

Editorial

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is at a crossroads. The defence budget stands at 0,8% of the gross domestic product (GDP), a far cry from the 2,0% of the GDP set as a precondition for the 2015 Defence Review to be implemented. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has in October 2019 once again emphasised the importance of the SANDF as a tool in domestic operations, both in border policing and in support of anti-crime operations on the Cape Flats. However, as pointed out by a defence commentator – for which budget? The SANDF is overstretched, and there is a mismatch between the allocated budget and the tasks at hand. There is an urgent need to find ways of making the SANDF sustainable and to stop the decline, which was identified in the 2015 Defence Review. In simplified terms, either the budget informs and drives the tasks, or the tasks dictate the budget. For some time, it seemed that South African defence policy has done neither, and, as is well known, no strategy will lead you everywhere, or more precisely nowhere. The new parliament, with its newly constituted Joint Portfolio Committee on Defence, has a unique possibility of changing years of political will to make hard choices on the future South African defence policy. The lack of direction given to defence by the political masters has left the defence force in steep decline and levels of operational readiness have moved beyond critical levels. At the end of the day, the lack of funding will cost lives, both due to failing and obsolete equipment, but also due to the lack of funding for basic training and exercises. It is high time that an honest debate on the future role and tasks of the SANDF be initiated, which includes scrutinising the constitutional mandate, the ability of the SANDF to support South African foreign policy through the deployment of troops in multilateral peace missions, and increasing numbers of domestic tasks be given to the SANDF. The SANDF is currently caught in a situation where – for various reasons – it is incapable of implementing the recommended human resource reforms, changing its top-heavy force structure, and thereby reaching a goal of a leaner and more efficient and professional military force.

In this issue of *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*, Vol 47, No. 1, 2019, the articles draw on history to examine contemporary issues around war and conflict or to focus on the interface between the military and civilian spheres. The articles individually and as a combined body provide an essential source of influence for all involved in military planning, education, operations and management.

Dirk Kruijt, in his contribution on civil–military relations in Latin America, provides a number of lessons on the dualism between the professional and the political army. Latin America has historically been plagued by military coups and the military ‘correcting’ the politics. Kruijt argues that the military often explains their involvement in politics as a consequence of the necessity to correct and transform their vanguard role in politics and society. The findings in the article have a wider use than merely Latin America, and similar analysis could be used to describe the role of the military in other parts of the world.

Pieter Labuschagne, in his article on small wars and people's wars, shows how Carl von Clausewitz's concepts of limited and absolute war are useful tools for explaining the different objectives of the opposing forces during the South African War 1899–1902, and then the subsequent divergent views and motives that led the conflict to transform into a full-scale conflict.

In the article by Janet Szabo about the last years of the Apartheid state's wars on the Angolan border, the author illustrates how a change in tactics and operations by the South African Defence force (SADF) – moving from a mobile force operational strategy to positional battle against an opponent with superior numbers – changed the fortunes of war for the SADF forces.

In their contribution, Robin Blake and Yolanda Spies highlight how an increased focus on non-coercive defence diplomacy (NCDD) is key to pre-empt conflict. Sustainable peace remains elusive in Africa and beyond. In the article, they argue that, if applied in a timely and coordinated manner at early stages of conflict development, the escalation of conflict can be avoided, and human lives be spared.

In the article by Gavin Cawthra, the focus is on military officers' education. In a case study of the Southern African Defence and Security Management Network (SADSEM) between 2000 and 2010, it is shown how this unique regional network tried to build capacity in ten Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries to enhance university-based quality military education. The article shows that even though not all ten institutions survived, the SADSEM network left a lasting institutional legacy and capacity.

In the article by Tshikani Lewis Khoza, Nombeko Mshunqane and Simpiwe Sobuwa, the focus is on lived experiences by military healthcare workers during external deployments. Despite being an integral part of military operations, the authors found that healthcare workers often lack the needed equipment to undertake and perform their duties effectively during deployment. The SANDF continues being deployed to multilateral peace missions but faced with significant financial and operational readiness constraints, central capabilities such as those of combat medical capabilities remain constrained.

In their contribution, Kgomotso T Matjeke and Gideon AJ van Dyk report how the increased number of single-parent households affects work satisfaction in the SANDF. Their study investigated how the frequent foreign and domestic deployments affect the stress and work satisfaction levels amongst single parents. The study found that there is a direct result of work–family conflicts and work–family enrichment on work satisfactory levels amongst single parents, and that there is a need to ensure that unit commanders and military psychologists provide more support for single parents among the SANDF personnel.

The Editor
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