

## From the editors

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The use of armed force, Clausewitz argues, has its own grammar but not its logic. In general, most military practitioners have a sound understanding of the nature of the political process that underpins the logic of war. At the same time, though, they tend to view politics with scepticism because politicians "... by virtue of their craft, perceive or fear wide ramifications of action, prefer to fudge rather than focus, and like to keep their options open as long as possible by making the least decision as late as feasible".<sup>1</sup> Instead of muddling through, the military realm, in contrast, is perceived as an orderly world set to "... simplify, focus, decide, and execute".<sup>2</sup> The reality of the military grammar that Clausewitz refers to, of course, is somewhat different. More specifically, it would be more correct to speak of the grammars of war since warfare, as the manifestation of war, displays itself in a number of ways. This is precisely the reason why Clausewitz advises,

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish ... the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.<sup>3</sup>

The conduct of war – warfare – is normally conceptualised within the context of two so-called grammars: a battle-centric conventional grammar, also known as regular war, and a people-centric asymmetrical grammar known variously (and rather loosely) as insurgency, guerrilla, or irregular warfare. Since the end of the Second World War, the possibility of nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) warfare appeared on the horizon as an unthinkable (and illogical) third grammar. This third grammar, though, establishes deterrence and the need to keep war from happening as key elements of the use of armed forces. As a matter of irony, the possibility of (self-destructive) total war contained in the third grammar, introduced the world to the notion of peace enforcement and peacekeeping. More and more armed forces are required to busy themselves with the prevention of conflict through peace enforcement and peacekeeping missions. The articles contained in this edition of the journal cover almost the whole spectrum of grammars – from a battle-centric grammar and the availability of nuclear weaponry to the use of armed forces for successful peace missions.

In the first article, Luke Diver addresses the very interesting yet complex and almost paradoxical issue of war and society during the South African War (1899–1902) during which Irish volunteers served in the army of an occupying power – namely Britain – to fight for British colonial rule and occupation in South Africa. The historical complexity of Irish politics and society, together with the contentious history of British rule in Ireland, made the support for the British war effort in South Africa by the Irish society in general, a sensitive historical reality. While the Irish were fighting for the British cause, others joined the Boer armies as an active statement of resistance against British rule.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, the reality is that the people-centric grammar of both the Irish and the South African struggles of independence were highly complex from a war and society perspective.

The people-centric nature of the second grammar of war is also very much at the heart of Paul Thompson's article on British military intelligence in the Zulu rebellion of 1906. The British military very cunningly made use of a proxy force, the Natal Militia, to suppress the Zulu rebels. Thompson points out that the militia was well adapted to the local circumstances and had a background and knowledge of military field intelligence based on British army experience in the South African War (1899–1902). Thompson argues that the field intelligence of the militia was never timely enough to enable a column commander to strike the enemy where it was reported to be. The rebels always had suitable access to intelligence to avoid the blow. For all this, the militia's imperfect intelligence was vindicated by success at Mome, where the *impi*, its leaders absorbed in their own mission, was caught and surprised. The role of human intelligence (frequently abbreviated as 'humint') is critical for the success of irregular warfare; yet, at the same time it is a highly contentious ethical issue. The notion of *impimpi* to describe this notion in the South African struggle for independence testifies to that reality.<sup>5</sup>

The articles by Maja Garb and Chukwuma Osakwe and Ubong Essien Umoh address the notion of success in peace missions and the contribution of private military and security contractors and international humanitarian law in this regard. Garb points out that there are still many open questions about the success of peace missions and how to define such successes. Osakwe and Umoh argue that the elusiveness of private military companies' individual or corporate responsibility for war crimes presents one of the greatest challenges as well as a dilemma for international humanitarian law, which seeks to address individual offences. The situation becomes even more complicated when non-governmental organisations and multinational corporations are involved in the use of private military companies.

Both articles attest to the complexity of the new grammar concerning the international use of armed forces.

In her article, Jo-Ansie van Wyk provides a broad overview of South Africa's nuclear diplomacy since the country terminated its nuclear weapons programme. More specifically, she explains why South Africa has not retracted on this position. She argues that, through the skilful use of strategies typically used by middle powers in their conduct of nuclear diplomacy as niche diplomacy, South Africa has succeeded in norm construction, identity formation and securing a niche role for itself, which resulted in material and non-material advantages for post-apartheid and post-nuclear weapons South Africa.

In practice, the grammar of war is overwhelmingly shaped by its geographical setting<sup>6</sup> as the use of armed force is always highly geographical. By addressing terrain as an operational and training reality for armed forces, Lodi, Smit and Ayirebi address an issue that relates to all the grammars of war. Their article examines the engineering occupational course curricula presented by the South African Army School of Engineers. Content analysis was used to determine the presence of terrain analysis content in the course curricula. The authors recommend that the learning objectives dedicated to terrain analysis should be expanded and better focussed and that assessment instruments capable of measuring competency in terrain analysis should be created and/or improved. They also highlight the fact that exercises are needed during the occupational courses that require officers to assimilate the effect of terrain on operations in order to improve officers' terrain analysis competencies. The article, once again, highlights the fact that terrain not only shapes the nature of operations but that, in fact, it defines the nature of land power as the pre-eminent form of military power everywhere.

### **The editors**

**Abel Esterhuysen & Ian Liebenberg**

### **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> Gray, CS. *Strategy and history: Essays on theory and practice*. London: Routledge, 2006, 79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Clausewitz, C. *On war*. Howard, M & Paret, P (eds, trans). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976, 88–89.

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- <sup>4</sup> Compare Van der Westhuizen, G in Snyman, I, Liebenberg, I & Roos, M (eds). *A century is a short time: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902*. Pretoria: Nexus, 2005.
- <sup>5</sup> According to a vast array of literature, the word *impimpi* has its origin in the colonial era when white landowners ran large black labour forces in South Africa. In order for these landowners to know what went about in the ranks, they would recruit a susceptible, bitter or frustrated fellow and pay them in return for the information. They would call this fellow a “pimp”, and the Nguni peoples termed this person, often in a degrading manner, an *impimpi*.
- <sup>6</sup> See the discussion by Daniel Moran in Moran, D. “Geography and strategy”. In Baylis, J, Wirtz J, Gray, CS & Cohen E (eds). *Strategy in the contemporary world*, 3<sup>d</sup> ed, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 115–131.