

From the Editors

Knowledge of the past and an understanding of our heritage and history as a human race is a precondition for being able to understand and explain current events. Informed discussions on the nature of historical events and their lessons are needed to prepare for and address the challenges faced now and in the future. For example, it would be impossible to make sense of the continued instability and conflict in Somalia without understanding the history of the Somali state, and the country's clan and inter-clan dynamics. Without informed academic studies, critical writing, and intellectual rigour, debates would be futile and superficial. It would also be impossible to design and undertake effective counterinsurgency operations (COIN) against Al-Shabaab and other armed non-state actors (ANSA) who are operating in Somalia against the African Union and the Somali government forces.

Without bringing evidence from previous military campaigns to bear (for example, lessons learned from fighting in a harsh terrain or climate), it would be impossible to conduct proper military planning. One might fail to deploy the needed military equipment for an operation to be successful. Although history and lessons learned are essential tools in planning for the next operation, every conflict is unique, and each new operation needs to be tailored to the unique circumstances that prevail in the conflict in question. History should, therefore, be part of the planning and unpacking of a conflict system and its solutions, but the lessons learned from yesterday's wars cannot win today's conflicts.

In this issue of the *South African Journal of Military Studies*, Vol 46, No. 2, 2018, the articles either try to draw on history while unpacking contemporary issues or produce lessons learned from historical cases for contemporary military planners and practitioners to draw from.

In his contribution, Leopold Scholtz illustrates how the Dutch COIN campaign in 1945-49 in Indonesia failed to reach its objective due to a misreading of the political situation, but also due to a misguided conventional military approach. According to Scholtz, the Dutch failed to win hearts and minds, and the excessive use of military force and the suffering of the local population undermined the broader objectives of the campaign.

Shawn M. Reagin in his contribution on the effect of the environment on British soldiers in East Africa during the First World War produces some crucial lessons for future conflicts. Environment, diseases and terrain had a devastating effect on the British and German forces fighting in East Africa, making it a more complex operational theatre to operate in, compared to the fronts in Europe during the same period. The comparisons of Reagin's contribution to more contemporary conflicts in

the periphery, and how challenging intervening forces have found these theatres, are easy to draw.

Donal P. McCracken in his article shows how Irish nationalist Michael Davitt's visit to South Africa and exposure to the Boer Republics' cause during the time of the Boer War changed Davitt's worldview. The contribution also shows how, around the early 20th Century, anti-imperial alliances were built and maintained across continents, tying local conflicts into broader questions and structural fault lines at the international level.

Moving on to contemporary issues, Liselotte Odgaard focuses on China's approach to East Africa claiming that China uses its One Belt One Road initiative and its support of existing United Nations and African Union missions as a means to strengthen development and security in the region. Beijing's intention is to maintain regional order as opposed to adopting a more interventionist stance. Although such a cautious, 'softly-softly' approach has undeniably led to positive spinoffs for both receiving countries and Beijing, Beijing's approach also demonstrates a bias for state security over individual security and does little to prevent conflicts from spreading, potentially, undermining regional order.

This issue ends off with two military psychology articles. Karen Zägenhagen and Gisela van Rensburg provide a study of the influence of rank on the ethical training of nurses at a military nursing college. Their study details the dilemmas faced by nurses when confronted with patients of varying rank and the tacit (and sometimes overt) pressure placed upon them to give preferential treatment to those of higher rank. It is important that educators of military nurses contemplate the hidden influence of rankism on the development of students' ethical competence (who should ideally see only ill bodies and people in need), and actively inculcate behaviours to combat these tendencies.

In their article, Stephanie van Wyk and Renier du Toit analyse and provide a redesigned model for the selection of Special Forces. Their study explores the process as well as the behavioural assessments used during the South African Special Forces officers' selection process, and proposes possible ways to improve them. Accurate and fair techniques for selection are paramount as the pressures to 'make it' are strong. However, at the same time, the physical and mental rigours of the job are immense and the correct candidates need to be chosen. Therefore, much is at stake.

Thomas Mandrup takes over as Editor of *Scientia Militaria*. The outgoing editors (myself and Raymond Steenkamp-Fonseca) would like to once again thank the editorial committee for their strong support and encouragement, and the reviewers who maintain the quality of the journal.

The Editors,

Justin van der Merwe and Thomas Mandrup