal emancipation significantly commenced with the acquisition of external sovereignty (Jackson 1993)- the recognition of Serbia as an independent state at the Congress in Berlin held in 1878. However, how many years Serbia was ruled as a democracy is more easy to

calculate, although it is not without methodological challenges. According to a Serbian historian Slobodan Marković, in the course of the last 200 years, Serbia spent as a democracy only about 30 years, or 15% of the time (Marković 2004).⁴ Regarding the formative historical moments for the development of liberal-democratic political culture we can single out very few events as following: the adoption of liberal Candelmas Constitution⁵ (1835) ; the adoption of Regents Constitution (1869) ⁶; October 5th 2000, the popular uprising against fraud of presidential elections held on September 27th 2000, which put an end to the decade long authoritarian rule of Slobodan Milošević. We could possibly include as a formative moment for the construction of liberal democratic political culture the assassination of the first democratic Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić in March 2003.⁷ The main axiomatic belief of this political culture is that Europe and the West in general represent unequivocally cultural, political and civilizational homeland of Serbia. Therefore, European political heritage of individualism, democracy, liberalism, rule of law, human rights, multiculturalism, critical interpretation of its own past, reluctance to the use of force, tolerance, compromise etc. are all values and norms that should be adopted and respected. The national identity projected by this political culture is a civic and temporal⁸ national identity. The fashion in which the civic national identity is being created, reproduced and redefined through contemporary security policies will be discussed in latter chapters when we discuss political elites. Accordingly, through liberal democratic lenses, regarding post Cold War national interests, Serbia is no different than other Western Balkan countries. Given its turbulent history, small size and impossibility to stand alone in a difficult geopolitical position, this cultural model pushes Serbia towards internal social emancipation and international integration, together with its Balkan neighbours, into a wider European, Euro-Atlantic and global integration.

3.3 National Libertarian Political Culture

National-libertarian political culture has a deeper historical, symbolical and even psychological roots in Serbia. It is a product of the half a millenium long struggle of the

4 Parliamentary Monarchy lasted 26 years and 18 months (January 1889 - April 1893; June 1903 - October 1915; December 1918 - January 1929. Parliamentary democratic republic lasts since October 2000. Together, in 2007, Serbia had 33 years of democracy.

5 In Serbian 'Sretenjski Ustav'. This Constitution was very liberal and due to Austro-Russian pressure lasted for only several weeks.

6 In Serbian 'Namesnički Ustav'. This Constitution introduced National Assembly and universal suffrage for males of full age. It never took effect due to resistance of great powers (Marković 2004).

7 Although it is still too early to tell whether this event can seriously impact the liberal-democratic political culture there are some indications that its effects are already observable. For example, in the aftermath of the assassination the liberal democratic bloc softened its human rights agenda in favor of internal security issues. Whether such a preference will become long term one or even permanent remains to be seen. For more on this issue see: Ejdus (2007).

8 Lene Hansen distinguishes spatial identity when the Other is located as geographically distinct and temporal identity when the Other is temporally distinct, such as the Self in the past (e.g. we are opposite of what we used to be) (Hansen 2006).

Serbian people for emancipation from foreign conquerors and empires that encroached the South East Europe. Those powers are the Ottoman empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire, German Third Reich and finally EU and US hegemony. The formative moments in the creation and reproduction of the national-libertarian cultural model are the rise of the Serbian state during Emperor Dušan and the Serbian Church during St. Sava; defeat in the Kosovo Battle against the Ottomans in 1389; demise of the medieval Serbian despotate in 1459; the first Serbian uprising in 1804; wars for national liberation (Two Balkan wars and the First World War) 1912-1918; peoples rejection of the Tripartite pact in 1941; resistance and conflict with Stalin in 1948; and finally the defiance of and military conflict with NATO in 1999. The main driver and motivation of the national-libertarian political culture is external emancipation. Matić argues that instead of internal controversies, as was the case in England, people in the Balkans, have throughout history faced wave after wave of foreign conquerors and enemies that endangered their survival.

The first motive of this political culture was to tolerate internal enemies and poor leaders in order to gain unity in the face of the external threat. In its system of values, national identity and heroic deeds always come before peaceful, civilizational and democratic compromises in the interest of progress

(Translated from Serbian by author from Matić 1993:839).

The conception of national identity that is projected through this cultural lense, is ethnic and spatial rather than civic and temporal. How such an identity is reproduced through contemporary security policies will be discussed in latter chapters. In constructing Serbian national identity, Patriotic Bloc and its discourse draw heavily on the medieval mythology designed and preserved throughout the centuries mainly by the Serbian Orthodox Church. As Vladimir Tismaneanu argues, those myths revolve around several major motifs: the Golden Age, the ideal of the Warrior and the notions of victimhood, martyrdom, treason, conspiracy, salvation and charismatic saviors (1998: 9). The psychological features of national-libertarian political culture are defiance as opposed to cooperation and mythical reasoning as opposed to rational cost-benefit reasoning. A prominent interwar intellectual Slobodan Jovanović, summed up psychological features of the dominant Dinarian⁹ mentality with the following words:

Dinarian ideology, its disobedience, spite to the world and its disdain of death was good for the heroic age of dangers. The age of troubles demands more realism and self-criticism. Especially in competition with other ethnic groups, we will need more national discipline[...]The Dinarian type has bravery but has over-estimation and over-emphasizing of the Self which makes him inflexible and unadaptable. Therefore, he has tendency to interpret all of his failures as a sign of a greater injustice, even for the deeds he is solely responsible. His patriotism sometimes

9 The Dinarian mountain range stretches from Slovenia over Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia. The famous geographer and anthropologist Jovan Cvijić, while examining the Balkan peninsula developed a psychological type of Dinarian people, Cvijić (1987).

reaches total self-sacrifice but is never clean from jealousy and exclusiveness. In Dinarian achievements there is more strenght and swing than plan and organization. Individual examples of bravery are countless but their outcomes are not worth the price paid and the sacrifice made [...] Of crucial importance is whether the posterity will be able to use national energy with more thrift and care so that they transform the dinarian dynamism from being individual and chaotic to a more organized collective strenght (Translated from Serbian by author from Jovanović 1964: 39).

Regarding its assumptions about the orderliness of the strategic environment, national libertarian political culture is highly skeptical towards external powers and the international fora in general.

The national libertarian strategic culture is built on three axiomatic beliefs. The first one, which we will for the purpose of this paper call *independence and defiance*, is that great powers seek to choke the national independence of Serbia, which stand in the way of their interests. Therefore the national independence from the great powers is priceless and should be pursued at any cost regardless of the consequences.¹⁰ From this is derived a specific *national-libertarian* understanding of *death*. Given that national freedom and independence has no price, human sacrifice is relativised if made in defence of independence. The first modern military commander and leader of the first Serbian uprising against the Ottoman Empire (1804) Karadjordje shared the belief that it is better to die and even sacrifice one's own children, if needed in the defense of liberty. That is why he sees defensive war as an 'honorable evil' (Đorđević 2000: 44). Such beliefs resonated in a letter he wrote.

When justice is ostracized from the world, we would rather die than live and we prefer death over life. It's better to die than to be enslaved, in chains, hopeless that freedom will ever arrive. Our life is a burden to us and if we and our descendants are doomed to eternal slavery, we prefer to sacrifice our own children than to leave them to the mercy of our enemies (Translated from Serbian by author from *ibid*: 38).

A good example of independence and defiance discourse can be found as well in writing of the Saint Vladika Nikolaj Velimirović. Thus, he argued that "our struggle against the nations who follow the watchword that might is right fills the whole of our history" (Velimirović 1916: 36). Because of its suspicion towards anything that comes from the international environment, national libertarianism is a fertile ground for conspiracy theories. In addition to the above described axiomatic belief of independence and defiance the added value of these theories is that enemies of Serbia don't act always through overt military political and economic pressures but often through secret organizations and covert actions as well. Conspiracy theories often name the Trialteral commission, Bilderberg group, Council for Foreign Relations, Committee 300, free masonry etc. (For excellent overview see: Byford 2006). These theories were evoked both by communist, socialists and by rightwing and clerical elites throughout the 20th century. However, they were especially intensified during

10 Turkish word *inat* (defiance), which expresses this behavior, is widespread in Serbian language and culture.

the 1990s and culminated during the NATO campaign against Federal republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 1999.

The second axiomatic belief can be labeled as the idea of *self-importance*.¹¹ According to Matić, the idea of *self-importance* is a quintessence of Serbian political culture and can be formulated as *To be and to stay yourself where you are* (Matić 1998, 2000: 27-30). Even though it may sound like a common ground for all collective identities, due to constant threats to its collective distinctiveness, the dynamic of societal securitization in Serbia and in the Western Balkans is particularly strong (Buzan et al. 1998, Buzan and Waever 2003: 377-395). Such self-understanding was created as a result of the historical fact that since the beginnings of their existence in the Balkans, detached and far away from their Slav motherland in the North East of the European continent, Serbs had to defend themselves from the encroachments of neighbouring great powers 'all unacceptable as their masters'. Given that they built, as it is often popularly put, 'house at the middle of the road' that is to say at the crossroads of different and alien religions, civilizations and empires, as Matić argues, Serbs developed a distinct, peculiar and powerfully enrooted collective identity under constant siege of great powers and their smaller Balkan proxies (Matić 2000: 28).

The third axiomatic belief, for the purpose of this paper labeled *civilizational-ambivalence*, assumes that the East and the West represent two fundamentally different worlds in permanent collision and that Serbia should remain neutral in this conflict. This idea insists on the "ultimacy of an alleged civilizational and spiritual gap between the East and the West" (Gačesa 2006: 75). In the same vein, one of the biggest Serbian statesmen of all time, Nikola Pašić, wrote that "West and East represent two enemies, two antinomies, two cultures" (Byford 2006:63). The Serbian Orthodox Church played a particularly important role here, not because it sees Serbia as the East or the West but because Serbia's and Church's alleged special position between the two worlds depends on the actual distinction between them. The civilizational-ambivalence dates from a letter that St. Sava, a founding father of Serbian church, wrote to Irinej back in 1221. In this letter Sava says:

The East thought that we are the West, and the West thought that we are the East. Some of us incorrectly understood our position in this clash of streams and shouted either that we don't belong to any of the sides or that we are exclusively part of one or the other! I say to you Irinej, we are Serbs, destined to be the East in the West and the West in the East, and to recognize above us nothing on the earth, but the Heavenly Jerusalem (Translated from Serbian by author from Jerotić 2004: 55).¹²

The graphic expression of civilizational ambivalence can be found on Serbia's coat of arms with a two headed eagle on it.¹³ While one eagle looks to the East, its spiritual and

11 In Serbian: samobitnost.

12 Apart from Matić, Milan Podunavac (1998) also argues that this narrative is central to Serbian political culture.

13 The double-headed eagle is adopted by several Eastern European countries from the Eastern Roman Empire

historical homeland, its other head looks to the West, its geo-political reality. Since its foundation and especially under Nemanjić dynasty, Serbia embraced spiritually the East (the Byzantine Empire) but materially, technically and economically it looked to the West. Dvorniković shows how that worked during the Middle Ages: “In matters of religion and art Serbia relies on Byzantine Empire while the armament, technical means, miners, financial experts and other things, it supplies from the West” (Dvorniković 1995: 32). Particularly strong anti-western attitudes were spread among the influential orthodox clergy at the turn of 20th century. The two most important persons, whose influence continues today, are Vladika Nikolaj Velimirović and father Justin Popović.¹⁴ Both of them condemned European liberalism, nihilism and socialism and shared apocalyptic visions of the European civilizations (ibid: 64).¹⁵ This has remained to be a part of the collective political psyche in Serbia even today. The West is cherished because of its technological achievements but scorned for the “moral and spiritual poverty”. This is especially amplified by the support Serbia gets from Russia in order to preserve its spiritual cradle, the Kosovo province, while the EU waves with a ‘materialistic carrots of aid, assistance, structural funds and membership’.

3.4 The Impact of the Political Culture and Tradition on Armed Forces and Security Policies

Given the prominent place of the armed forces in the liberation wars it is not surprising to see that national-libertarian model decisively shapes the organization of armed forces and security and defense policies much more than the liberal democratic one. Moreover, it can be argued that the three above mentioned axiomatic beliefs of national libertarian political culture are the foundation on which the normative model of the Serbian Armed Force is built. According to the popular proverb, armed force is ‘people's dependence’¹⁶ and a guarantee of its freedom and independence. Its role is the defense of the country and making of liberation wars. Such an army is highly appreciated by the people. The Serbian language has another proverb “A Serb goes to the Army with joy”.¹⁷ If war as a mean of self defense and national liberation has a praised role in national-libertarian culture, it is not the case with the expeditionary function of the military. Be it power projection or international peacekeeping

(Byzantine Empire). In the Byzantine heraldry, the heads represented the dual sovereignty of the Emperor (secular/religious) and dominance of the Roman Emperors over both East and West.

14 During the 1990s Vladika Nikolaj was not only amnestied for anti-semitic ideas and sympathies for Adolf Hitler but beatificated by the Serbian Orthodox Church in 2003. Today he is glorified as the second biggest personality of the Serbian Orthodox Church after St. Sava. For an excellent study on the process of rehabilitation of this controversial person see: Byford Jovan (2005).

15 From such ideas sprang a Godpraying movement, aimed at saving Serbia from European nihilism, during the interwar period. In Serbian Bogomoljački pokret.

16 In Serbian: narodna uzdanica.

17 In Serbian: rado Srbin ide u vojnike.

missions, sending troops abroad has no moral justification and as such is seen and perceived as mostly illegitimate.

The above mentioned national libertarian axiomatic beliefs were important driving force behind agenda setting and policy/decision making in Serbian (and Yugoslav) politics throughout history. Lets just take four extreme historical cases from the 20th century - 1914, 1941, 1948 and 1999 - when Serbia¹⁸ was facing external military threats and its political elites were put on the trial of having to comply or defy foreign ultimatums. All four times, they decided to defy against all odds. In three cases (1914, 1941 and 1999) the cost, in terms of life, infrastructure and political independence, by far outweighed the benefit of defiance. The rationalist analysis can hardly provide us with a good case for the rational choice behind these decisions. Therefore, constructivist analysis of political and strategic culture and identity has to be undertaken in order to explain such defiant foreign policy behaviour of a small vulnerable state.

Regarding control of the armed forces, there is a long tradition of civilian control in Serbian history. Already in the medieval Dušanov Canon from 1349 it was stipulated, in article 129, that "Every army shall be ruled by dukes as much as by the Tsar. What they command should be respected. He who disobeys the Dukes shall be condemned as well as he who disobeys the Tsar" (Đorđević 2000: 24).¹⁹ Although civilian control over the armed force, in line with such a tradition and political culture, has been present throughout most of the Serbian history, democratic control has not. For the latter to take roots, there needs to pass a longer period of practising of democratic control of armed force which in Serbia has first been introduced, slowly and painfully, in 2000.

Before we proceed, it is important to make several caveats about the argument presented above. Firstly, neither Matić nor author of this paper did substantiate the argument about the cultural rift with sociological empirical evidence but only with discursive analysis of literary and political narratives. However, the political scene of Serbia, split manicheally into two blocs, "democratic" and "patriotic", reflect this split with outstanding precision. Secondly, it is important to note that the argument is not meant to be a sociological one in the first place. That is to say, different cultures don't necessarily belong to different social groups.²⁰ The opposing cultures don't exist out there in the 'objective world'

18 In 1941 and 1948 it Yugoslavia ran foreign policy for the republic of Serbia.

19 However, there have been times when officers attempted and undrtook military coup d'etats. Firslt and the most violent one was in 1903 when King Alexander Obrenović and his wife Draga Masin were brutally murdered by a national-libertarian oriented secret military organization Crna Ruka composed of high Army Officers. The Obrenović dynasty was replaced by Karadjordjević dynasty (Hadžić 2004b). Second time was in March 1941 when army officers overturned the government because it signed Tripartited act and joined Axis power. Final attempt of a para-military coup was attempted with the assasination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in 2003.

20 Although some evidence about social strata of voters of 'democratic' and 'patriotic' blocs exist and go along the lines of dichotomies: urban-rural, educated-uneducated, transition winners-losers, young-old etc.

and we are not attempting to reify them. Instead of that, they are layers of narratives and images, interpretations of different historical experiences, particular societal „software“ that is utilized by different actors in the political arena as discursive tool of self legitimization which becomes visible through our conceptual lens. Thirdly, the two models are not equally deeply embedded in the Serbian collective construction of social reality. The national libertarian is much more strongly present especially when it comes to foreign, security and defense policy and organization of armed forces. Finally, the two discourses are empowered differently in different political situations. Since we are concerned here with the impact of culture on the normative model of the armed forces, it suffices to focus on situations important for the security of Serbia. In short, the more imminent the threat to national security gets, the more conducive the social and political environments become for national-libertarian narratives and arguments to resonate in the public and political discourse.²¹

The following chapter will discuss the contemporary civil-military relations in Serbia with a special emphasis on how *liberal-democratic* and *national-libertarian* discourse shape the normative model of ideal type soldier in contemporary Serbia.

4. Historical Background

4.1 1945-1990

Although the period before 1990 is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to make a few reflections on this historical background against which the events of the 1990s make much more sense. The fate of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia²² (SFRY), created on the ashes of interwar Yugoslavia in the aftermath of the World War Two, was a function of regime legitimacy and military legitimacy was necessary for the former. When the Yugoslav Peoples Army (YPA)²³ lost legitimacy, so was the case for the regime as well (Gow and Zveržanovski 2003: 203). Therefore, in contrast to the principle of ‘neutrality’ of the armed forces in liberal-democratic states, the military in SFRY was an important actor in the political life with a formal role in the political processes. The YPA had three roles: defense of territory in relation to external aggression; regime defense from internal disruption and nation building, since it was the only truly Yugoslav institution. The later was particularly the case after the Constitution from 1974 loosened the federation and introduced the system of the so called *ethno federalism*. Finally, it should be added that SFRY was significantly contributing to the peacekeeping operations under UN mandate during the Cold War.

21 The best example is the fact that during the NATO bombings in 1999 even the discourse of the democratic opposition took the forms of national-libertarianism.

22 In Serbian: Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija - SFRJ.

23 In Serbian: Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija - JNA.

While it was suppressing a weak liberal-democratic political culture (present in the dissident discourse) dominant Yugoslav socialist discourse was heavily built on some elements of the national libertarian political culture.²⁴ For example, the central narrative and source of iconography in the post war socialist Yugoslavia was the National-Liberation Struggle (NOB).²⁵ Moreover, the axiomatic belief of independence and defiance found its new expression in the rupture with Stalin and Soviet Union in 1948, conflict with whom would be against all realistic odds had the Soviets decided to militarily invade SFRY. The self importance belief was engrained in the invention and development of a self-governing socialist political system which was in many respect completely *sui generis*. Finally, axiomatic belief of civilizational ambivalence drove the foreign policy of Non Alignment movement and inspired the ideology of peaceful coexistence. Although the socialist discourse drew heavily on libertarian political cultures of Yugoslav people, given its post-national socialist ideology, it was however purified from national mythologies and carriers of national identities which were subversive for Yugoslav project. Only in 1980s following the death of Tito and rising political and economic crisis, had the libertarian ideology been accompanied again with its ancient national myths (e.g. Kosovo battle), visual carriers of national identity (e.g. Serbian cross), strong desecularisation of society and growing influence of its most important agent, the Church (e.g. Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbia).

4.2 1990-2000

The fall of the communism was not followed with the emergence of liberal-democratic discourses, as was the case in most of the Central European countries but with a strong outburst of national-libertarianism. Moreover, during the period between 1990 and 2000 Slobodan Milošević and other political elites overtly manipulated with thus far suppressed national-libertarian discourse. During his legendary speech given on Gazimestan on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo Battle Slobodan Milošević evoked the same self-importance of Serbia and ungratefulness of Europe with the following words:

Six centuries ago, Serbia heroically defended itself here in Kosovo. But it defended Europe as well. It was defending at its ramparts European culture, religion and European society as a whole. Therefore, it seems not only *unjust* (emphasis added F.E.) but also unhistorical and completely absurd to discuss whether Serbia belongs to Europe (Slobodan Milošević, 28 June 1989).

Suspiciousness towards the West was among the central narratives of the revamped nationalist discourse of the early 1990s. The West was often depicted as ungrateful for all the sacrifices Serbia had made for its wellbeing and security. The sacrifices began with Kosovo battle in 1389, when Serbs blocked Ottoman military advancement further into Europe and

24 Such a discourse was present in most part of Yugoslavia, but was particularly strong in Serbia.

25 In Serbian: Narodno oslobodilačka borba

lasted until the German attack on Yugoslavia in April 1941 delayed the execution of Barbarosa plan to invade Moscow²⁶ and ultimately led to the defeat of the Nazi Germany.²⁷

The period between 1991 and 2001 brought fundamental changes to the army in Yugoslavia as well. When SFRY dissolved, the FRY²⁸, composed of Serbia and Montenegro, was a successor state and its Yugoslav Army(YA)²⁹ was meant to succeed YPA. YA inherited the bulk of the equipment and officer corps from the Yugoslav Peoples Army (YPA)³⁰ but it also inherited its history, mindset and problematic relationship with society as well. Throughout most of the 1990s FRY was under international sanctions. Therefore there was no opportunity for the YA to participate in international peacekeeping operations as was the case with most of the European Armies in the 1990s. Instead, the YA performed “a somewhat perverted domestic military assistance role” (Gow and Zveržanovski 2003: 203). In other words, apart from its role in the Bosnian conflict, the YA was an instrument of Milošević policy and oriented solely towards regime defense and national security. During the period 1991-2000 the regime of Slobodan Milošević managed to a large extent to undermine YA's professional and political autonomy through the establishment of new chains of command, personnel changes in the officer corps and the development of militarized police forces as its institutional competitors (Edmunds 2003: 24, 25).

This period can be split into two phases (Edmunds 2003: 10). During the first phase of *disintegration*, which occurred between 1991 and 1995, SFRY collapsed into 5 new states while the YPA split into YA and Bosnian Serb Army of Republika Srpska (VRS).³¹ During this period, the YA was engaged in “pro-Serb struggle to preserve the Yugoslav federation” (Edmunds 2003: 10). During the first phase, the YA was expelled from Slovenia in 1991 and Croatia in 1995. Also, although the Yugoslav state officials claimed that Yugoslavia was never a party to the Bosnian conflict the YA was informally engaged “through the provision of technical, personnel and material support to the VRS” and the Armed Forces of Republika Srpska Krajina (Edmunds 2003: 12; Gow, Zveržanovski 2003: 205).³² The second phase, that

26 Thus, according to this self-important theory of the World War Two, due to their sudden military commitment to Yugoslavia, Germans were not capable of conquering Moscow before the winter time which ultimately led to their defeat on the Eastern front and in the Second World War in general.

27 During the parliamentary session on Kosovo, held on July 24, Nebojsa Prokić, MP from Liberal-Democratic party, criticized the myth of self-importance and ungratefulness of Europe. He reminded the Assembly that only 7 years after the Kosovo battle, in 1396, Serbian leader, despot Stephan Lazarevic fought together with Ottoman commander Bajazit and his army against Christian knights at Nicople. This is a good example of discursive battle between national-libertarian and liberal-democratic political forces and their alternative historical interpretations and narratives. Prokić aims to demystify the myth of Kosovo battle as sacrifice for Europe and Christianity and thus destabilize legitimacy that national-libertarian discourse which has built on it.

28 In Serbian: Savezna Republika Jugoslavija - SRJ.

29 In Serbian: Vojska Jugoslavije - VJ.

30 In Serbian: Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija - JNA

31 In Serbian: Vojska Republike Srpske - VRS.

32 In Serbian: Oružane snage Republike Srpske Krajine - OS - RSK

of authoritarian consolidation, occurred between 1995 and 2000. During this phase Milošević succeeded in gaining full control over the army and coopted it to his regime. The army was subject to numerous purges of its officer corps. Moreover, the YA continued its special relations with the VRS although more discretely due to the Dayton Peace Agreement. The Albanian uprising in Kosovo and the emergence of the Kosova Liberation Army (UÇK)³³ showed the deficiencies of Ministry of Interior's (MUP)³⁴ police forces in the province. In the summer of 1998 the YA became engaged side by side with the MUP in the armed conflict against the UÇK. In order to tighten his grip over the Army, Milošević created a parallel command structure in Kosovo bypassing the General Staff.³⁵ Finally, although the YA was defeated and expelled from Kosovo after being bombed in 1999 by NATO, it kept its high legitimacy and popularity in society.

As the military political pressure from the West increased, the discourse about civilizational-ambiguity and self importance radicalized and perverted to aggressive anti-Westernism. Conspiracy theories plagued public discourse. The military wasn't immune on those processes. Moreover, in numerous conferences organized by the Army and in official publications of the YA such as *Vojno Delo* and *Vojska*, conspiracy theories have often occupied important space (Byford 2006:189-190). For instance, during the 1990s, the so called Group 69 operated in the army. Composed of high military officers and some people with supposed psychic abilities, this group was established to defend the country from asymmetric, paranormal and neo-cortical warfare that foreign powers supposedly launched against Serbia in order to psychologically subjugate it (ibid 174-195). The discourse about ungratefulness of the West from the beginning of the 1990s transformed into a discourse about the intention of the West to economically, politically and militarily subjugate the last asylum of freedom and justice in Europe - defiant Serbia. This is how a spokesman of the Milošević regime once explained it: „The true goals of NATO aggressors are to occupy our country in order to dissolve the last island of independence in this part of Europe” (Ivica Dačić, *Politika* 25. April 1999. p.5).

5. Contemporary Civil-Military Relations 2000-2007

5.1 Political Background

In September 2000, after more than a decade of authoritarian rule, Milošević was defeated by democratic candidate Vojislav Koštunica in the presidential elections. After Milošević had refused to admit the results, a popular uprising in the streets of Belgrade and other main cities

33 In Albanian: Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës - UÇK.

34 In Serbian: Ministarstvo Unutrašnjih Poslova - MUP.

35 The full consolidation of control happened in October 1998 when Milošević sacked Momčilo Perišić and appointed his loyalist General Dragoljub Ojdanić Chief of the General Staff (Edmunds 2003: 24).

across Serbia put an end to the regime on October 5th 2000. Sensing the inevitability of the wind of change, the leadership of YA decided to back up opposition's presidential candidate Koštunica and Democratic Opposition of Serbia. As a sign of gratitude, the new President Koštunica resisted to replace Milošević's general Nebojša Pavković with a democratically more credible person.³⁶ Zoran Djindjić and the Government also had debts to pay but to other parts of security sector. Namely, due to the deal made in the dawn of 5th of October between Djindjić and chief of Red Berets³⁷ Milorad Luković *Legija*, the Government left this unit intact until they assassinated Djindjić and failed an attempted *coup d' État* in March 12th 2003. Another reason behind the protracted defense reform was the growing split among the new ruling DOS³⁸ coalition whereby Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić and DS³⁹controlled MUP and Ministry of Defense (MO)⁴⁰ while President Koštunica and his DSS⁴¹ controlled the Army. This division is present in the new government established in 2006 as well, this time with MUP being controlled by DSS and MO controlled by DS. The split between the DS and DSS and their cohabitation in power, impeded security and defense sector reform until the assassination of Zoran Djindjić in March 2003 and to an extent is still slowing down the creation of a holistic security system and social consensus on national security policy in Serbia.⁴² The relationship between the Army and society was further complicated by the fact that until 2005 there was one Army and three separate territories - Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (Gow and Zveržanovski 2003: 210). Apart from the YA, these three territories were controlled by a number of other armed actors: UÇK, Kosovo Protection Corps and NATO in Kosovo, MUP in Serbia and Montenegrin police in Montenegro. The second democratic government (2004-2006) was a weak, minority government and was formed with the support of the Milošević SPS. Under such circumstances, it was very difficult to undertake serious defense and security sector reform. Since 2006, with the new third democratic government that included DS as well, the political climate for unblocking the defense reform has changed for the better. Firstly, after the success of the pro-independence camp at the Montenegrin referendum in the spring of 2006 Serbia re-acquired full competencies over its foreign and security policy (Stojanović 2007). As far as territorial and sovereignty issues are concerned, although very difficult and potentially explosive, now only the status of Kosovo remained on the domestic and international agenda. Secondly, right after the dissolution of the State Union, Serbia adopted its new Constitution. The document mentions democratic and civilian control of armed forces and the right of conscientious objection which is surely a significant way forward in comparison to the previous Constitution from 1990. However, the competences of the Army remained ambiguous while the right of conscientious objection is

36 General Pavković was retired from the position of the General Chief of Staff on 24. June 2002.

37 Jedinica za specijalne operacije: JSO (Special Operations Unit)

38 Democratic Opposition of Serbia- the name for the democratic bloc from the later 1990s.

39 Demokratska stranka: DS

40 In Serbian: Ministarstvo Odbrane MO

41 In Serbian: Demokratska stranka Srbije: DSS

42 For instance while DSS pleads for armed neutrality, DS favors accession to NATO.

very restrictive. The defense system is still regulated by laws from 1993 and 1994. As the Chief of Staff argues “even at the time when they were written, they missed the subject because they hadn’t recognized the changes occurring in Europe from 1989 to 1993” (Ponoš 2007). The law on the implementation of the Constitution tabled the adoption of a set of new legislatures for a year after the adoption of the constitution, meaning by the end of 2007.⁴³ In spite of the unresolved territorial issues and deep divisions among the ruling democratic parties, the armed forces went through a set of reforms⁴⁴

5.2 Overview of Defense Reforms

The most important positive ramification of the post 2000 democratic transition was the gradual introduction of principles of democratic and civilian control of armed forces into legislature and practice.⁴⁵ For instance, the Constitutional Charter (2003) of the successor to Yugoslavia, the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, for the first time mentioned that armed forces are under democratic and civilian control. Unfortunately, the Parliament often lacked the will and mechanisms to exercise its most important control function over the budget – the purse-power – let alone some other prerogatives.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the General Staff became a part of the Ministry of Defense and a civilian started performing the function of Minister of Defense.

Second important transformation was a constant downsizing of the unaffordable and oversized standing army that was tailored during the Cold War for a defense of territory from potential external aggression. Although Serbia today remains the last state in the Western Balkans region that has kept general and obligatory national service, the length of the term of service has been reduced to 6 months in the military service and 9 months in the civilian one. One of the reasons for that can certainly be the resistance of citizens to the idea of the professionalization. In spite of that, the size of the army shrank from 105,000 people in 2000 to 45,000 people in September 2006. According to Strategic Defense Review (SDR) - adopted by MO in June 2006 by the end of the 2007, the size of the army should be decreased to 34,000 soldiers. The same document stipulates a fully fledged professional army of 21,000 by 2010 (or 0.2% to 0.4% of the total population) in peacetime. That will be a significant reduction from the late 1990s when this figure was around 0.9% (Popović 2006). Whether this vision will materialize is yet to be seen. The current declared priority of the Army leadership to reduce quantity and increase quality seems to be a promising signal for the time

43 These laws are Law on the Army, Law on Intelligence Services and Defense Law.

44 This was especially the case since General Zdravko Ponoš was appointed acting Chief of General Staff in 2005 and Chief of Staff in 2006.

45 For the difference between civilian and democratic control see Cottey A. Edmunds T. and Forster A. (2002) ‘The Second Generation Problematic: rethinking Democracy and Civil Military Relations’ *Armed Forces and Society*, vol.29, no1, autumn

46 See: Ponoš (2007) ‘Vojaska Srbije po Nato standardima’, *Vreme*, br. 863. 19. jul.

being.⁴⁷ However, the reduction in quantity is often perceived by the military through *national-libertarian* lenses.⁴⁸ Necessary quantitative shrinking and professionalization of SAF, common for most post-communist armies following the end of the Cold War, is most often interpreted in national libertarian discourse as a conspiracy between domestic ‘traitors’ and a wide array of Western organizations and services with one aim in mind - to decrease the capacity of Serbia to defend itself. For example, retired Army General Milen Simić explained the defense reform in the fashion shared by a good part of the military, especially its more experienced part:

American and British Generals and officers, invited by self-declared friends, participated in defence system reforms and brought them to a stage which, we can infer - Serbs are given away power to defend territories. [...] Therefore, submissiveness of representatives of MoD and ‘reform oriented’ generals and officers towards American military bureaucracy has fatal consequences on the defence capability of Serbian people, because it was declared submissive virtue that needs to be ceaselessly cultivated[...] (Sikavica 2006)

Thirdly, the right of conscientious objection for persons subject to military conscription was introduced, starting from 2003. It is worthwhile noting that the new Constitution, adopted in 2006, also guarantees this right although in a very restrictive fashion. It stipulates that any person can be called to a military service without weapons. This is a flagrant derogation of international instruments and the recommendations of the Council of Europe.⁴⁹

Apart from these substantial changes, a set of organizational reforms have also taken place. Today, the SAF are composed of three operative commands: Command for Land Force, Command for Training and Command for Air Force and Anti Aircraft Defense. Structural changes are being undertaken in line with NATO standards. Since there is no political decision on joining this Alliance, as Mr. Ponoš put it, “it is not the issue of political but professional orientation, reaching standards and reputation in military profession. The best the world has, in the domain of the military, it is NATO standards” (Ponoš 2007).⁵⁰ Also, military academies of branches were merged into a single one while a high number of Army

47 See Ponoš (2007).

48 Methodological note: one of the objectives of the interviews and opinion polls that could be conducted in the second phase of the research will be gaining insights whether national-libertarian beliefs are widespread among other soldiers as well.

49 “A person using its right on conscientious objection can be called to serve its military duty without weapons and in accordance with law” art.45 of the constitution. This is against international and regional standards and diminution of rights in comparison to the previous established practice in Serbia. More on this and other security issues see: Ejdus F., Savković M. and Popović Đ. (2006) “For in the hands of Brave Mandušić Vuk-Security in the proposed Constitution of Serbia”, Western Balkans Security Observer, no2, September-October. For the international standards see: See : resolution 337/1967 of Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe. Also: Alinea 9. Bandrés Molet & Bindi resolution of The European Parliament.

50 The only document that overtly mentions NATO accession as a goal is the still not adopted draft of National Security Strategy proposed by President Tadić (Stojanović 2007).

generals were retired (Hadžić 2004a). Regarding representativeness, according to the MO, ethnic minorities are represented in the SAF in line with their share of the population. However, the official record doesn't show their status and ranking. It is important to note that women are still extremely under-represented in the SAF. Currently, there are only 181 women which makes 0.3 % of the total number whereas the NATO average is around 10 %.⁵¹ In the academic year 2006, the Military Academy introduced the first generation of female cadets.

5.3 Foreign, Security and Defense Policy

It is difficult to argue that Serbia has a clearly defined foreign, security and defense policy. The deep cultural and societal divisions discussed above prevent the state and society to reach national consensus on strategic orientation and foreign, security and defense priorities. However, so far the least common denominator of all three post October 2000 democratic governments has been the full integration of Serbia into the EU and Partnership for Peace (PfP). Regarding the former, the discord however exists whether the EU membership will still be pursued if EU members recognize independence of Kosovo.⁵² Apart from that, in June 2003, Serbia submitted a formal request to join the PfP program and in November 2006, during the NATO summit in Riga, Serbia was invited to join PfP. Regarding accession to NATO, until recently, the official foreign policy goal of all three democratic governments was, ambiguously defined, Euro-Atlantic integration. However, since autumn 2007, the government rejected the term Euro-Atlantic integration and clarified its intention only towards European integration, i.e. EU. This happened because of the shift of DSS towards the opposition of accession to NATO because of the Kosovo status negotiations.⁵³ This moved DSS on towards national-libertarian pole of spectrum. Besides, Serbia participates in a number of regional security initiatives such as, for example, the Conference of Defense Ministers of Countries from South East Europe. Finally, SAF participate in a number of peacekeeping missions under UN mandate around the world. For that purpose, a Centre for Peacekeeping Operations has been recently established within the MO. Serbia thus far participated, with military observers or medical teams in the Ivory Coast, East Timor, Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi.⁵⁴ Approximately 100 people have participated in these activities in the course of the last few years. In the near future, field officers in a medical team will be deployed into Afghanistan and Lebanon.

51 Official website of Ministry of Defense of Republic of Serbia www.mod.gov.yu Accessed on August 1, 2007

52 Within the democratic bloc, DS, LDP and G17 plus insist that Serbia will seek membership regardless of resolution of Kosovo issue. DSS will abandon that goal if the EU accepts independent Kosovo. In patriotic bloc, both SRS and SPS declare themselves as eurosceptics and oppose membership in the EU.

53 Their newly adopted party program from October 2007 state that Serbia should permanently remain neutral regarding international military alliances.

54 However, Serbian soldiers have never participated in any NATO or EU missions.

Serbia still lacks national consensus on the concept of national security (Stojanović 2007). Serbia lacks Foreign Policy Strategy, National Security Strategy, Strategy of Defense and above mentioned laws on security and defense. There are currently two drafts of National Security Strategy that were separately prepared by teams of advisers to the Prime Minister and the President. One of them should probably be adopted in autumn 2007.⁵⁵ After the National Security Strategy, the next paper down the hierarchy of strategic documents is Strategy of Defense, which Serbia also doesn't have. A draft of Strategy of Defense, written in line with the PM's draft of National Security Strategy, was proposed by the MO in May 2007 and should be adopted by the end of 2007. According to the draft, the global security environment is characterized as increasingly uncertain and unstable (p.4). Substantially changed approach of Serbia to the international community and Euro Atlantic integration is said to positively affect Serbia's security (p.5). The document identifies that the biggest security threat to Serbia is resolution of final status of Kosovo which would not be in line with the international law, UN charter, Helsinki Final Act and the Constitution of Serbia - that is to say independence. This threat is followed by terrorism, armed uprising or aggression, separatist tendencies, national and religious extremism, organized crime, uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, natural and man made accidents and high tech cyber crime (p.7). Strategic Defense Review (SDR) which was adopted by the MO in June 2006 assessed biggest threats to the security of Serbia and the region in the following order: terrorism; uprising of illegal armed groups; national and religious extremism; organized crime and environmental and industrial catastrophes. The same document stipulated three missions of the SAF: defense of Serbia from military challenges, risks and threats; participation in development and maintenance of peace in the region and in the world and assistance to civilian authorities in countering non military threats to y security.

In sum, although there is a weakening political consensus on the accession to the EU among the democratic bloc, Serbia cannot reach political and societal consensus on most of the other foreign, security and defense matters. This is a consequence of the deeper division within Serbian society in relation to the interpretation of collective identity, the recent (Stojanović 2007) but also more distant past (Matić 1993, 1998, 2000) and the way forward to be taken regarding democratic consolidation and Euro-Atlantic integration.

In the following chapter, we turn to different layers of agency and their perspectives of the image of the soldier and armed force.

55 Although the two documents come from the so called 'democratic bloc' they substantially differ in wide array of issues. In short, although both strategies project the liberal-democratic identity of armed forces and society, PM's proposal has certain above mentioned national-libertarian elements as well. This reflects so far unsuccessful, policy of Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia, to overcome division of Serbia into two blocs. (Stojanović, 2007)

beliefs whenever discussion on security and defense is started. For example, when expressing their views against sending troops abroad, they often spell out above mentioned national-libertarian axiomatic beliefs. For example, in a recent discussion about the participation of SAF in international peacekeeping missions, one MP stated clearly expressed the civilizational ambivalence belief:

Throughout Serbian history, Serbia had prepared for the defence of its territory. We should hold to the slogan crafted by St.Sava: To be the East to the West and the West to the East, not to meddle into the affairs of great powers, to take care of our business and deal with our problems. (Barać 2004)⁶⁴

Although resistance vis-à-vis participation in NATO missions is greatest, for SRS it concerns the participation within the UN peacekeeping missions as well. For instance, in a recent parliamentary debate about participation of SAF in UN peacekeeping missions an MP from SRS stated that the “UN is nothing but a Trojan horse serving NATO, US and powerful western circles to implement their ideas, their further conquest” (Barać 2006). Another exemplary discourse was made in the Parliament by the leader of the SRS, Tomislav Nikolić, who spoke along the well known lines of *self importance* belief:

There are no Serbian children for peacekeeping operations outside of Serbian borders. There aren't! And if we do have children, and indeed we made our sons so they can defend the country, we didn't give them birth to defend foreign armies, but he who starts a war, anywhere in the world, he should bring it to an end by himself (Nikolić 2004)

What is surprising sometimes is how even the leaders from the democratic bloc adopt national-libertarian discourse when the issue touches upon security and defence. For example, discussing recently in the Parliament of Serbia and Montenegro the place of military profession in serbian tradition, late Foreign Minister of Serbia and Montenegro Vuk Drašković and president of SPO said that:

Military profession, along with painting, construction and literature, belongs to those professions which are especially appropriate for both Serbs and Montenegrins. Military skills and traditions belong to something which suits us well, something that, in a sense, we inherit. (Drašković 2004).

Another example is discourse of DSS which is increasingly shifting towards the national-libertarian pole. For instance, DSS adopted a declaration on armed neutrality of Serbia in October 2007. It builds on motives of independence and defiance that were discussed above. For instance the declaration says:

“Armed neutrality represents expression of honest determination of Serbia against politics of force, threatening peace in the world, aggression and war. [...] Abandonment of armed neutrality would oblige Serbia to participate in wars that are

64 32nd session of Parliament of Serbia and Montenegro, December 22, 2004.

not in its interest, limit its independence and freedom of decision making, threaten the lives of its citizens and encumber internal transformation and prosperity of the country”.⁶⁵

It is not difficult to see the similarity in the worldview of DSS and SRS about the hostility of external environment and malevolent nature of great powers and military alliance they form.

This discursive shift happens mainly because the negotiations on the status of Kosovo issue “Kosovized” all other political debates and agendas in Serbia. Put differently, the Kosovo issue threatens to further spill over national-libertarian discourse into the democratic bloc because it makes sense in the hearts and minds of the people and as such brings political points, support and legitimacy.

Another very important issue is what kind of strategic identity those two blocs construct and reproduce. The “patriotic bloc” largely remains in the spatial discursive construction of other. In other words, the main threats to national security of Serbia as seen by this bloc are geographically distinct political communities. Since the beginning of 1990s the patriotic bloc securitized a wide array of issues. The most prominent ones were the neighboring states and ethnic groups such as Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Albanians. Relations with Croatia and Bosnia to a large extent desecuritized firstly after the Dayton peace agreement in 1995 and more significantly after the fall of Milošević in October 2000. However, two securitized issues continued after the 2000. The first one is a Bosnian minority in Sandžak especially Wahabi groups. The second one is Albania and its population in Kosovo and South Serbia. The possibility of independence of Kosovo is arguably the biggest security problem in Serbia today. The fear of spill over of conflict triggered by unilateral declaration of independence into South Serbia and Vojvodina is often used as argument by the patriotic bloc and sometimes even by the members of the democratic bloc. Apart from the neighboring states, the patriotic bloc heavily securitized the relationship with the West. Partly due to the St Sava tradition of suspicion towards the intention of Europe, but more importantly due to the Western interventions against the Milošević nationalist regime during the 1990s the leaders, members and voters of these parties regard the West especially the US as a dangerous enemy of Serbia. Apart from concrete nations that were securitized, the political elites from this bloc securitized more abstract political configurations such as the Green Transversal (Muslims in the Balkans) Neo-liberal globalization and less visible centers of powers such as Vatican Opus Dei, Free Masonry, Trilateral commission, Bilderberg group, Council for Foreign Relations, Committee 300, free masonry etc. (For excellent overview see: Byford 2006). In sum, the patriotic bloc has modern and to a large extent antagonistic vision of national identity besieged by wide array of threats enemies generated mainly outside of the territory of Serbia. Its modern because its territorially defined, and its antagonist because its relation with the Other is much more based on the exclusion and cooperation than integration and

65 Source: www.dss.org.yu

amalgamation.

In contrast, during the rule of nationalist bloc in the 1990s, the Democratic opposition constantly attempted to shift the attention from external threats to Serbia to the regime and security sector of Serbia as the most dangerous actors. However, as it always the case, it is very difficult for any opposition to be effective securitizing actor especially if its designed threat is the state itself (Buzan 1998). The main political program after the fall of Milosevic and deconstruction of his nationalist regime was to desecuritize the relationship with the region and with the Western international community. The loss of external enemies had to be substituted with a new Other for the collective identity of political community to be preserved and its imagined borders reinforced. Arguably, this new Other was not anymore spatial but a temporal one. In other words, the new democratic political elite constructed Serbia and Balkans in the 1990s as its most radical other. The discourse on how Serbia should never go back to the times of ethnic cleansing, nationalism and war resembled on the post war discourse that has been driving forward European integration since the 1950s (Weaver 1998). However, an important transformation in identity construction occurred following the assassination of Democratic Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. Namely, the Self in the past as the threatening Other was complemented with a new threat, spatially located within the territorial space of Serbia, conspiracy of coalition of organized crime, paramilitary forces, secret service and nationalistic bloc against the democratic *acquis*. Thus the Self from the 1990s materialized into the internal enemy, partly visible (nationalistic political parties) and partly invincible (criminal groups and renegade parts of security sector). To sum up, since the democratic bloc engaged into post-modern discursive construction of Other through temporal articulation of different selves in the past as its main threat. However, after the new democratic pro-western regime was shaken by the Djindjić Assassination, the discourse shifted to a more spatial realm designing the threats within the territory of Serbia. The only common ground between the two blocs when it comes to security/identity puzzle is the issue of Kosovo. The unity between the two blocs regarding this issue mend the dividing lines in interpretation of national identity. However, such a position creates an atmosphere of collective cognitive dissonance inability to regarding the reality in Kosovo province and nationalistic euphoria that delays the process of democratization. Whatever the outcome of the negotiations, independence or autonomy, the issue of Kosovo will permanently pump new blood into national libertarian discourse thus burdening European and Euro-Atlantic ambitions of the democratic bloc. To sum up, democratic bloc construction of other and societal threats can be regarded as postmodern due to its temporal rather than spatial basis. Also, it is less antagonistic, because, given its most radical Other is itself in the past, it creates conditions for cooperation, integration and possibly amalgamation with territorially distinct Others, especially the one, created at the pan-European level.

5.5 Public Opinion

Public opinion is more difficult to subdue to discourse analysis than political leadership. However, the opinion polls do show certain tendencies and can serve as indicators of different political cultures. The public opinion on five issues will be relevant here. **Firstly**, it is opinion about international military deployment of SAF. According to the polls, the biggest share of the population (48%) is against participation of SAF in any peacekeeping operations whatsoever (Hadžić, Timotić 2006:129). A smaller part of the better educated citizens support such an idea (35.3%). However, the public generally supports the peacekeeping missions under UN mandate - 62% in 2005 (Hadžić and Timotić 2006: 129). This skepticism towards peacekeeping is partly due to an unresolved Kosovo issue at home but also due to a deeper skepticism of international military missions engrained in the Serbian political and strategic culture discussed in more depth above. The **second** important issue is public support for obligatory national service. According to the opinion polls there has been a stable support for the general and obligatory national service - 60.3% - while only 28.2% of citizens favor professional army (Hadžić, Timotić 2006: 118). One of the explanations for such an attitude may be, as Timotić argues, the fact that people fear high economic costs of professionalization (ibid: 118). Given that such a cost-benefit analysis is not based on valid information and estimation, we could guess that there may be another underlying explanation for this. National-libertarian macho norm that healthy Serbs should attend the army, which is 'people's dependence' and set up to perform territorial defense could help us understand this attitude. **Thirdly**, the public opinion about threat perception and friends and enemies can be indicative. As well, according to public opinion research conducted from 2002 until 2005, Serbian citizens assessed security threats in the following manner (Miroslav Hadžić and Milorad Timotić 2006). The biggest global threat is perceived to be conflicts over limited resources (25.3%). Such a fear of a threat on a global scale also reflects *national-libertarian* culture. Such a worldview of international politics as an arena in which great powers compete for natural resources derives from *national-libertarian* axiomatic belief of *independence and defiance* outlined before. This is closely followed by the clash of civilizations (22.4%) and the US preventive military interventionism (21.2%). Conflict between poor and rich occupies the fourth place (18.5%), while the threat no. 1 for the majority of Western countries - global terrorism - stands for Serbian citizens at the fifth place (18.2%) together with organized crime. Paradoxically, it seems that *national-libertarian* suspicion towards the West in general and the US in particular rendered Serbian people, though not its liberal-democratic elites, suspicious and critical about its major threats as well (i.e. Al Qaeda). Weapons of mass distraction (WMD) are feared by 12.9% of citizens while and ecological disasters (4.1%) lag far behind in threat perception among Serbian citizens. Regarding the threats to the security of Serbia, the hierarchy of perceived threats is somewhat different. Unsurprisingly, the biggest perceived threat is potential conflicts in multi-ethnic regions of Serbia (60%) in Kosovo, South Serbia, Sandžak and Vojvodina. Only half as threatening is perceived to be organized crime (32%) followed closely by economically and socially triggered conflicts

(29.5%). Fear of the re-emergence of wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia comes fourth (11.8%) while regional terrorism (10.4%) and another aggression by the NATO or US (10.2%) stand just behind on the fifth and sixth place in the hierarchy of perceived threats. Another important dimension of the threat perception is whom Serbians see as friends and whom as enemies. At the top of the friends list are Greece (42.7%), Russia (23.3%), Norway (7.1%) and China (7.1%). In contrast, the enemy list begins with Albania (63%), US (49.7%) and Germany (15.5%). The **fourth** issue is the support of the Serbian people for Euro Atlantic security integration (Hadžić, Timotić 2006) Regarding the Partnership for Peace program there is a steady trend of increasing support which is at the moment around 72%. The main assumption behind this popular support is a belief that Serbian membership in the Program would improve the security of Serbs in Kosovo or even prevent independence of the province from Serbia. So, for the citizens PfP is not important regarding the contribution of SAF to security of the Euro-Atlantic region but as leverage for national and territorial defense. Regarding the support for Serbian membership in NATO, there is as well an increase but at a much lower level, at the moment around 32 % of the population (Stojanović 2007:102). The opposition to NATO accession decreases in response to perceived acts of pressure imposed on Serbia by the West.⁶⁶ This again fits well into the template for action provided by the axiomatic belief in *civilizational-ambivalence*, discussed at length above. Also, as one would suggest from the *national-libertarian* cultural constraints, a significant percentage of Serbs - 48% - is against participation in international military peace missions (Hadžić, Timotić 2006). Such citizens believe that Serbian soldiers shouldn't give life for other nation's interests, especially for the US national interests.

Fifthly and finally, it is worthwhile looking at the legitimacy that the SAF enjoys in the public. Despite its controversial role during the 1990s when Serbia lost four consecutive wars, up until June 2003 the AF was the institution with the strongest support in the public. This paradox peaked just after the defeat against NATO in 1999, when the SAF enjoyed 83% of the popular support (ibid). As Chief of Staff General Zdravko Ponoš recently put it "we were rocked to sleep in a belief that the people loves us and supports us regardless of what we do, which was not true" (Ponoš 2007). However, in October 2003 the support for the army started its decrease. It was firstly surpassed by the Serbian Orthodox church and then in 2005 by the education system as well. This was the result of several factors, including several corruption affairs, unresolved murders and bizarre suicides of soldiers but also, paradoxically the increasing feeling of security from external threats among the citizenry.⁶⁷

In summary there is obviously a gap between the threat perception in official documents and threat perception of the general public. Firstly, there is a gap between what the political

66 For a lengthy discussion on Serbian debates on NATO accession and public opinion polls regarding this question see: Western Balkans Security Observer, No 5, April- June 2007 and Hadžić M. Timotić M. eds. (2006) *Javnost i Vojska*, Centre for Civil Military Relations, Belgrade.

67 75% of citizens feel totally safe. See Hadžić, Timotić 2006.

elite securitized as the biggest threat - Kosovo independence and terrorism - and what citizens see as the most threatening - conflict over resources and multiethnic violence. This gap is terminological one because terrorism from Kosovo is what can cause multiethnic violence. But it also reflects the state's concern about its formal prerogatives and sovereignty and people's concern about the real violence and human security. Regarding the question of friends and enemies, we can see another gap between the popular and elite perception. If foreign policy was a direct reflection of people's feelings, Serbia would be in alliance with Russia and China. Contrary, it would have severely securitized relationships with the US and Germany. In contrast to that, Serbia's official foreign policy preferences show much greater inclination towards the perceived "enemies" such as the US, Germany and the West in general. This is so because, since 2000, three *liberal-democratic* governments have succeeded each other.

5.6 The Church and the Army

In this chapter, the text will analyse the influence of Church on the armed forces in Serbia. It has already been mentioned above that Serbian Orthodox Church is one of the main generators and agencies of the national-libertarian discourse. In a contemporary Serbia, although the Serbian Orthodox Church officially doesn't ally with any political powers, as Gacesa puts it, the pendulum of the Serbian Orthodox Church's official policy apparently inclines towards the radical nationalist pole (Gaćeša 2006: 66). During the 1990s, the Army started opening up to the ideas of the Orthodox right in spite of the fact that it was formally under the control of leftist political parties. This was especially the case with the ideas of Nikolaj Velimirovic, the writing of the fascists and antisemites such as for example Dragoš Kalajić (Byford 2006: 217-219). Nevertheless, the relationship between the Army and the old communist establishment still prevalent in the SAF at the time, remained tense. For instance, during the 1990s the Army still refused to introduce religious service for its soldiers, something which was finally done after the democratic change of 2000. However, apart from those tensions between the new Orthodox right and the old communist military establishment, these two groups had a common enemy: the West and its New World Order. This fact led to, if not coalition, then certainly peace among the two streams.

The events in October 2000 marked the end of Milosevic's regime. With the regime, other remnants of communist establishment, including from SAF, went to the dustbin of history as well. Notwithstanding the fact that parts of the old general's corps remained in active duty for quite some time, the democratic changes removed the last obstacles for the clericalization of the AF.⁶⁸ In search of its new identity, the AF found its new source of identification in Orthodox Christianity, while the military organization established a special relationship with the Orthodox Church. For example, already in December 2000, the Chief of Staff's

68 General Chief of Staff Nebojša Pavković remained in office until 2002.

Directorate for Moral organized a round table about religious questions in the Army on the occasion of the launching of the initiative to introduce clerical service in the Yugoslav Army. Among other invited experts spoke prominent antisemites and radical clero-nationalists from anti-western and anti-liberal circles. Serious criticism was spelled out against Western Civilization as destructive and aggressive, especially towards Serbia and its people. Father Gavrilovic proposed christianization of the armed force with the aim of the defence of Serbia from “fanatic Croatian Roman-Catholicism and blinded mujahedeen Islam” (ibid, str.252). On the same occasion it was mentioned that “religions in our society, although equal before the law, are unequal before our national culture and history, that is to say, they don't make the same contribution to national culture and preservice of national *self-importance* and statal selfsufficiency of Serbian people” (Petakov 2007:29).⁶⁹

In the years that followed this process was intensified (Byford 2006: 246-262). Journals such as *Vojno delo*, *Vojska*, *Vojni informator* and *Odbrana* regularly published articles which glorified the importance of anti-liberal ideas for the spiritual revival of the Serbian nation and especially the Army. In 2002, an epyscope for cooperation with the Army was appointed (Porfirije). In April 2002, he led the military visit to the monastery Hilandar in Mounth Athos in Greece. A group of military officers and a military unit was for the first time collectively baptized in a Monastery Vavaedenje near Čačak in 2004 (Petakov 2007: 35). In September 2005 the army proudly announced to the public that it consulted the Church concerning the draft of the Strategy of Defence (Byford 2006: 253). Finally, even strategic documents are decorated with religious symbols. For example, the White Paper on Defence is decorated with religious symbols and icons.⁷⁰

The above described process of clericalization of the SAF happened for several reasons. The Army lost its old sources of identification and legitimization personified by Tito and Milosevic regime. Meanwhile, the wider societal and poltical environment established newrelationship with Serbian Ortodox Church. Therefore, Church found in the Army an easy ground for the advancement of its clerical influence. In return, the SAF perceives the Serbian Ortodox Church as a protector of its deteriorating image after a series of corruption affairs and increasing unpopularity of Armed Forces within the younger population.

69 After having published a collection of papers from this conference under the title Military and Faith, publication house Vojska published another book focusing on Orthodox Christianity. Its title is Orthodoxy and War, written by Borisav Grozdić, creator of the idea of introducing the clerical service in the VS. The content of this book is similar to the book Military and Faith.

70 On page 99 of the White Paper on Defence of Serbia and Montenegro, there is an icon of White Angel stretched over the whole page. The White Paper on Defence: State Union Serbia and Montenegro, Vojska, Beograd, April 2005.

6. Conclusion

This paper has argued that the normative model of ideal type military in Serbia can be conceptualized as a tension between two opposing traditions: *national-libertarian* and *liberal-democratic*. While the former proscribes the values of independence, defiance and civilizational ambiguity the latter favours integration, compromise and alliance with the West. In addition, the two political cultures construct two different visions of national identity. The two opposing models of identity in Serbia often see each other as the most radical threat. Such a cultural bipolarization creates a strategic culture of *paralysis*. While the patriotic bloc sees the utility of military force in a more territorial defensive fashion, the democratic bloc perceives the military as an asset for international integration and under such a light, in a more peace-keeping and far from territory projecting way. This disables the creation of national consensus on the question of what is the purpose of the Armed Force. Furthermore such a bipolarization creates strategic schizophrenia. In other words, Serbia aims at the same time both to continue with Euro-Atlantic integration (NATO and EU) and come closer to the Russian Federation. For example, it simultaneously uses Russian support for the Kosovo issue against the EU and US proposals for the province's independence while aspiring to join the EU and possibly NATO. Such a contradiction between Serbia's two foreign policy priorities, Kosovo and EU, perpetuates the culture of *civilizational ambivalence* vis-à-vis the past, the spiritual, and the East on the one hand and the future, the material and the West on the other. Finally, such a bipolarization fuels a completely reactive foreign policy and turns Serbia more into an object than into a subject of international relations.

The paper also sketched the main features of defense reform, international security integration and civil-military relations in Serbia since the start of democratization process. It was shown that, despite their minor divergences, the political elites that have been in power have been attempting to build foreign, security and defense policy and armed force in line with *liberal-democratic* values and Serbian geo-political reality. However, as the paper have shown, *national-libertarian* beliefs and values are constraining their efforts. The strenght of the constraints is particularly amplified with the increasing grip of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the stronghold of *national-libertarianism*, over the Military.

In short, the attempted construct of the normative model of ideal-type soldier in Serbia can hardly be entitled *democratic*. Notwithstanding radical discursive transformation done by the democratic political elite, the *national libertarianism* is still important and widespread system of beliefs which influences the evolution of foreign and security policy as well as the armed forces and is most probably here to stay for a long time.

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