

# ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND ANALYSIS OF ETHICAL STANDARDS OF A PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER IN THE SLOVAK ARMED FORCES

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## **Abstract:**

Even in the 21st century, the world finds itself in a complicated, even confusing situation. The mutual relations of the countries of the international community are in a kind of anomic state. Value systems, political orientations, the social structure of the population are changing, new values are emerging and traditional ones are disappearing. Objective causes, sins of the past, unstoppable globalization, deviation from traditions, cultures, environmental difficulties, permanent crises. All this, to a greater or lesser extent, affects the internal dynamics of almost all states on the one hand, and on the person, individual, social individual on the other hand. This situation occurs in all areas of social, economic, social and economic life, not excluding such a specific area as the armed forces.

**Key words:** ethics, ethical dilemmas, professional soldier

The term ethics began to refer to a philosophical discipline that dealt with morality, human moral virtues or their opposites. On the other hand, the concept of morality began to be understood as a phenomenon that is investigated by this ethics. (Klimeková, 2005, p. 10, Jankovský, 2003, p. 21 – 23, Poláková, 2008, p. 12) The term military ethics has been used in the military since about the middle of this century, depending on how its importance has grown in the life of mankind military activity and the entire military for the life and further destinies of the entire contemporary civilization. Military experts have understood that preferring the military-professional side of this specific profession is simply

not enough, that it is a multi-dimensional profession that, in addition to other aspects, also includes the human and ethical level. World War II, but even after it, the following local wars stimulated interest in the moral side of wars, in the goals of individual wars, the ways of their conduct, but also in the actions of man in these wars. It is necessary to see a direct connection between the course of the war and the level of human preparedness. There was a need to deal with the moral context of the activities of the armies. The content of the ethical theory is the examination of all military activities from a moral point of view, when by military activity we understand the activity of the armed elements of society and the civilian population, aimed at preparing the defense of the country in times of peace and in times of war.

Military practice puts a military professional every day in many situations that can be considered problematic or conflicting. Morality arises when it was necessary to start regulating relationships between people. From this point of view, it is a historically extremely old phenomenon that develops, becomes more and more important, but often also more complicated, as society develops. It should be seen that the level of morality corresponds to the quality of social relations. That is, how complex these relationships are, the quality of moral relationships corresponds to them. And it is history that convinces us that the moral relations of some social systems in history and in the present supported lawlessness and crime more than they regulated relations for the benefit of members of society, for the benefit of its positive development, as is the case in the conditions of non-democratic regimes.

Many countries are increasingly turning to institutes of morality and ethics. It is from these mechanisms that they expect the correction of deformed relationships and a change in the thinking and behavior of individuals. Sometimes they even expect a miraculous transformation of the entire society, but they do not realize that the change in the moral behavior of individuals is linked to many other areas, such as education, upbringing, the quality of the legal system, the economic situation and the political climate, which significantly contribute to the formation of human characters. interpersonal relations forming a desirable level of social life. The condition is that the transformation processes must take place in all areas of social life, otherwise it is impossible to expect success.

The level of ethical theory also naturally corresponds to this, because ethics represents a theoretical reflection of morality. Ethics not only justifies, but also establishes certain moral principles by which society is governed. However, it is nowhere given whether this theory always follows the correct social development and the well-being of society members. It must be understood that if the basic views on morality are wrong, they are distorted in every part of the social system.

But this is no longer just a theoretical question, but a practical one, because it also creates the image of that company on the outside. Thus, moral behavior is largely the result of the individual's free choice. Accordingly, it is possible to characterize morality as a social phenomenon, as an area of human activity defined by the opposition of good and evil and the associated norms of human behavior in society (Hulan, B. - Wagnerová, S., 2007, p. 5). The French sociologist G. Friedmann understands morality in the usual sense as the mental state of an individual or a collective, either in relation to a certain goal (in most cases) to be achieved - for example in war - or even without any precisely defined relation (1; s 317).

It is the ethical theory that justifies the principles and norms of moral behavior. Historically, ethics arises later than morality, as the condition for its emergence is the existence of theoretical thinking. Ethical theory cannot be expected to be a complete guide to human behavior, but it can be expected to define certain boundaries within which a person can move without fear of being sanctioned by society for acting against its interests. Ethics is the science of moral activity, moral relationships and moral consciousness (Hulan, B. - Wagnerová, S., 2007, p.11).

Connecting the military organism with morality is not a new matter, but has long-term historical roots since the time of the first armed forces. With their development, the importance of morality continued to grow, gradually it even became one of the basic attributes of their successful operation. The phenomenon of values accompanies man since the dawn of civilizations and their cultures, but the term value itself appears as an axiological concept only at the end of the 19th century. It was taken from economic science, in which, in the form of the so-called of utility and variable value was connected with the principles of the market economy. For the emerging axiology, it was suitable as an expression that can be used to express the fact that things, events and our ways of acting have or do not have value for us. Ethics and morality are closely related to philosophy, because they are about man and his relationship to the world, society, other people and himself.

By the term military morality, we usually mean a set of standards declared by society, originating in social morality, but functionally referring specifically to military activity carried out in a military environment (Ethics and the Army, 1992, p. 61).

Professional moral awareness is reflected in the theory of military ethics, which specifies the knowledge of general ethical theory with regard to the functions that the army performs in the interests of social goals. Its subject is:

- the moral dimension of military activity,
- specific manifestations and functions of morality in the process of training military professionals and soldiers in basic service for the defense of the homeland and the fulfillment of the peace-making task,
- ways of forming moral relationships and moral consciousness of members of armed forces,
- the content of moral categories in the conditions of the armed forces and their importance for the moral training of members of the armed forces.

The current military-ethical theory consists of the following components:

- the history of the origin and development of military ethics according to individual stages and periods. Each of them is characterized by certain regularities resulting from the way of social life, transforming into the conditions of the military. In this part, it is possible to confirm the conditionality of the success of military activity not only on the military-technical level, but also on the dependence of the results on the level of morale;
- another part of the military-ethical theory examines the essence and structure of moral consciousness and its transformation into the conditions of the military;
- in military ethics, corresponding attention is paid to moral relations and moral practice in the army. It deals with a specific aspect of the mutual relations between military professionals and soldiers of the basic service, the peculiarities of the implementation of moral principles and standards in military conditions, in connection with other social contexts (Hulan, 2010).

If we follow efforts aimed at strengthening the role of morality in people's lives, we need to think about whether this process will also affect the military as a whole, individual armies, and above all, what will be the mechanism of these fundamental changes.

The current state of development of ethical theory shows that moral principles are among the most important standards by which people are guided in the performance of their profession, and it is in military practice that morality has stood and always stands at the forefront of the qualification requirements binding on its members. There are multiple paths to making moral principles a standard part of a military professional's qualifications, but there can only be one outcome, and that's why the whole process is extremely challenging. In advance, it is necessary to emphasize the need to build on the internal identification of members of the armed forces with the demands of the profession, on creativity and positive approaches to the fulfillment of military duties, and to reject the

currently often overrated path of mechanical reminders and emphasis of duties, sometimes even mentoring, which turns out to be a path that is not very effective and incorrect.

Military professional ethics is therefore a part of current professional ethical teachings. These teachings are often understood under the term professional ethics in two meanings:

1. These are general theories about the specifics of the morality of that profession, they are actually teachings about morality in the conditions of specific professions. This is how specific professional ethics are created.
2. They are understood as sets of norms (codes) of morality, valid for a specific profession. It is a system of specific requirements of morality resulting from the peculiarities of individual professions, when traditions, experiences and specificities of individual professions are also taken into account (Hulan, 2010).

The foundations of morality appeared only with the need for a certain moral regulation, which came with the development of more complex social relations in society (division of labor according to gender), that is, in the period of gender society. Moral concepts were created based on the experience of useful and harmful. Imitation, customs, myths, songs and rituals were the basis of morality in this period, which was characterized by the principle of equality between family members (Poláková, 2008, p. 19). This period of moral development is referred to by Lillie (1966, p. 47) as the level of habit.

By the term military morality, we usually mean a set of standards declared by society, originating in social morality, but functionally they only apply to military activity carried out in a military environment. Because society is interested in its security, because it is interested in the highly qualified activities of its security and defense institutions, it is interested in their high professional level and their high level of morality. Therefore, it declares these requirements in the form of demanding standards, having a distinct legal character. The individual's free attitude towards these standards is thus considerably limited, no less feasible. We especially understand the morality of a soldier and a military professional as the morality of a citizen in equal measure, when the military professional is the dominant bearer of the values of military morality. (Hulan, 2002)

For a member of the Slovak Army, the basic moral obligation is the military oath, which emphasizes the basic postulates of military morality: civic and patriotic duty, loyalty to the homeland, bravery, discipline, conscientiousness and readiness for self-sacrifice.

These moral obligations are extensive and other moral standards can be

derived from them. For military professional morality, the most important terms are military duty, military honor, strict and fair decision-making and action, self-control, the ability to make demanding self-evaluations and the resulting ability to self-regulate one's own behavior, being an example to those around you, and the need for lifelong qualification growth. These are extremely important values that must be continuously worked with. (Hulan, 2010)

Wars gradually became one of the accompanying phenomena of human development and under the influence of politics. Wars in certain phases of human existence were and may still be considered an attribute of human life, and in some cases they are even presented as a condition for social progress. It is not surprising that even in ethical literature they are evaluated in a contradictory way. However, the reality is that in social, political and ideological aspects, the moral orientation of people in military and combat activities is inseparable from the processes taking place in society. Only the method of implementation of individual principles is specific in the conditions of combat activity. However, the specificity of military morale lies not only in the demand for these special qualities, but also in the special nature of their formation and expression.

Military-ethical views are connected with military science, especially with learning about strategy and tactics, and the investigation of the moral training of troops is based on pedagogical and psychological disciplines. Military science and military-ethical theory is significantly historically conditioned, and therefore historical sciences also participate in its improvement. Military ethics does not solve the issue of homeland defense only from the point of view of the military, but also from the positions of all people. (Hulan, 1998) The defense of the homeland, especially in modern history, cannot be considered only the task of the troops, but it has a distinct universal character. However, even in peacetime, a military professional must study the international law of war, and knowledge of the issue of war ethics must become part of his moral preparation for the performance of his profession. For the above reasons, war ethics should be considered an inseparable part of military professional ethics,

- moral assessment of wars and war conflicts in terms of their course and consequences;
- moral assessment of the means of conducting combat activity;
- moral principles of conducting an armed struggle;
- moral relations to the wounded and killed;
- moral relations to captured soldiers;
- moral principles of conducting combat activities by the armed forces (army, partisans, movements, etc.);

- moral attitudes towards defectors, traitors and spies;
- moral relationship to the civilian population, material and cultural values in the enemy's territory.

Naturally, moral qualities cannot be formed only on their own, but must cross-sectionally and systematically intertwine with the entire system of education and training of military professionals. It may not be a problem if the condition of high-quality staffing of the training system is met.

Professional moral consciousness is reflected in the theory of military ethics, which specifies knowledge of general ethical theory with regard to the functions performed by the military in the interests of social goals. Its subject is:

- the moral dimension of military activity in the sense of a specific professional activity,
- specific manifestations and functions of morality in the process of training military professionals to fulfill the tasks of homeland defense, which in the current conditions, it takes on global dimensions, specifically the dimension of the peace-making task,
- ways of forming moral relationships and moral awareness of members of the armed forces at the individual and social level as the basis of their effective activity, the creation of the content of moral categories in the conditions of the armed forces and their importance for the moral training of members of the armed forces,
- creation of an effective system of ethical training of members of the armed forces so that the moral dimension becomes part of their professional preparation (Ethics of the military professional. 1992, p. 58).

## **Conclusion**

The basic principles of military professional morality in our army are formulated on the basis of the norms of social morality. Even the most representative documents in this area must be created in the process of creative application of the principles of social (civic) morality in the conditions of a military environment. This process is characterized by certain principles that must be respected if we want to preserve the functionality of the army built on humanistic principles. When drafting the „Professional Soldier's Code“, certain principles must naturally be respected:

- the global character of the military and its tasks and possibilities in the current

era;

- the profession of a military professional as a soldier and peacemaker;
- direct connection of the profession of a military professional with national and state interests;
- high demands on the physical and spiritual qualities of a military professional (Hulan, 2010).

A professional soldier should not be judged only by his top military and professional level. Since professional soldiers in the overwhelming majority also act as leaders of their subordinates and are affected to a greater or lesser extent by the official and personal problems of these people, they must, or should be, aware of the responsibility for their lives, for their survival in the event of a threat or war status. That is why soldiers - professionals are to a large extent responsible for peaceful development and non-escalation of tension in the world as such and in specific risk areas. So we can perceive the professional ethics of soldiers as a theoretical approach to military activity - both peaceful and wartime. This ethics should not be seen as something self-serving or useless, it should become an integral part of the training of professional members of the armed forces, without connotations of the previous strongly ideological period. The ideal state would be to achieve rejection of the routine performance of the function and at the same time accept the equal status of education in the ethical field, which is (should be) an organic part of it.

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