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Brand and Strategy of Branding of the Croatian Armed Forces in the Context of Psychological Combat Readiness and the Art of War

Marina Svrze, Dina Žižić, Mijo Knezović

Abstract

The aim of the research in the first theoretical section is to throw light on and identify the link between Psychological Combat Readiness (NATO's Morale and Unit Effectiveness), perception, brand and branding in the context of the art of war. Through theoretical elaboration of relevant authors and examples from the history, the link between the stated terms has been identified as well as their importance in the context of the human factor – Psychological Combat Readiness in armed conflicts. In the second empirical section the research results validate the quality of the Croatian Armed Forces within the context of a brand as well as public perception and high regard for the CAF in that context. However, the results of the research point towards the need for further development through two synchronised development directions: the development of the brand identity and communication strategy aimed at improvement of the public perception of the brand, with the goal of maintaining and developing the power of the state and ensuring competitiveness in current security and defence environment.

Key words

Croatian Armed Forces, Psychological Combat Readiness, perception, moral, brand, branding, war, Clausewitz, trinity

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Introduction

The Croatian Armed Forces have emerged from the very nucleus of the Croatian people, rooted in the Article VII of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and evolved during the Croatian War of Independence. They were established in natural environment and although they lacked ideal conditions for initial peaceful development, the conditions for justification of their constitutional role were abundant.

Later development of the Republic of Croatia, its positioning in international organizations, the EU, NATO and the UN, and its participation in international peace support, peace-making and peace building missions in areas of conflict worldwide was substantiated by the active role of the Croatian Armed Forces. The historically intertwined relationship continues to develop to these days and in the current environment, affirming that "since their establishment, the Croatian Armed Forces have been the fulcrum and the pivot of all state activities" (Bilandžić, 2008).

Similar to armies of other states, the Croatian Armed Forces, being part of the state's identity in which they are rooted, have a responsible role because they influence the public perception i.e. the perception of the population. It is hard to draw a clear line between the two subjects because this is a mutual relationship of constant interaction that fits into the closed circle of interdependence of life on Earth. In the process of constant changes, the two influence each other. This is not a relationship of exclusion but quite the opposite; they build on and complement each other. This mutual influence should be constantly observed and developed in the context of influence and development of moral i.e. psychological and spiritual factors that provide base for numerous successes and failures (a term Psychological Combat readiness - PCR will be used further in the text)².

² Use of the term: moral, morale (different from the moral, Gray, 2010. and Pavlina, Komar (ed.), 2003.), esprit de cops, physical forces, moral forces, moral elements, moral factor... can create a confusion in the understanding of the meaning of these terms, their translation and contextualization in the Croatian language. Rather than providing a detailed analysis of the terms related to psychological and spiritual factors, this paper will employ the term Psychological Combat Readiness – PCR (Pavlina, Komar ed., 2003.), more precisely the Croatian model of PCR which encompasses society, military, unit and a soldier (Filjak T.,

In accordance with the text above, the goal of the research in the theoretical section was to explore and identify the relationship between the PCR aspects and the perception regarding success in the art of war.

In further research the concepts of the brand identity and brand image have been considered as well as the connection with PCR and the perception in the context of the art of war. The empirical section of the research has corroborated that current public perception of the Croatian Armed Forces is that of the brand identity. The result of the research will contribute to further development of the identity of the Croatian Armed Forces and consequently military and civilian PCR i.e. the totality of the state power of the Republic of Croatia.

In the context of the above mentioned, the scientific research had a task to provide answer to the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the current public perception of the Croatian Armed Forces?

RQ2: Do the Croatian Armed Forces have the potential to develop in the context of the brand and branding strategy?

The research draws its relevance from the fact that it was conducted before and after the crises that Croatia has been facing, i.e. before and after the Zagreb Earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic.

2002.), which has not been adopted as Croatian STANAG 2565. "The term PCR, has been used since the beginning of the Croatian War of Independence as a broader term, providing the sum of an individual psychological readiness of all members of the unit/cell, and so much more: the cohesion and enthusiasm in the unit, readiness to help one another as well as trust put in the commander as their leader" (Filjak S. and Trlek, 2014.). In this regard, the aim is to show that a man, with all perfections and imperfections is a key agent in the art of war and this fact cannot and must not be overlooked when war and warfare are considered. The paper does not strive to clearly define the terms due to the lack of consesus among the authors regarding the use of the terms, including the authors cited in this paper and the wider scientific and expert community. However, we believe that considerations elaborated in this paper will provide a context for the subject of the research. In order to ensure the precision in citing the authors, the original English citations were retained. For example, Clausewitz has recognized the importance of these factors and the term morale in his texts included: morale, spiritual strength, cognitive and emotional processes, esprit de corps...emphasizing in this way that invisible, intangible and incalculable still presented the key factor in wars and conflicts that he analysed.

Psychological combat readiness and perception in the theory of war/warfare

"It does not rule, it plays."

C. Gray

Human history is permeated with testimonies of numerous conflicts and wars. This fact or awareness can bring us to the statement that "war is essentially a human activity" (Storr, 2009). Similar thoughts are exemplified in Heraclitus: "War is father of all, and king of all. He renders some gods, others men; he makes some slaves, others free." (Mikecin, 2017). The war needs to be accepted as one of the phenomena of the human existence, whose initial development can be found in the conflict of two opinions that leads to the final act of war and murder committed among humans, regrettably singling out the man from other living creatures. We should be aware of all of its negative aspects and rather than ignoring it, we should study it in order to avoid facing the consequences of its manifestations, regardless if it is fair or unjust.

The power and consequences of war is also described by following quote:

"War is hugely important. It can shape continents, and can do so dramatically quickly. Four Empires ceased to exist as a result of the 52 months of the Great (or the First World) War. Eight new countries were born in Europe. As a result of the six years of the Second World War, the border of the Soviet Union was effectively moved over 800 km west, to the Oder (if not the Elbe). Japan and Germany renounced militarism. They ceased to be major players on the world stage for decades. Regrettably, war is hugely important." (Storr, 2018).

The importance of the Psychological Combat Readiness in the art of war

"War is produced by, and receives its form from, the ideas, feelings and relations which obtain at the moment it breaks out"

Clausewitz (Foch, 1920)

It can be said for each conflict that it has two dimensions. Although the scientific and expert communication about war is preoccupied with the physical dimension, historical testimonies by war commanders indicate the importance of PCR. Marshal Foch speaks about the capital value of this aspect while pointing out that victory is secured when the enemy loses faith in its objectives. In quoting von der Goltz's contention that destroying enemy's hope of victory is more efficient than its physical destruction, Marshal Foch sees the war as the area of moral force, victory as the PCR superiority over the defeated, and battle as the combat of two wills (Foch, 1920). This dimension of the influence and importance has been recognized by other military theoreticians, such as Miyamoto Musashi, stating in his Five Rings that "warrior skills have their eyes focused on heart and mind of the people participating in combat", and final victory is realized by diminishing bravery: by use of arms, bodies or minds for as long as the adversary is zealous, they will hardly give in. The aim is to "make the adversary feel defeated from the bottom of their heart" (Musashi, 2008), or as Beaufre says "in this dialectics of the will the solution is to instigate such a psychological event as to convince an adversary that it is useless to start or continue to fight" (Beaufre, 1968). In his ruminations on military skills, Saxe devoted much of his attention to tactical concepts and techniques, however while analysing the battles he recognized and emphasized the key importance of the other dimension. He claimed that the overall success lied in the heart, and the problem was that the natural faults of the heart and its influence on battle were ignored. "Without a knowledge of the human heart, one is dependent upon the favour of fortune, which is sometimes very inconstant", adding that "It is not big armies that win battles; it is the good ones." (Saxe, 2007).

In his book *The Human Face of War*, based on the results of his analyses of battles, Storr also sees the PCR aspect as crucial, and in the paradigm he sets up Storr gives the key role in warfare back to the man, i.e. to the individual, pointing out that every soldier is making the decision individually by starting to believe that he is beaten, that he needs to surrender or that he needs to give up, regardless of its objectivity. Furthermore, in his book Storr puts more stress on tactical level, pointing out that the aim of the manoeuvre or arms effect is to reduce the individual and collective participation in the war by influencing the will and breaking the cohesion (physical and social), primarily by virtue of shock, surprise and suppression (Storr, 2009).

The importance of the PCR dimension for the outcome of the war was also identified by Boyd who singled it out as a separate category. According to Boyd, one of the categories of conflict is a *moral conflict*. By reviewing the ideas and experiences of Clausewitz, Balck and Falls, Boyd found that the aim of *moral conflict* is "to destroy moral bonds that permit an organic whole to exist" by employing "surface, fear, anxiety, and alienation in order to generate many non-cooperative centres of gravity, as well as subvert those that the adversary depends upon, thereby magnify internal friction" (Boyd, 2007).

Considerations of the above mentioned theoretical foundations and highlighted hidden tacit knowledge of war participants who fortunately have not remained hidden in their minds, but gave bases for further development of knowledge and secured the appropriate adaptation of organizations to new circumstances, bring us to musings of Clausewitz.

Clausewitz also points out that PCR does not only "permeates war as a whole" but also has the "the most decisive influence conduct of war" (Clausewitz, 2010). By analysing wars and battles, Clausewitz puts PCR as equal to the physical dimension, emphasizing its importance because it is linked to the will which moves all forces, directs them and brings them together, concluding that the will is in fact the PCR item. The importance of will in the context of war/warfare is illustrated by the comprehensive RAND research in historical examples of wars, its frequent occurrence in doctrines and computer simulations, war games, etc. which did not consider will sufficiently as "indelible human nature of warfare" (Connable, B.

Et Al, 2019). Clausewitz identifies the importance of the PCR dimension in the climate of war as made of: danger, physical effort, suspense and randomness, underlining that it is difficult to quantify it as a physical dimension because, as he claims, it wants "to see and feel". Physical causes and actions seem "the wooden handle, whilst the moral are the noble metal, the real bright-polished weapon" (Clausewitz, 2010). PCR factor is often neglected in peacetime, when armies tend to use the old methods, forgetting what revives the war, and falling into the trap of attracting the material and tangible, and forgetting its importance during drills and manoeuvres. PCR factor is difficult to understand in peacetime, especially if the study of military thought is neglected and the state of "sheer psychological inertia" as Clausewitz calls it, sets in (Foch, 1920, Clausewitz, 1997).

However, Clausewitz's key contribution to the military thought on understanding the war/warfare is the concept of "a wonderful trinity"³ (in German *Eine wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit*). Clausewitz's trinity is the core of his theory on understanding the war and tendencies to find the universality of war, i.e. its nature, the essence of war, and moving away from the wish to define the character of war inclined, as Fleming points out, to change along its natural progression (Fleming, 2014).

By putting the war in the context of dialectics and search for the truth between the identified tendencies (a. primordial/original violence, hatred and enmity; b. the play of chance and probability, c. politic/policy; reason) in the space between true violence without which the war cannot actually start, through the politics which provides the objective/purpose/motif while engaging with it in the game of probability and randomness, it can be concluded that physical factors cannot either start, lead and stop the war or give it the meaning. If this statement is connected to the Clausewitz's contention on interactive connection of war and environment and impossibility to separate it from the social reality, illustrated by the metaphor of a chameleon, it is

³ For the purpose of this paper, several authors offered a translation of "On War": Graham, Howard, et al., Ministry of Defence and Lazarević, who translated the trinity and tendencies in different ways. In this paper, we will focus on the following English translation: trinity – a wonderful trinity, and tendencies are: a) primordial/original violence, hatred and enmity; b) the play of chance and probability, c) politic/policy; reason

possible to say that PCR factors weaken or enhance the passions of the population, increase or decrease the power of the army and finally give or take power from politics. It needs to be stressed that this cannot be considered through simplification and consecutively as a single interactive fluctuating system which affects one another and creates effects (detailed explanation: Beyerchen, 1992, Fleming, 2014, Waldman, 2009, Summers, 1982). "War is evolutional and dynamic" (Storr, 2009).

Through the concept of "a wonderful trinity" Clausewitz has not only pointed out the true and the real which do not change when it comes to understanding war as well as the importance of PCR, but also the need and importance of the concept of brand and branding strategy of the military in the context of synergistic interaction between the military and civilian population, which will be elaborated later in the paper.

In order to support his statement on the influence of passion as the determinant factor, Clausewitz provides the example of the Russian resistance to Napoleon, when Russians turned the desperate situation into victory, when the heart and temperament of the people, through engagement of militia⁴, contributed to the overall equation of their public policy, war potential and combat strength (Clausewitz, 1997).

A similar example is shown in the Finnish SISU concept during the Winter War or the Soviet-Finnish War (1939-1940), and finally the proof of Clausewitz's statements has been confirmed by the results of Fleming's research of the trinity in examples of the resistance of the town of Vukovar during the Croatian War of Independence and the resistance of Sarajevo during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These results have shown that the dominance of PCR over the physical factor was the decisive factor

⁴ Reserve. In the military thought and practice of the 19th century, the German army, led by Prussia and Scharnhorst, regained a key role after this idea was presented by von Below. It was from this great mobilization of the reserve and militia of soldiers that they drew power and proved superiority in the "cruel courtroom of struggle" (Gray, 1992). It can be said: a logical sequence of thinking with regard to the position of Germany, the required mass and support to ensure sufficient military power to achieve local superiority, but also to protect the depth. But this potential was not recognized in World War II, when "the Germans began building internal defences three years after the start of the war and a year after the first mass Allied air strikes" (Michalski, 1969).

in resistance to Serbian tactics and strategy, which caused stalling and difficulties in Serbian intentions to realize their operational and strategic goals (Fleming, 2014), particularly during key moments at the beginning of war, since "the beginning of the battle is the most important issue of the warrior skills" (Musashi, 1981). PCR, not physical, factor can be evaluated in the war, especially through the loss of territory and supremacy of the reserve component, because, "The faster one's own reserves have shrunk in relation to the enemy's, the more it has cost to maintain the balance … thus the amount of reserves spent is an accurate measure on the loss of morale!" (Clausewitz, 2010).

Fleming's research confirms the assertions by Clausewitz and Moltke on difficulties in overcoming the differences between the war on paper and in reality, i.e. on the need to overcome the thing that can never be experienced in theory, the friction, as Clausewitz calls it, "which cannot, as in mechanics, be reduced to a few points, is everywhere in contact with chance, and brings about effects that cannot be measured, just because they are largely due to chance". (Clausewitz, 2010)

Furthermore, the importance of PCR is prominent also in "the game of probability and chance" in which war commanders/armies give the volume to the war with their courage and talent through the game of strategy and manoeuvring between a. political goals/motive and b. blind natural forces of violence, the root of everything, hatred and animosity among masses of people, and with their creative mental process they divide successful strategies from the unsuccessful ones, thus confirming that "the only source of creativity in war has to be human" (Gray, 2010).

All of this leads us to a realization that war is nothing else than human activity, relationship between people, simply and metaphorically shown as two humans – two wrestlers, according to Clausewitz, two swordsmen according to Musashi or as the Sun Tzu points out "fighting against a large number (of people) is the same as fighting against the small (number)", and the rest is only the thing of connection between them and the unorthodox (indirect) and orthodox (direct) methods (Szun Tzu, 1997 and 2009).⁵

⁵ There are different translations of expressions Cheng and Chi from Sun Tzu's the Art

The relationship between perception and Psychological Combat Readiness

Earlier considerations lead us toward the words of Joseph de Maistre: "A battle lost is a battle one thinks one has lost; for a battle cannot be lost physically" (Foch, 1920). If we consider these words in the context of perception, we can conclude that actually "human perception leads to the result of war" (Storr, 2009) and that "Positions are seldom lost because they have been destroyed, but almost invariably because the leader has decided in his own mind that the position cannot be held" (Vandegrift, 1944). If we link this to the earlier considerations and examples on the importance of PCR, the connection and the importance of PCR in the context of the power of perception is recognized, however it can be said that the aim of the physical act in war is to gain effect on human perception. As Clausewitz points out: "All war presupposes human weakness, and seeks to exploit it" (Clausewitz, 2010). However, it should not be forgotten that "in war the chief incalculable is the human will..." (Hart Liddell, 1991), which can be brought into context of the above mentioned friction.

War is susceptible to irrationality due to all circumstances in which it is waged, and with it come the weaknesses caused by perception and PCR, because the previous examples demonstrated the degree of influence of PCR on human perception. While considering perception, it should not be overlooked that "the changes in (information) technology and human culture have enhanced the potential influence of this activity to unprecedented levels of significance to the conduct of war." It can be said that "the perception aspect is central to the conduct of conflicts", hence "it requires the perception issue

of War, such as: orthodox/unorthdox, direct/indirect, and they can also be translated as correct/incorrect, clear/sudden, open/hidden. Taizong from the Tang dynasty defined them as cycles in the art of changing the perception of the adversary by virtue of manoeuvre warfare. Similar opinion is given by Kautilya (317 – 293 BC), an Indian advisor and thinker: a) open war), b) concealed war, and c) silent war (Kautalya, 2000, Boesch, 2003). We could connect these to the following expressions that are very popular today: hybrid, low-intensity conflicts, gray area operations, new generations of war, Gerasim's doctrine, and the like...... and to the expression liminal warefare/manoeuvre (more details in Kileullen, 2020), which brings it back within the boundaries of the theory of manoeuvre warfare.

to be included as a central element in the planning process, understanding that perceptions are the only bridge between the tactical actions and the strategic goals" (Shabtai, 2019). Modern security and defence environment, and an informational landscape which makes it challenging is confronting perception with numerous challenges (for more details refer to: Mackey, 1992, Sardar 2010, Ramírez and Wilkinson, 2016, Cascio, 2020, Kurzweil, 2003, Harari Y. N., 2018). For example, information crises as considered by Viktorija Car and Jelena Jurišić, including fake news - the plague of journalism, as Tanja Grmuša calls them, digital transformations (transferring business into the digital sphere, relying on artificial intelligence, algorithms) together with the issue of clickbaits as a way of manipulation of context in research of Beck, Kanižaj and Stela Lechpammer (for more details refer to: Jurišić and Kuduzović, ed. 2021) All these present a challenge to perception. Beside imposing PCR as the key multiplier of the power of perception, these challenges require all members at all levels of military organization, the chain of command in particular, to have high level of information literacy⁶ as ultimate and essential literacy in modern information landscape (Špiranec, Sanja and Banek Zorica, Mihaela, 2008), but also as first lines of defence.

Finally, we can infer that PCR and perception have always played a key role in the context of the outcome of war/warfare, which makes sense if we consider the human essence of warfare. This fact alongside the synergy of the military and civilian population make it necessary to consider the process of perception of the Croatian Armed Forces by the Croatian public and population within the concept of brand and branding in order to realize as much of synergy between them as possible.

The whole consideration so far should not be viewed only through the stereotype of war/warfare as a fight between soldiers. It should be viewed in the wider context of all forms of threats to state interests and weakening of the power of a state, even an alliance. Naturally, this consideration implies the mirror consideration, in the context of strategies of suppression of violence/conflicts/war, meaning: to act upon that part of the trinity, the

⁶ Information literacy implies media literacy, computer literacy, digital literacy, ecomedia literacy

area of natural drives, passions which, not without reason, Clausewitz give precedence in his concept of the essence of war.

Theoretical framework of brand and branding of the state

"The reputation of an organization becomes personal just as soon as it is an honor to belong to it".

Marshal Maurice de Saxe, 1696-1750

In compliance with the viewpoint of Božo Skoko, brand is too wide a term to be narrowed down in a usual way to a logo-mark, logotype or slogan. It certainly covers that area too, in a way that its identity becomes visual; however, brand requires identity through senses, something that is not immediately discernible, but is contained in the brand (Skoko, 2004). Other relevant authors agree that there is a deeper sense behind the visual aspect, visual and aural factors are important; however, expanding the conscience about the brand is necessary too. In order to achieve this, it is crucial to have a brand identity (Keller, 1993, Dinnie, 2007). Nevertheless, the epitome of the concept of brand has been shown by Skoko with the example of the building of the brand of the Croatian Armed Forces. He points out that the personality of brand has two parts: head - rational facts that speak about the brand itself, and heart - emotional values and associations that are attributed to it. Thus, the trend of building a brand should be directed firstly towards the development of the identity of the Croatian Armed Forces themselves, i.e. towards formulating basic communication values and architecture of the brand of Croatian Armed Forces (based on history, present, war and peace). Furthermore, reinforcing the internal communication, creation of the sense of belonging, cohesion and pride of the Croatian Armed Forces bring us to the brand. Simply speaking, the Croatian Armed Forces as an 'umbrella brand' (Skoko, 2021).

In the theory of brand and branding we recognize two terms which are critical in considerations of this paper: it is the brand identity and brand image. In the context of communication theory, identity is created and managed by the sender, exemplified in the economic discourse by a company, whereas image

would represent the perception of the buyer. To put it simply, the company packs the message of the brand in the form of identity, and buyer unpacks it in the form of the image. In this communication environment the intention is to reduce to a minimum the gap between the reality of the company and the perception of the buyer, to synchronize everything in order to ensure loyalty, trust or to the contrary: to prevent the brand from weakening or being ignored (Adidam, 2007). This is exactly the purpose and the goal of the strategy of branding: to serve as a process of bridging between the identity and image, i.e. shaping the identity in a positive discourse as something that makes the difference in relation to others, as something that *is* on one hand and influences the improvement of image, i.e. the public perception.

Beside the most familiar environment - economic, strategies of branding are also applied at the state levels. Branding of the state is more "complex, however it essentially comes down to the same presumptions" (Skoko, 2004). In modern world branding of the state is becoming increasingly important and the number of states interested in enhancing their influence in modern interactions is also increasing. Thus, the increase in the area of scientific researches within the framework of branding of states has been noted. Unlike the branding of a product, branding of the state encompasses more disciplines outside classic strategies of branding. Moreover, this is a "highly politicized activity, which generates the phenomenon of zealous and often conflicted standpoints and opinions" (Dinnie, 2007). The aim of branding of the state is to "enhance its distinction, associate positive values and associations with it along with other quality traits". However, when it comes to the strategy of branding it is important that it does not succumb, as Skoko put it, to the greatest of the sins, which is to promise too much, and then fails to deliver (Skoko, 2004) because the strategy of branding should primarily ensure and develop mutual trust.

Branding of the state, although this is a relatively new concept, is increasingly preoccupying scientists and experts. It has become an increasingly popular concept in the modern world, and we can find relevant information on the necessity and positive effects of that strategy on the public perception in a series of researches and examples, as well as examples of the organizational support to the implementation of that strategy.

The latest example that needs to be highlighted is the Irish fusion of branding and economic measures conducted by the special group at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has been building its identity over centuries through the famous state agency British Council, founded in 1934. Beside it, the BBC and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (succeeded by The Foreign and Commonwealth Office - FCO in 2020) have been entrusted to "pursue our national interests and project the UK as a force for good in the world. We promote the interests of British citizens, safeguard the UK's security, defend our values, reduce poverty and tackle global challenges with our international partners". In the US, one of the elements for implementation of the strategy is the United States Agency for global Media (USAGM), together with the *Voice of America* and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Likewise, we have the example of the German Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) initiating the project with the proposal for later official strategy. Their aim was to influence the change in public perception of Germany as cold, uncreative, unexciting, 'mechanical' state with no emotions, as well as to change the negative public perception in the context of Germany's presentation as the Europe's instigator (more detailed in Skoko, 2004., USAGM, 2021., Dinnie, 2007., Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2021). The UN Department of Global Communications expanded their story through traditional and digital media in order to secure support for their work, realize their goals and gain the trust of the external subjects (UN, Department of Global Communications, 2021).

In regard to the topic of branding in the area of security and defence sector, NATO can be singled out as an example of organization which recognized the importance of a brand needed to improve public conscience and understanding of NATO in order to emphasize the importance of building public trust and support (NATO, 2021). A good example of the defence industry's influence on national branding strategy and support to the

⁷ The original text taken from https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office/about).

strategy is Russia, as explained in the research by Danilova and Vorozhtsov (Danilova and Vorozhtsov, 2018).

The strategy of branding of the state with one key part – international communication and projections of the influence on external factors, can also be seen through the concept of Joseph Nye - *soft and smart power* (Nye, 2012, Skoko and Kovačić, 2009) or *sharp power* (Walker, 2018).

However, the strategy of branding can also be considered through realization of the influence on the domestic public perception and/or population to support the maintenance and development of psychological factors in population and military, as a key factor in reaching the goals of the warfare and state interest, which was discussed in the previous chapter and which is the focus of this paper.

In this context, we can recognize the psychological factor as a key factor in securing the interests of a state through theoretical frameworks of the power of a state and elements of power which constitute the foundation to build on and maintain the power of a state and make the source of utilization of the instruments of the state power (*Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economic (DIME)* (Table 1). The table shows that the authors have recognized the importance of psychological and spiritual factors of the population in development of the power of a state. Their idea was acknowledged by the German author Guido Ficher who singled out the elements of power on the eve of World War II by grouping them into three categories. Moreover, he accentuated the psychological factor as a separate category which united the economic flexibility, art of invention, perseverance and ability to adapt. The rest of the two factors are political and economic (Aron, 2010).

Table 1. An overview of the elements of power

#	Spykman	H. J. Morgenthau	Rudolf Steinmetz	Heffington, Oler and Tretler
1.	surface of the territory	geography	population	natural resources
2.	type of border	natural resources	dimension of the territory	geography
3.	population number	industrial capacities	wealth	human capital
4.	existence or non-existence of raw materials	military readiness	political institutions	economy
5.	economic and technological development	population	quality of military commanding	industry
6.	financial strength	national character	national unity and cohesion	R&D/ technology
7.	ethnic homogeneity	national morale	earned respect and international friends	infrastructure
8.	degree of social integration	quality of diplomacy	moral quality	government
9.	political stability			culture
10.	national spirit			national will
11.				international
111.				reputation
12.				*

^{*} In explanation of bibliography it is stated that even "data" can be considered as the element of power, although it was not singled out in the text.

Sources: Aron, R. (2010) *Mir i rat među narodima*. Golden marketing. Zagreb.; Heffington et al. (2020), *A national Security Strategy Primer*. National War College. National Defense University. Washington D. C.

Empirical research - discussion

In order to get an insight into perception, view and relation of the public towards the Croatian Armed Forces, a research has been conducted by applying the questionnaire as the research method which is attached to this paper.

The research was conducted in the Republic of Croatia, in the period between March 10 and April 1, 2020 by using an anonymous questionnaire constructed at the Google docs page: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeJxlUTm8iWH6M8Hd46O426Oy0vqvU5XazosFL9XzcPzGFoPQ/viewform (Appendix 1).

The research was conducted on the sample of Croatia's population not employed in the Croatian MoD or the Armed Forces. It was sent via e-mail and communication platforms (*Viber and WhatsApp*). A total of 207 males and females aged over 17 participated in the research: 116 were female (56%) and 91 were male participants (44%), while 26 (28.5%) of them fought in the Croatian War of Independence. The average age of the respondents was 37 to 46. In regard to the requested opinions, respondents can be classified according to age, sex, education, county of residence and current employment status.

The questionnaire was made exclusively for the purpose of getting an insight in the perceptibility and image of the Croatian Armed Forces in the Republic of Croatia through structured (closed) and unstructured (open) questions. The questionnaire consisted of 60 questions. The first part pertained to socio-demographic questions, which included the data on age, sex, education, place of residence and current status of the respondents. Other questions pertained to the evaluation of their personal attitudes, opinions, beliefs and feelings of respondents towards the military profession, Croatian Defence Academy and the space allotted to the Croatian Armed Forces in the media.

Part of the questions pertained to the image of the Croatian Armed Forces in the Republic of Croatia and in the world, knowledge about the heroes of the Croatian War of Independence, knowledge of symbols and logos associated with the Croatian Armed Forces.

The resultant data were processed using the Microsoft Office Excel 2010.

Analysis and results

The questionnaire analysis processed only those results that were relevant for the subject of this paper, as well as for future considerations on improvements of methods of branding and advertising of the Croatian Armed Forces. Relevant answers provided by respondents are shown in charts.

91 males (44 %) and 116 females (56 %) participated, totalling 207 respondents split into the following age groups: 37 to 46 years of age – 62 respondents (30 %); 27 to 36 years of age – 46 respondents (22.2 %); 17 to 26 years of age – 41 respondents (19.9 %); 47 to 56 years of age – 40 respondents (19.3 %); 57 years of age or over – 18 respondents (8.6 %). According to their education, the respondents were divided into the following groups: primary education – 2 respondents (0.9 %); secondary education – 56 respondents (27 %); further education – 46 respondents (21.7 %); higher education (bachelor's degree) – 86 respondents (41.5 %); postgraduate education (master's degree) – 7 respondents (6.7 %); postgraduate education (doctoral degree) – 5 respondents (2.4 %).

16 out of 21 Croatian counties were included in this paper. The number of respondents per county was as follows: Split-Dalmatia Country: 79 (38 %); Zagreb County: 47 respondents (22.7 %); Osijek-Baranja County: 24 (11.6 %); Dubrovnik-Neretva County: 12 (5.8 %); Lika-Senj County: 12 (5.8 %), and the remaining counties totalling 33 respondents (26.1 %). Counties that were not included in this research were: Karlovac County, Varaždin County, Koprivnica-Križevci County, Požega-Slavonia County, and the City of Zagreb (the data were processed under the Zagreb County). The following was the current employment status of respondents: 87 respondents were employed in the public sector (42 %); 46 were employed in private companies (22.2 %); 29 were university students (14 %), 23 were retired (11.1 %); 11 were unemployed (5.3 %); 10 were entrepreneurs (4.8 %) and 1 was a secondary school student (0.6 %).

Question No. 10 is related to the military profession: What does it mean for you to be a soldier? Majority of respondents – 132 of them (63.8 %) answered that it is a vocation, 40 respondents (19.3 %) considered it a profession,

whereas 35 respondents (16.9 %) answered that it was a job (Chart 1). The research results including both male and female respondents are shown in the following charts.

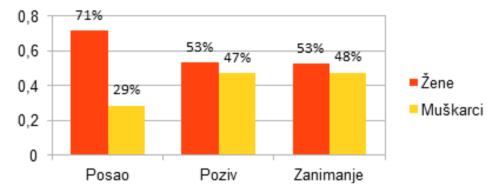


Chart 1. What does it mean for you to be a soldier?

A total of 177 respondents (85.5%) claim that soldiers and military profession should be exemplary to others, whereas 30 of them (14.5%) think that soldiers and military profession should not be exemplary. When they were asked to explain their answers, majority of respondents who considered them as exemplary used the following words: honour, honesty and patriotism.

The following questions were linked to the image of the Croatian Armed Forces: question No. 13: In your opinion, what is the image of the military among the citizens of Croatia?; question No. 14: In your opinion, what is the image of the military in the world?, and question No. 18: What are your personal impressions about the Croatian Armed Forces? The results of the research are shown in Charts 2 and 3, according to female or male respondents, whereas Chart 4 provides the whole picture about the image of the Croatian Armed Forces by comparing the answers to questions No. 13, 14 and 18. In this chart we can see that almost half of the respondents (48%) think that the image of Croatian Armed Forces is good, 33% consider it very good, 11% see it as extraordinary, 6% think it is bad, and 2% think that the image is very bad.

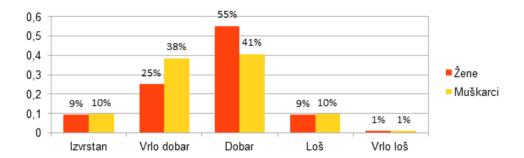


Chart 2. Image of the Croatian Armed Forces among citizens of RC

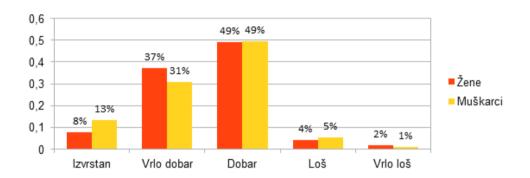


Chart 3. Personal impression about the Croatian Armed Forces

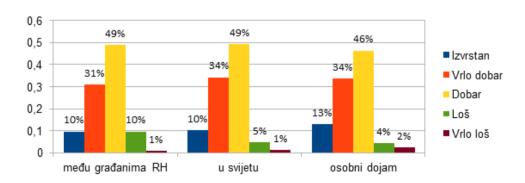


Chart 4. Comparison of questions No. 13, 14 and 18 – perception of the image of the Croatian Armed Forces

The same questions about the image of the Croatian Armed Forces have been analysed according to the time when they were answered: before and after the Zagreb earthquake and beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (Chart 5). According to the results, it is notable that the image of the Croatian Armed Forces in the category exceptional was increased by 13%, and in the category very good by 12%, whereas percentages of other categories were decreasing. Deployment of the Croatian Armed Forces' units to the streets of Zagreb, assistance in the removal of the earthquake rubble and assistance in suppression of the COVID-19 pandemic have been perceived as positive by a large number of respondents.

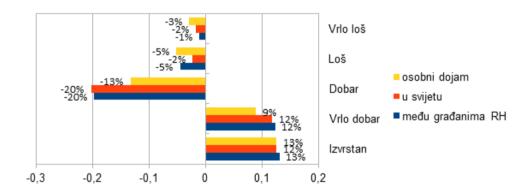


Chart 5. Comparison of questions 13, 14 and 18 – before and after the crises, changes in perception of the image of the Croatian Armed Forces

The following are the answers provided to question 25 regarding the frequency of occurrence of topics on the Croatian Armed Forces in the media, according to different categories of respondents: sufficient – 103 (50 %); insufficient – 93 (45 %), and too much – 11 (5 %) (Chart 7).

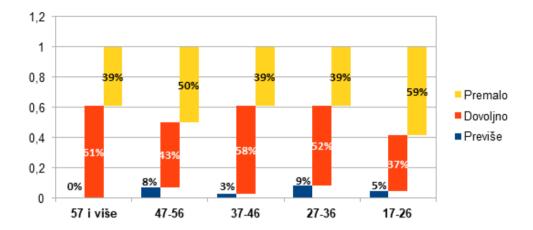


Chart 6. Frequency of occurrence of topics on the Croatian Armed Forces in the media

According to the respondents' opinions and the answers to question No. 26, the Croatian Armed Forces have been portrayed in the media as: good – 92 %; positive – 89 %; 57 % of respondents think that they are not well equipped, and 47 % think they are not transparent.

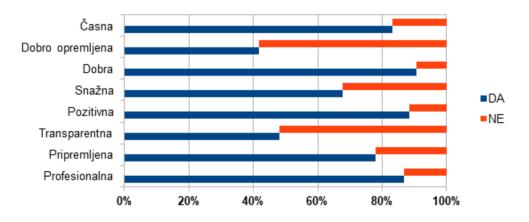


Chart 7. Portrayal of the Croatian Armed Forces in the media

The research also provides an insight into the opinion about the image of the Croatian Armed Forces in the media according to different age groups: respondents aged 57 and over have the best opinion, whereas those between the ages of 27 to 36 have the worst opinion.

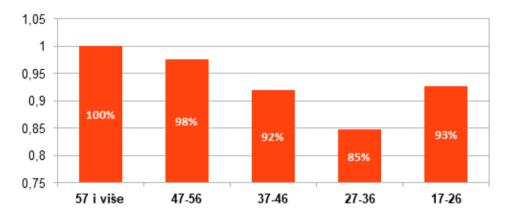


Chart 8. The Croatian Armed Forces are presented in the media as being good

In question No. 39 respondents were asked to name one of the heroes of the Croatian War of Independence, 153 respondents (74 %) named at least one. Among respondents who did not give a single answer, there were 5 of them who participated in the War, two of them were in the age group 37 to 46, and three belonged to the age group 47 to 56. The chart shows that Blago Zadro is the most frequently named hero of the Croatian War of Independence. A total of 83 respondents named him, followed by 33 naming Ante Gotovina, 18 naming Andrija Matijaš-Pauk, and 17 naming Damir Tomljanović-Gavran (Chart 9).

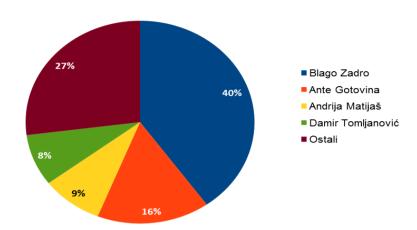


Chart 9. The most frequently named heroes of the Croatian War of Independence

In the open-type question No. 58 repondents were asked the following: In your opinion what is the most frequent notion, image, symbol or stereotype associated with the Croatian Armed Forces? Respondents most frequently associated the Croatian Armed Forces with patriotism (blue) – a total of 97 respondents, whereas the behaviour of individual soldiers (light green) was second in frequency, totalling 35 respondents (Chart 10).

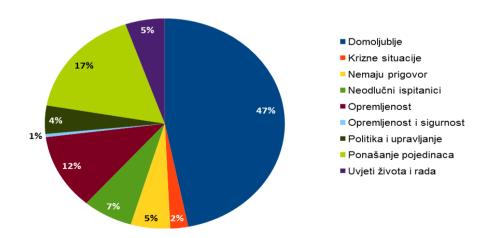


Chart 10. Most frequent notion, image, symbol or stereotype associated with the CAF

When these results are viewed in relation to the crisis situation, in this case the Zagreb earthquake and COVID-19 pandemic, it can be noted that the increasing number of respondents answered "patriotism" and "crisis situations", similar to the answer that they did not have any objections.

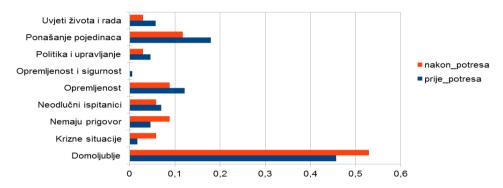


Chart 11. Most frequent notions, images, symbols and stereotypes associated with the Croatian Armed Forces before (blue) and after (red) the crisis.

The questionnaire results showed that the most common answer (69 respondents) to the first part of the question No. 59 (What do you like most about the Croatian Armed Forces?) was "the equipment and security", 36 of them answered "individual behaviour", and 34 of them answered that they did not have any objections.

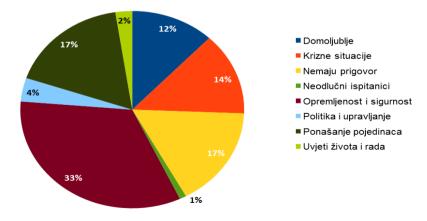


Chart 12. What do you like most about the Croatian Armed Forces?

The most common answer (32%) to the second part of the question No. 59 (What do you like the least about the Croatian Armed Forces?) was that they did not have any objections, followed by 25% of those who answered "politics and management" and "individual behaviour" (21%).

A critical view of the results

The empirical research by questionnaire was conducted compliant to the set questionnaire goals. Its results answer the question on the image of the Croatian Armed Forces according to opinion of the Croatian public, i.e. how the Croatian public perceives the identity of the Croatian Armed Forces. The research results show that the image of the Croatian Armed Forces is very good. Almost half of the respondents (48%) answered the question about the image of the Croatian Armed Forces with "very good" or "excellent", which confirms the positive trend regarding their public image. However, the results show that there is a space for improvement of the Croatian Armed Forces' image either by further development of their identity or by improving the communication strategy which would reduce the gap between their identity, i.e. how they see themselves, and their image, i.e. how the public sees and perceives them. In this regard, the words of Božo Skoko can serve as the guiding star:

"The Croatian Armed Forces are on the good way to become a brand. The Croatian Armed Forces are recognized as modern and victorious military, proven on the battlefield. The level of professionalism of the soldiers demonstrated in the field is notable, and in a certain way the Croatian Armed Forces have become a role model to be followed by other armies in the region. Extraordinary pride and trust of the Croatian citizens in the Croatian Armed Forces give their image a good foundation. With additional self-promotion and building of some segments of the image, the power of the brand of the Croatian Armed Forces can transcend the local and regional boundaries" (Cadets Newspaper, 2016).

The analysis of the obtained data brings us to the conclusion that the image and the visibility of the Croatian Armed Forces are based on patriotism (associations: Croatian flag, the coat of arms, rosary, heroes, pride, honour, trust). Respondents still perceive the Croatian Armed Forces through the lens of their victory in the Croatian War of Independence. This fact is in line with the results of the research carried out by Skoko which showed that relevant authors from the Croatian scientific and expert corpus recognize the significance of the Croatian War of Independence in construction of the Croatian identity, regardless whether the development of the Croatian identity coincided with the beginning of the establishment of the independent Croatian state or if it had started earlier in the past (Skoko, 2004).

According to the results of the research, the frequency of occurrence of the Croatian Armed Forces in the media falls between sufficient and insufficient. However, due to the activities carried out by the Croatian Armed Forces, the respondents see no reason why they should not be more present in the media.

We can find further support to the statement that there is a space for improvement in promotion and building of the image in the answers to the group of questions pertaining to the Open Door Day, known to more than 60% of respondents, although they never visited such events. The reasons why they had not visited these events are the following: they were insufficiently in the flow of current events or they did not know if it was possible to visit such events. We can link this again to the above mentioned communication environment, or maybe even the unattractive content of the event. This could be remedied by further development of the identity and improvement of the perception among younger age groups. This can also be the consequence of the fact that these generations, under the influence of information and communication technologies, are looking for new technologies and better access to data and information, which again stimulates the development of information and communication technologies.

Finally, the research shows us that, regardless of the somewhat negative perception regarding the behaviour of individuals, politics and management, the respondents still perceive the Croatian Armed Forces as a reliable enabler of the state's security.

Conclusion

"...to be your own master on your own land, to speak your mother tongue, to be proud of what is yours, original, genuine and authentic."

Mladen Trnski

The theoretical section of the paper sheds light on the connection between the PCR, perception and the potential of the brand and branding in the context of the art of war. Theoretical elaboration of relevant authors and examples from the history lead us to the identification of the connection between the stated terms and the importance of the psychological combat readiness, i.e. psychological and spiritual factors as key factors in warfare.

The research shows that this factor is often overlooked in peacetime, but more emphasis is placed on the physical, material factor. In this way, the essence of war, best illustrated by Clausewitz's trinity, the human essence of war, and how physical factors cannot either start, lead and stop the war or give it meaning, are removed and forgotten. The paper also recognizes and highlights the trend of the importance of population/public and interactive relationship with the army in the art of war, and thus the potential of the concept of brand and strategy of branding in the context of influence on the development of psychological combat readiness of the Croatian Armed Forces and population/public, but also on international alliances.

In the empirical section of the research, although the sample is not representative, the quality of the Croatian Armed Forces has been validated within the context of the brand together with their public perception and regard, regardless of the sporadic negative occurrences within the brand. However, the research results emphasize the need for further development through the two synchronized development directions. The first one pertains to the development of identity primarily through communication values while building on the values of the past, present, war and peace, i.e. on the training of the Croatian Armed Forces' members, their visual identity, moral, exemplary, positive and appropriate behaviour, their presence in

everyday life and readiness to provide assistance to the civilian population, their care for and active protection of the environment, promotion of the values obtained during the Croatian War of Independence, etc. The second pertains to the improvement in communication with the public in order to perceive the reality of the Croatian Armed Forces in the way they perceive themselves, by creating events and products with clear and memorable messages (films, souvenirs, publications, schools, parades, celebrations, etc.) by virtue of advanced communication platforms and potentials of the modern peer-to-peer communication in order to ensure effective visibility and accessibility of the Croatian Armed Forces to the public.

This two-way communication channel should provide a medium for agile adjustment to the current context and challenges of future trends, in particular to the challenges of violence. The Croatian Armed Forces need to build modern and quality brand which will be a part of both, Croatian identity and strategy of branding of the state. In this way the Croatian Armed Forces can influence the public, the population but also draw their power from them. We can conclude by saying that Croatia and the Croatian Armed Forces should continue to build, in collaborative dialogue, their way towards greater good and better future.

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APPENDIX

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES

Dear participants,

the purpose of this questionnaire is to contribute the research on the Croatian Armed Forces as a brand used for promotion of the military.

Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. The anonymity of your answers is guaranteed. Therefore, we kindly ask you to answer the questions autonomously and honestly to ensure that the collected data are reliable and relevant to the research. The questionnaire contains two groups of questions and its completion should not take more than 15 minutes of your time.

All nouns in the questionnaire pertain equally to male and female gender.

1.Please	indicate your age:	6. Did you participate in the Croatian War of
	17 - 26 years	Independence?
	27 - 36 years	□ YES
	37 - 46 years	\square NO
	47 - 56 years	7. Did you work in the military?
	57 - 66 years	7. Did you work in the mintary?
	67 or over	
	indicate your gender:	8. If you left the Croatian Armed Forces, please
	Female	provide a short explanation why:
	Male	
you ha	indicate the highest degree/level of education we completed: Elementary school High school Trade/technical/vocational training Associate degree Undergraduate degree (BA, BS) Master's degree (MSc, MRes) Professional degree Doctoral degree indicate the town, place or county of your ce:	9. Does any of your family members work or has worked in the military? YES NO 10. What does it mean for you "to be a soldier"? Profession – which requires education Job – source of livelihood Vocation – not connected to income, the way of life you live 24/7, 365 days a year
_		
5. Your c □	current employment status: School student	
	University student	
	Employed in public administration	
	Entrepreneur	
	Unemployed	
	Retired	

11. A soldier and military profession should set an example to young people:	22. Have you personally visited an open door event organized by any of the Croatian Armed Forces' units? Never Once Many times Regularly		
13. In your opinion, what kind of image do the Croatian Armed Forces have in Croatia? Very bad Bad Good Very good Excellent 14. In your opinion, what kind of image do the Croatian Armed Forces have in the world? Very bad Bad Good Very good Excellent Very good Excellent	23. If you have visited the open door event at any location of the Croatian Armed Forces' units, what are your impressions? Very bad Bad Good Very good Excellent 24. If you have never visited an open door event organized by any of the Croatian Armed Forces' units, please specify the reason: I was unaware of the possibility I am not interested in such events It was not organized in my place of residence I don't have enough information on the		
 15. Your first positive association about the Croatian Armed Forces is: 16. Your first negative association about the Croatian Armed Forces is: 17. Your first association about women in the Croatian Armed Forces is: 	□ Other reason 25. In your opinion, how often do the Croatian Armed Forces occur in the media? □ Not enough □ Enough □ Too often 26. The Croatian Armed Forces are portrayed in the media more as (circle the adjective of the pair		
18. What are your personal impressions about the Croatian Armed Forces? Very bad Bad Good Very good Excellent	that describes your opinion): professional or unprofessional ready or unprepared transparent or intransparent positive or negative		
19. Have you been acquainted with the military studies at the Dr. Franjo Tudman Croatian Defence Academy? ☐ YES ☐ NO	strong or weak good or bad well equipped or poorly equipped honourable or dishonourable		
 20. Have any of your family meambers or acquaintances studied or are currently sudying at the Croatian Defence Academy? ☐YES ☐ NO 21. Have you been acquainted with the open door events organized by the Croatian Armed Forces' units? ☐ YES ☐ NO 	27. Do you read articles, news, and watch radio and TV shows about the Croatian Armed Forces? Never Once or twice a year Once a month Once a week Every day Several times a day		

28. Which newspapers, magazines, shows and topics about the Croatian Armed Forces do you read or watch most often?	34. Have you ever visited any of the Croatian Armed		
	Forces' official webpages?		
	□ YES		
What kind of topic about the Croatian Armed	□ NO		
Forces in the media do you find most interesting	35. If you answered YES to the previous question,		
(choose multiple answers):	which of the Croatian Armed Forces webpages do		
☐ Everyday life of soldiers	you visit?		
☐ University courses and life of cadets	□ www.osrh.hr		
☐ Military uniforms and equipment			
☐ Arms and ordnance	_		
☐ Purchase of new arms and equipment	□ www.vojnipilot.hr		
☐ International military missions	□ www.morh.hr		
☐ Military assistance to civilians in need and	☐ Other. Which one?		
during disasters			
☐ Promotions and decorations			
☐ Changes at command positions	36. How many members of the Croatian Armed Forces		
☐ Anniversary celebrations	are there today in your opinion?		
Recollections from the Croatian War of	5000 - 10 000		
Independence	\Box 10 000 $-$ 15 000		
☐ Tribulations of the Croatian War of	□ 15 000 - 20 000		
Independence	☐ More than 20 000		
☐ Crisis situations in the military, accidents,	☐ I do not know/ I cannot estimate		
tragic outomes	27 7 11 4 1 64 6 4		
☐ "Scandals" involving the military	37. In your opinion, are the members of the Croatian Armed Forces awarded and valued according to the		
□ "Veterans of Peace"	the work and effort invested?		
☐ Features in daily shows	T YES		
☐ Military sports competitions	□ NO		
	L NO		
29. Do you read articles in military publications and the military magazine "Croatian Soldier"? ☐ YES ☐ NO	Explain your answer: 38. Please write down the name of the Croatian Armed Forces' units that you know of.		
30. Have you ever watched any movie featuring the Croatian War of Independence? ☐ YES	39. Please write down the name of one of the heroes of the Croatian War of Independence that you know		
	of.		
31. If you answered YES to the previous question, which of the following movies did you watch:	40. Please write down, if you know, the colours of the Croatian Armed Forces' uniforms.		
☐ The Price of Life	- <u> </u>		
☐ Vukovar: The Way Home	41. Please match the Croatian Armed Forces wartime		
☐ How the War Started on My Island	guard brigades and the colour of their berets:		
□ Madonna	black, red, green, ocre-brown		
□ Celestial Body	black, red, green, ocre-brown		
3	guards brigade TIGERS		
Number 55	guards brigade THUNDERS		
☐ The General	3. guards brigade MARTENS		
☐ The Missing	4. guards brigade SPIDERS		
☐ Besieged	5. guards brigade FALCONS		
☐ Other movie. Which one?	7. guards brigade PUMAS 9. guards brigade WOLVES		
32. Have you watched any documentary featuring the Croatian War of Independence?	42. Tick the boxes with officers' ranks:		
□ YES	□ 2 nd lieutenant		
□ NO NO	□ Major		
	□ Colonel		
33. If you answered YES to the previous question, please write down the title or the topic of the movie:	□ Staff sergeant□ Corporal		

II. For each of the following statements about the Croatian Armed Forces, please select the number (from 1 to 5) that best describes your opinion. The numbers have the following labels: 1 - I totally disagree; 2 - I mostly disagree; 3 - I don't know/I cannot estimate; 4 - I mostly agree; 5 - I completely agree	I totally disagree	I mostly disagree	I don't know/I can't estimate	I mostly agree	I oompletely agree
43. The Croatian Armed Forces are a well-organized military organization.	1	2	3	4	5
44. The Croatian Armed Forces are well-trained to conduct all tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
45. The Croatian Armed Forces are well-equipped to conduct all tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I have a full confidence in the Croatian Armed Forces as a security factor.	1	2	3	4	5
47. A positive image is important for the Croatian Armed Forces.	1	2	3	4	5
48. The Croatian Armed Forces gained their prominence during the Croatian War of Independence.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Participation of the Croatian Armed Forces in international military operations contributes to their positive image in the Croatian society	1	2	3	4	5
50. "The Wings of Storm" – the Croatian Air Force aerobatic display team is a significant promoter of the Croatian Armed Forces	1	2	3	4	5
51. The Croatian Armed Forces is a facilitator of the economy in Croatia due to investments in defence industry.	1	2	3	4	5
52. Military equipment and ordnance produced in Republic of Croatia are good promoters of the Croatian Armed Forces abroad.	1	2	3	4	5
53. Participation of the Croatian Armed Forces in international military operations has proved them to be a safe and reliable partner.	1	2	3	4	5
54. We can always count on quick and timely reaction and assistance of the Croatian Armed Forces in case of natural disasters.	1	2	3	4	5
55. The extent of media coverage of the Croatian Armed Forces gives them enough visibility.	1	2	3	4	5
56. The Croatian Armed Forces inform the public on all of their activities in a timely and truthful manner.	1	2	3	4	5
57. The public trusts that the Croatian Armed Forces will successfully respond to any possible danger or threat.	1	2	3	4	5

58. What is, in your opinion, the most common opinion, image, simbol or stereotype associated with the Croatian Armed Forces?

59.	What do y	you like most and least about the Croatian Armed Forces?
	I like most:	
	I like least:	

60. What do you feel when you look at the picture? (Tick **maximum of three** boxes.)



Pride	Genocide
Honour	Crime
Winners	Sorrow
Freedom	Refugees
Joy	Shame
Affliction	Something else?

Thank you very much for your time! Please check once again if you have provided answers to all questions

Authors

Lieutenant Colonel MARINA SVRZE (svrzemarina@gmail.com) worked on high-ranking positions in the field of public relations and international defence policy at the Croatian MoD. After the completion of the three modules of the specialist Train the Trainer Course in Communicology in Bern, Switzerland, and participation in numerous specialized courses and conferences in the field of public relations in the US, Germany and Croatia, she became a lecturer at the Croatian Defence Academy's War College, and the Defence Diplomacy Course in 2004. In 2007 she was appointed lecturer of The Art of Communication at the Croatian Defence Academy's Military Leadership and Management Department. As a lecturer in the field of communication and media sciences, she provides lectures at all levels of education at the CDA. She was a mentor and a commentator to many students of the 3rd level of CDA's Officer School as well as to the students of the Military Leadership and Management study programme. Additionally, she was a guest lecturer at numerous events in various departments of the MoD and the Armed Forces as well as in non-military departments of the state administration. She is the lead professor in the scientific field of security and defence, and she teaches a course in Media, Propaganda and Public Relations as part of the Military Leadership and Management study programme.

Captain DINA ŽIŽIĆ (dina.zizic@morh.hr) served in a variety of command positions in the Croatian Armed Forces. She graduated from the Blago Zadro Command and Staff School at the Dr. Franjo Tuđman Croatian Defence Academy. Her current position is in the CAF General Staff Career Management.

Lieutenant Colonel MIJO KNEZOVIĆ (mijo.knezovic@gmail.com) served in a variety of positions in Croatian MoD and the CAF General Staff. Currently, he works at the Janko Bobetko Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies in Zagreb.