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Editorial

Amidst the ebb and flow of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the latter half of 2020 saw several notable developments that directly influenced global security and defence. The positive results stemming from the clinical trial data for a Covid-19 vaccine, especially those of Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc. mean that ‘effective’ Covid-19 vaccines could already be available for administration by the end of the year. While this is encouraging, Jori Breslawski of the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University argues that there are several overarching concerns about the global distribution of the vaccines. First, countries marked by civil strife and ungoverned spaces, where non-state actors control millions of people, will find it extremely difficult to distribute the vaccine. Second, the governments in countries where there is civil war may choose to reserve access to the vaccines for their supporters only, and neglect those who oppose their regimes. Last, large-scale misinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic and a general mistrust in health care and medical science may also prove problematic.¹ These issues will undoubtedly come to the fore over the course of the next few months after the first Covid-19 vaccines had been authorised for global distribution.

Apart from the positive strides made to curb the Covid-19 pandemic, the outcome of the 2020 US presidential election holds far-reaching consequences in terms of several matters related to alliance politics as well as global defence and security. The armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the historically disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh in the period September to November 2020 also refocused global attention on the Caucasus region. This encounter forms part of the broader Russia–Turkey proxy conflict that started in 2015, and which has been linked to the ongoing clashes in Syria, Libya and more recently, Nagorno-Karabakh. Other notable developments of the year in terms of global security and defence, which in all likelihood will spill over into 2021 and beyond, include the ongoing tensions between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea; rising tensions in the East China Sea; territorial disputes in the South China Sea; simmering tensions between India and both China and Pakistan; the continued presence of al-Shabab in Somalia; the destabilisation of Mali; ongoing violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo; the Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria; and, the lingering instability in Afghanistan and large parts of the Middle East.

There have also been several notable events in southern Africa, which affected the region in terms of defence and security. The escalating conflict in the resource-rich northern province of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique between government forces and a local armed group linked to Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is cause for concern. For South Africa in particular, the inability of Mozambique to deal effectively with the unfolding crisis in northern Mozambique holds serious consequences. With increasing pleas from Mozambique for foreign intervention to help curb the violence in Cabo Delgado, we may even see the operational deployment of the already over-stretched – and critically underfunded – South African National Defence Force (SANDF). If the situation in Cabo Delgado continues to deteriorate, and in the event that conflict moves further south to Mozambican heartland, South Africa and the broader Southern African Development Community (SADC) may have no other option open than to commit boots to the ground. This will naturally have far-reaching consequences for all parties concerned. In addition, the porousness of South Africa's territorial borders was highlighted again in November 2020, when the infamous Malawian preacher, Shepherd Bushiri, managed to skip bail and escape the country. While this event in itself is marred by corruption and a disregard for the law, there are bigger issues at play. Despite the recent enactment of the Border Management Authority Act (2 of 2020), South Africa finds it increasingly difficult to enforce its territorial sovereignty and protect the flow of people and goods through its borders. The Bushiri incident is but a symptom of a far larger problem related to effective border management in southern Africa and further afield.

In this issue of *Scientia Militaria*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2020, the articles reflect both historic and contemporary issues related to war and conflict as well as matters related to defence and security. As always, it is hoped that these articles will provide key insights and act as a source of influence for individuals involved in the broader ambit of military planning, operations, management and higher education.

In his article on Oswald Pirow, Alex Mouton sets out to explain the factors and events that shattered Pirow's political reputation during the 1940 parliamentary session and which left a lasting perception of him as a failed minister of defence. Mouton finds that, after the 1940 parliamentary session, Pirow's reputation would never recover despite several attempts to rehabilitate himself during and after the Second World War. By the time Pirow passed away in 1959, his reputation as a disastrous minister of defence was already firmly established.

Lungani Hlongwa, in his article on China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI), argues that there is a strong correlation between maritime success and national economic prosperity. Hlongwa conceptualises China's MSRI through the lens of sea power by highlighting maritime logistics as a strategic conduit for power projection. He concludes that China's MSRI is indeed a pursuit of sea power, as it encompasses economic, political and military power. Moreover, Hlongwa argues that China's maritime trade dominance will be further reinforced by the MSRI, especially since the country is simultaneously building a blue-water navy and gaining international recognition in global peacekeeping and anti-piracy operations.

The article by Anna La Grange discusses the Smuts government's justification of the implementation of emergency regulations in South Africa during the Second World War, and analyses the influence thereof on the Ossewa-Brandwag movement. La Grange argues that the metaphorical battle on the South African home front had two sides indeed. On the one side there was the active and passive resistance against the Smuts government's war effort, and on the other, the Smuts government's actions to curb the growing internal unrest within the Union. The main attempt by the Smuts government to suppress the internal unrest manifested itself in the form of the implementation of various emergency regulations and war measures. These regulations and measures specifically affected the Ossewa-Brandwag, a dualistic organisation within the Afrikanerdom, which would eventually lead the active resistance on the South African home front directed against the Union's war effort. La Grange concludes that the implementation of the emergency regulations resulted in domestic unrest in the Union during the war, and provoked further definite hostility among Afrikaners. The manifestation of this hostility towards Smuts was evident in the election results of 1948, which saw the National Party claiming victory.

In his article on doing research on sensitive topics, such as the dubious Sweden–South Africa Arms Deal, Wayne Stephen Coetzee provides a reflexive account of some of the strategies used and challenges faced when investigating a highly politicised 'sensitive topic' such as the conventional arms trade. According to Coetzee, the conventional arms trade is a sensitive topic that is often shrouded in secrecy. He argues that the processes connected to the conventional arms trade normally take place behind closed doors between a relatively small and tightly knit group of individuals. Researchers often also find it extremely difficult to gain access to such people. Moreover, building rapport with key decision-makers can take a long time and requires considerable effort and resolve by the researcher. Coetzee uses a study done on the Sweden–South Africa Arms Deal to provide several insights into the substantive issues related to conducting research on sensitive topics and, in particular, aspects connected to elite interviewing and research ethics.

Karen Horn focuses on the aspects of fear and mortality as experienced by South African soldiers on campaign in East Africa and the Western Desert during the Second World War. In her article, Horn argues that, in order to understand an individual's war-time experiences in terms of their awareness of mortality, one must first of all attempt an analysis of their emotions as expressed in written narratives. She therefore used diary accounts, memoirs and personal correspondence of a number South African servicemen to investigate their experiences of fear and their awareness of mortality during the war.

In the final article of the issue, Jaco Pietersen et al. report on the role of change management in improving policy effectiveness in the SANDF. They suggest that one of the principal reasons for the large variance between defence policy, military capabilities and real operational demands stems from the lack of effective prioritisation of defence within South Africa. The authors also argue that the SANDF has been largely unsuccessful in complying with the demands of defence policy, irrespective of the fact that the policy by itself may be obsolete and/or inappropriate for the South African context. They there-

fore conclude that, in terms of military effectiveness, it is doubtful whether the defence force can meet its current operational demands. They conclude that the ‘schizophrenic’ organisational culture present in the SANDF may be one of the primary causes of the defence force moving ever closer to renegeing on its constitutional mandate.

A selection of book reviews on several contemporary published works by Anri Delport, Jean-Pierre Scherman, Will Gordon, JC Pieterse and Ian Liebenberg concludes this issue of *Scientia Militaria*.

The Editors

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Breslawski, J. “A Covid-19 vaccine might be tough to distribute in countries at war”. *Washington Post*. 12 November 2020. < <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/11/12/covid-19-vaccine-might-be-tough-distribute-countries-war/>> Accessed 20 November 2020.