

## From the editors

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Editors of academic journals are confronted with choices and trade-offs. A wide variety of factors are influencing the choice of articles and themes for a particular edition. *Scientia Militaria*, the South African Journal for Military Studies, is a journal with a particular focus and covers a wide spectrum of military-related topics. As an academic discipline, Military Science, though, is characterised by its interdisciplinary nature. This interdisciplinary nature is once again demonstrated through the variety of articles in this particular edition.

Prof. William Dean from the US Air Command and Staff contributed an interesting article on morale among French colonial troops on the Western Front during the First World War. He pointed out that the traditional images of the French Army on the Western Front during the First World War have been that of the grizzled yet determined French peasant or worker. However, recent research portrays a different view of the French Army on the Western Front. Dean's article provides an overview of the morale of the 600 000 men from across the French empire who served in the frontline and in logistics units in France. Bringing these colonial soldiers to a foreign country and culture to fight in a new type of horrific war was strenuous, while at the time perhaps not contentious. The article provides an impressionistic overview of the morale of these colonial forces in France. The author argues conclusively that the French colonial empire paid a high price in the war. The colonies were economically and demographically dislocated and the returning colonial veterans of the First World War played a part in the growing nationalism of the inter-war years. Their experiences and views contributed towards the setting of the stage for post-1945 revolutions in the French empire.

Of the many debates concerning so-called post-modern militaries, none has been as intensive as the position of homosexuals in contemporary armed forces. The current debate in the US armed forces once again highlighted this reality. Margot Canaday and Aaron Belkin contributed an interesting article on the position of gays and lesbians in the South African military to this edition of *Scientia Militaria*. The apartheid military maintained a dual policy on homosexuality. Though homosexuality was prohibited among members of the permanent force, it was tolerated among conscripts. Since democratisation in 1994, the SANDF had to bring its policies on homosexuality in line with the South African Constitution. In 1998, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) implemented the Policy on Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action that declared that there would no longer be discrimination against gays and lesbians. The authors argue that the gay community professed disappointment at the level of anti-gay sentiment that is still prevalent in the military. At the same time, and given the military's history on the issue, significant progress had been made in the South African military in this

regard. The article concludes that the integration of homosexuals has not had a negative impact on recruitment and retention, morale, unit cohesion or operational effectiveness in the SANDF.

A relevant and interesting contribution was received from Rosalie Arcala Hall and Anita Cular from the Philippines on a topic that should be of great interest to the South African military. The article focuses on the importance of civil-military relations in disaster rescue and relief activities, and Hall and Cular use the 2006 mudslide in Southern Leyte as a case study. The authors draw some very interesting conclusions from their discussion by noting that the Philippine armed forces' participation in disaster response generated little controversy. With regard to the involvement of foreign military forces in the disaster relief they noted that arrangements between the local authorities and the foreign military groups were for the most part mediated by Philippine military liaisons and, by limiting the foreign troops' movement and activity, the local civilian authorities managed to avoid many of the sensitive questions associated with hosting foreign troops in population centres. Hall and Cular also alluded to the possible mismatch between foreign assistance offered and what was actually needed. In this particular case, the authors argued, foreign military assets clearly provided added value in terms of transporting relief goods and personnel, particularly the US military. Most of the foreign teams, they noted, though, mattered little in the search and rescue operations.

Andre Wessels focuses in his article on the interaction between the South African naval forces and those of other Commonwealth nations since the creation of the South African Union in 1910. He outlines the role of the South African naval forces in both the First and Second World War and its gradual growth in size and importance during the Cold War. At the same time, though, the South African Navy and its predecessors have always been small in comparison with the major Commonwealth navies. For many decades, the Royal Navy had been the South African Navy's main naval partner, until the Simon's Town Agreement was abrogated in 1975 and the isolation of the apartheid years took effect. The democratisation of the country in 1994 provided new opportunities for South African warships, resulting in many naval diplomacy visits and exercises in South African waters and elsewhere.

Maritime piracy, Theo Neethling notes in his article, is an age-old phenomenon. Piracy has posed challenges for mariners as long as ships have gone to sea. The Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden (east coast of Africa), and the Gulf of Guinea (west coast of Africa) represent important seaways of growing maritime insecurity for Africa. Indeed, maritime piracy along Africa's coastal areas is of great strategic and political-economic interest. Neethling's article provides an interesting comparative political view of the similarities and differences relating to the phenomenon of piracy on the east and west coasts of Africa. The author highlights the reality that most security challenges confronting Africa have their origin in the lack or failure of state governance. Piracy around the coast of Africa is just another example of how the financial liberalisation that accompanied

globalisation has created a borderless world that coincides with criminal activity and creates numerous problems for especially poorer countries.

The history of the so-called Border War in Namibia and Angola is increasingly under the spotlight as more and more of the participants of that war are putting their experiences in writing. In their review article on publications in this regard, Ian Liebenberg, Tienie du Plessis and Gert van der Westhuizen provide an analysis of some books written in recent years by participants from the different sides involved in the Border War. The review of non-South African works on the war, which are not widely available in South Africa, is of particular importance in the rising interest and debate about the war in South Africa. Each perspective, the authors note in their conclusion, holds some information despite destroyed documents and clumsy bureaucratic processes. Such growing intersubjectivity can do historiography and social sciences (including international politics scholars) in South Africa only good.

The Editors

Ian Liebenberg & Abel Esterhuyse