

From the editors

The military profession, like the scholarly one, faces the dualistic conundrum of learning from the past in an effort to shape future reality. The question is not only how to balance the study of history with concerns of, in many cases, the unpredictable, foreseeable future. It is also a matter of how to study both history (in an effort to draw the right lessons from past experience) and contemporary trends (to temper our expectations of the future). Historically, informed guesswork governed by what Colin Gray refers to as the ‘golden rule of prudence’ is the best way to ‘gamble’ with the future and ensure that plans are not only governed by hope.¹ As editors of a journal on military studies our challenge is always to find a careful balance in the content between looking at what has happened and what is due to influence future strategic and tactical realities.

In his article on African maritime security, Francois Vreÿ contends that the maritime domain is due to assume an increasingly prominent place on the future African security agenda. The challenge for both military practitioners and maritime scholars is to keep the debate on good order at sea from becoming a single-factor analysis with a focus on piracy. More specifically, a theoretical framework is required that will address a whole spectrum of maritime threats in the future maritime security domain – from maritime terrorism, piracy, illegal oil bunkering, human trafficking and international criminality to unsettled maritime boundaries. Globalisation brought about an implosion of time and space, and the trans-border movement of large amounts of material and human capital. But so-called globalization also brought a deepening of the rich poor gap, social fragmentation, crime and localized violence and maritime strategists and practitioners have to be aware of these contextual challenges. Naval responses to these threats, at the same time, should be balanced with approaches that emphasise cooperation between numerous actors and agencies, and which promote maritime security through both landward and offshore initiatives.

In writing about information-based conflict in Africa, Brett van Niekerk and Manoj Maharaj argue that the rapid assimilation of information technologies into African economies firmly places Africa on a trajectory that will see the continent competing and integrating with the rest of world. However, the use of information

¹ Gray, CS. “Why strategy is difficult”. *Joint Forces Quarterly* 22. Summer 1999. 12.

technologies in a competitive economic environment exposes Africa's vulnerability to information-based threats such as censorship, communications intercepts, the use of information and communications to instigate violence and uprisings, and the possibility of cyber-warfare. As is clear from recent developments, cyber technology also infringes on the rights of the individual and community of friend and foe alike. Thus, the authors contend that information-based conflict in Africa is prevalent, and that it is likely to increase. The global information network was a key feature in the recent uprisings in many of North Africa's Arab nations, it is argued.

The uprisings in many Arab countries around the world, Glen Segell argues, were dramatically affected by the unique relationship in every country between populations, their governments and the politics in that country. He points out that the outcome of the simultaneous unrest in numerous countries in North Africa, the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula since 2010 could neither have been predicted nor predetermined since every country has a unique political system. Segell attributes the different outcomes in countries to different modes of thought and action with respect to armed force and the differences in the nature of civil-military relations in those countries. A key element in many of the uprisings was the decision by the state leader to use force or not, the leader's ability to control and use the military, and the desire and ability of the military to support the leader as the recent demise of Egypt's short lived democracy has demonstrated.

Turning towards civil-military relations in a historical context, John Laband argues that the spheres of authority of the civil and military powers in the late Victorian British Empire were not unequivocally defined, and could lead to disagreements that threatened the efficient conduct of military operations. The author relies on three case studies from Southern Africa between 1878 and 1888 to prove his point. This led to an 1879 ruling by the British government that the commander in the field always had to exercise full control over active operations, and in 1888 this finally clarified the circumstances in which the general in command assumed operational authority over both the colonial and imperial troops stationed in any of the colonies.

Pieter Labuschagne highlights that the 1899–1902 South African War created major rifts in the post-war South African society because of the various controversies that emanated from the conflict. One such factor, which left a long legacy of bitterness and which inhibited nation-building in the country, was the role and participation of black auxiliaries who were deployed against the Boer forces. The author specifically highlights one incident in this regard that occurred at Gatberg on 20 November 1901. The skirmish, between a Boer commando and a

black unit commanded by a British officer on the Transkei border, resulted in a great deal of bitterness and controversy that lasted for many years. The author explains the animosity that was generated by the incident and the contrasting views of the incident.

In his article, Scott Spencer looks at the aftermath of the 1899–1902 South African War and the creation of the South African Constabulary (SAC) in late 1900 to provide law and order over the new Transvaal and Orange River colonies. The author contends that by 1900, policy makers no longer simply exported ‘English’ or ‘Irish’ models to the colonies but sought guidance from existing institutions throughout the British Isles and Empire in a single ‘British-Imperial’ model of administration. More specifically, British policy makers and the new corps’ senior officers turned to the imperial policing network for ideas, methods and particularly personnel to assemble the SAC. Eventually, ten thousand officers and constables were recruited from across the British Isles and Empire. Many SAC veterans eventually used the imperial policing network to take up new positions in police forces throughout the British Isles and Empire. With this historical example in mind, Spencer speculates that the past ten years in Iraq might have been quite different if the Bush administration’s Coalition Provisional Authority had followed the British example of recruiting men (and women) based on merit, ambition and expertise and not simply for their adherence to the party line.

Defence diplomacy as a crucial outcome of a country’s foreign policy always played an important role. André Wessels returns the focus in this edition of the journal to the maritime domain with an analysis of the peacetime roles of the SAS *Drakensberg*. These roles included humanitarian and relief operations, training missions and exercises, ceremonial duties and anti-piracy operations. In the end, Wessels argues that the SAS *Drakensberg* –

... was born out of the operational needs of the old SADF, and was then a product of the apartheid era, but has evolved with the rest of the SAN (and SADF/SANDEF), and has become (thus far) the most prominent and most visible ship of the SAN, and also the foremost grey diplomat of the SAN, and in that sense, relatively speaking, the most successful ship of the SAN.

The conflict in Namibia against South African occupying forces and its ramifications for Angola has led to an unabated stream of publications on the Border and Angolan Civil War in Angola in South Africa, Russia and Cuba. The edition concludes with a review article by James Jacobs on three recently published, important books on the Border War. With the growing debate on the outcome of the

so-called Battle of Cuito Cuanavale² and, by implication, the Border War, the books by Leopold Scholtz and Roland De Vries cannot be ignored. The work by Leopold Scholtz represents the first effort by a South African historian to write a comprehensive history of the war. As one of the key operational commanders during the war, De Vries' autobiography represents a critical primary source for future reference and research on the war.

The editors

Abel Esterhuysen & Ian Liebenberg

² The clashes between Cuban and FAPLA forces and the South African military at the Lomba River and the Tumpo Triangle among others.