

# South African Journal of Military Studies

Volume 48  
Number 2  
2020

ISSN 2224-0020 (online)  
ISSN 1022-8136 (print)

[scientiamilitaria.journals.ac.za/](http://scientiamilitaria.journals.ac.za/)

## Scientia Militaria

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ISSN 2224-0020 (online); ISSN 1022-8136 (print)

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**South African Journal**  
*of Military Science*

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## Editorial

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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.<sup>1</sup> 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**

*Evert Kleynhans & Thomas Mandrup*



### **ENDNOTES**

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- <sup>1</sup> 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.



# **“All just grandiose plans and talk”: The destruction of Oswald Pirow’s reputation as Minister of Defence, 1940**

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## **Abstract**

The popular perception of Oswald Pirow is that of an incompetent Minister of Defence, much derided for his bush carts pulled by oxen in the era of the *blitzkrieg* doctrine of dive-bombers and tanks. However, this was not the perception of him in the years between 1933 and 1939. When Pirow became Minister of Defence in 1933, the Union Defence Force was in a poor state. During the Great Depression between 1929 and 1933, austerity measures had reduced the already small army to an insignificant force. In what has been described as a Pirowian renaissance he succeeded in improving the preparedness of the Union Defence Force drastically. Ian van der Waag points out that with the outbreak of the Second World War, South African defences were in a better state of preparation than during any other period in its peacetime history. This was a considerable achievement, as Pirow had to deal with the vehement hostility of the National Party who viewed the Union Defence Force as a tool to serve British imperialism. In addition, the average white voter was extremely reluctant to pay taxes to fund a standing army, while the rise of Nazi Germany made it near impossible to secure modern armaments from Britain. What ultimately destroyed Pirow’s reputation as Minister of Defence was his disastrous performance in the 1940 parliamentary session. His vindictive attacks on Jan Smuts made it possible for the premier to launch a devastating counterattack, condemning him as a fraud and an incompetent windbag. In the process, Smuts succeeded in destroying Pirow’s reputation as a highly regarded administrator and as a potential prime minister.

## **Introduction**

At the end of August 1939, Oswald Pirow, the United Party (UP) member of parliament (MP) for Gezina and the Minister of Defence, was one of South Africa’s most controversial politicians. For some English speakers, he was too pro-German, and he had autocratic tendencies, while the National Party (NP) viewed him as a puppet of British imperialism. And yet, he was the odds-on favourite to succeed JBM. Hertzog as prime minister. The reason for this was that he was an outstanding orator and parliamentary debater, as well as a highly rated cabinet minister. He was the founder of the South African Airways, reviver and moderniser of the bankrupt railway system, and as the Minister of Defence the rebuilder of the neglected Union Defence Force (UDF).

In October 1938, the London *Sunday Times* expressed its admiration in the following terms, “Pirow is a remarkable man ... as an administrator, he probably has no superior in the British Empire”.<sup>2</sup> For General JC Smuts, the deputy prime minister, he was one of the “coming leaders of the country”.<sup>3</sup> However, by May 1940, he was vilified as a fraud and an incompetent windbag. This article 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 disastrous Minister of Defence.

## **Biographical background**

Oswald Pirow was born in Aberdeen in the Cape Colony on 14 August 1890. His parents were German-born. His father, Carl Ferdinand, a medical doctor, was the son of a missionary, and had emigrated to South Africa in 1888. When Pirow was three years of age, his parents settled in Potchefstroom in the Transvaal where they became naturalised citizens of the South African Republic. In 1905, due to a lack of educational facilities in South Africa, Pirow went to study at Itzehoe Gymnasium in Holstein, Germany. On completion of his school education, he attended the Middle Temple in London from 1910 to 1913 to qualify as a barrister. On being called to the Bar, he returned to South Africa in 1914, determined to follow a political career.<sup>4</sup> That he was raised with German as his home language, was educated in Germany, and that he was a member of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church meant that, in the eyes of many Afrikaners, he was not one of them. Paul Sauer, a prominent Cape MP, defined it as Pirow’s *Duitsheid* (German attitude).<sup>5</sup>

## **Minister of Defence and the poor state of the Union Defence Force, 1933**

Despite the doubts about his Afrikaner identity, Pirow had a meteoric political career in the NP, the political platform of Afrikaner nationalism. He was elected to parliament in 1924 and became the Minister of Justice in 1929. On 31 March 1933, with the forming of the coalition government of the NP and South African Party (SAP), he became Minister of Railways and Harbours, as well as of Defence. The Union Defence Force (UDF) was in a poor state. During the Great Depression, austerity measures between 1929 and 1933 had reduced the already small UDF to an insignificant force. In 1927, the UDF had consisted of 151 officers and 1 259 men and was dependent on the Active Citizen Force (ACF) part-time soldiers for the defence of the country. Because of the financial hardships, 49 ACF units and 54 Defence Rifle Associations (the commandos) were disbanded. Between 1930 and 1934, the army could not afford even small-scale training exercises. The poor state of the UDF provided Pirow with an opportunity to enhance his political prospects. Energetic, dynamic and with a burning desire to become prime minister he had to show himself as an efficient administrator, as well as a defender of the white minority in South Africa. Turning the ramshackle UDF into an efficient fighting force would help to pave his way to the premiership.

Pirow immediately set out to rebuild the UDF.<sup>6</sup> It was a challenging task as most of his fellow NP MPs felt that the traditional commando system, made up of volunteers, was more than enough to protect the country, as a professional standing army would

be an instrument for British imperialism. This was reflected in the opposition to the founding of the Special Service Battalion (SSB) to assist poor white youths. Within days of his appointment as the Defence Minister, Pirow had to decide about the SSB being part of the UDF. On 17 March 1933, General AJE (Andries) Brink, Chief of the General Staff and Secretary of Defence, had submitted a detailed plan for such a battalion to Pirow's predecessor Colonel FHP Creswell.<sup>7</sup> Eager to prove the coalition's determination to deal with poverty amongst white people and to enhance his own political image, Pirow accepted the proposal on 18 April. During the defence budget on 12 June 1933, Paul Sauer – who resented the contemptuous and autocratic way Pirow treated NP backbenchers – used the founding of the SSB to settle a score with him. His speech oozed loathing for a man he regarded as too arrogant and too German in his attitude:

The hon. the Minister of Railways is, I would not like to say, contemptuous, but he is very near it. He has got Prussian antecedents, and he does not believe much in democracy ...<sup>8</sup>

Sauer then proceeded to claim that the SSB could be the nucleus of a Nazi corps, sneeringly demanding to know whether the young men of the SSB would wear the black or brown shirts of the fascists, or red shirts to commemorate Pirow's visit to communist Russia in 1925. Although other MPs praised the SSB to the skies, Sauer did harm Pirow's reputation as it created the perception that he had a soft spot for authoritarian ideas. Other republican NP MPs also felt that the SSB was an unsuitable institution for South Africa as it was an attempt to militarise the Afrikaner youth as potential cannon fodder for the British Empire in any future war.<sup>9</sup> The hostility of these NP MPs to any rebuilding of the UDF increased after 5 December 1934 with the merger of the SAP and NP to form the UP. DF Malan, leader of the Cape NP, refused to join the new party as he viewed the SAP as a puppet of British imperialism. He became the leader of the remaining ultra-nationalistic rump of the NP, the "Purified" NP.<sup>10</sup>

For his defence plans, Pirow also had to bear a sceptical white electorate in mind. As the country had no enemies, geography and British domination of the continent after the First World War had given South Africa safe land borders, while the Royal Navy, with its base at Simon's Town, was responsible for the defence of the coastline.<sup>11</sup> Voters were therefore reluctant to pay any more taxes for the upkeep of a standing army. As a result, Pirow focused on one of the reasons for the founding of the UDF, namely the fear of a potential black uprising in Africa north of the Limpopo against colonial rule, which might imperil the "white civilisation" in South Africa<sup>12</sup> to secure public support for an enlarged and modernised UDF. In July 1933, at a Committee of Imperial Defence meeting in London, he pointed out that, although it was not governmental policy, it was possible that South Africa could provide military assistance in the British colonies of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika (now Tanzania) in "a case of protecting whites against natives". General Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, the Chief of the UDF's General Staff, informed British officials that Pirow's "plea for co-operation in defence of the white civilization of Africa was really a political cry to justify the retention of the Union Defence Forces".<sup>13</sup> This led to Pirow emphasising the growing military might

of imperial Japan and that a Japanese victory over Western colonial powers in Asia could create the opportunity for a black uprising in Africa, unleashing an invasion of South Africa.<sup>14</sup> The “maintenance and supremacy of our white civilisation” became the essence of Pirow’s five-year plan, compiled with the assistance of Generals Van Ryneveld and Andries Brink and presented to parliament on 2 May 1934 to rebuild the UDF.<sup>15</sup>

The five-year plan was a significant change to South Africa’s security strategy. Up to 1933, the NP government’s strategy was limited to the land defence of the Royal Navy naval base in Simon’s Town in terms of the 1922 agreement with Britain. There was a determination not to use the UDF outside of South Africa, as it was feared that it could be used to support the British Empire in the case of a European war. The change in South Africa’s security strategy convinced Major AN Williams of the Royal Marines – the Royal Navy’s intelligence officer and liaison officer with the UDF in South Africa – that Pirow was a whole hearted Imperialist, working hard to make South Africa a valuable link of the Empire, and that there was the possibility that South Africa might participate in a war against Japan. Although he accepted that the country would be reluctant to participate in a war against Germany, Williams thought that, if the Germans attacked Great Britain, South Africa would come to its assistance.<sup>16</sup>

Pirow’s re-organisation plan was approved by parliament, and he secured an increase in the defence budget, the first since 1924. The budget would increase every subsequent year.<sup>17</sup> And yet, Pirow still did not have the necessary funds to achieve his goals. Even with war clouds gathering in Europe in 1939, the budget for the UDF would be smaller than the one for the police.<sup>18</sup> An important reason for this state of affairs was political pressure, as the NP viewed Pirow’s black invasion warnings as a smokescreen to serve the interests of Britain. In 1935, Malan rejected Pirow’s warnings of attacks by black hordes from the north, or by the Japanese as a scare story to convince Afrikaners to give up their freedom by seeking protection from the British Empire.<sup>19</sup>

That concerns about the NP as an electoral threat had a profound influence on Pirow’s defence plans was evident in his determination in 1935 to secure a 15-inch gun battery to defend Cape Town. The British War Office and the Committee of Imperial Defence felt that 9.2-inch guns were more than adequate to deal with any hostile naval raiders.<sup>20</sup> Pirow claimed that the bigger guns were a case of political necessity. Although the UP was on the crest of the political wave and even though it would win the next election, it was impossible to say what would happen after that. Fearing the growth potential of the NP, Pirow wanted big measures to counter NP propaganda that the UP was a puppet of British imperialism.<sup>21</sup> The 15-inch guns had to serve as proof that the UDF was not in the service of the British Empire, but was the defender of South Africa’s neutrality. In this, Pirow had the full support of Vice Admiral Sir ERGR Evans, officer-in-command of the Royal Navy’s Africa Station, who regarded Pirow as his greatest friend in the southern hemisphere. In his memoirs, Evans wrote that Pirow’s “company to me was like a glass of champagne after a successful Admiral’s inspection”.<sup>22</sup>

To secure South Africa's goodwill and especially that of Pirow, who was perceived as Hertzog's successor in any future European conflict, the British government approved his request for 15-inch guns. To protect the city in the period that it would take to install such a gun battery, the monitor HMS Erebus with its two 15-inch guns, was offered on loan to South Africa.<sup>23</sup> As it was essential for Pirow to present to parliament a complete scheme for the defence of Cape Town, he demanded support and assistance from Britain to ensure that the use of a monitor was a viable protection scheme. The high commissioner in Pretoria promptly urged Malcolm MacDonald, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, to provide support, "[i]t is important that we should do our best to meet the wishes of Pirow who would be rather seriously embarrassed politically in the event of the scheme collapsing."<sup>24</sup> MacDonald concurred and wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare, First Lord of the Admiralty, to give the most sympathetic consideration to Pirow's requests – "I need not say how important it is from the political point of view that we should do everything that we can to help him."<sup>25</sup>

### **Rebuilding the UDF**

Under the leadership of Pirow, a gradual process to rebuild the UDF started. The number of commissioned officers in the standing army was enlarged, while the training of troops was improved as money was provided for the field training of ACF units. Large field exercises were held in 1937, 1938 and 1939.<sup>26</sup> Pirow instructed Colonel George Brink to visit Britain, Germany, France and Italy to study their armed forces. On his return, Brink was appointed Director of Army Organisation and Training. He was to be promoted to Deputy Chief of Staff in 1938, and played a leading role in reorganising the army and improve its training.<sup>27</sup> After the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 1935, Pirow set out to create a modern air force to counter any possible Italian aggression.<sup>28</sup> After World War I, the main aim of the South African Air Force (SAAF) was internal security and white hegemony, for example, the bombing and machine gunning of rebellious African groups, such as the Bondelswart Nama in South West Africa (Namibia), and the crushing of the revolt by white miners in Johannesburg. For this, the obsolete aeroplanes of the SAAF were adequate, but not for dealing with a modern air force such as that of the Italians. Pirow became convinced that, if the SAAF had a thousand modern planes, no foreign country would venture an attack on South Africa. To make this a reality, he announced a scheme to train a thousand pilots over five years with the commensurate expansion in the strength of the air force and the creation of four new airfields.<sup>29</sup> To implement this scheme, the state subsidised flying clubs to train civilians. The aim was to recruit university students. On completion of their training, these new pilots would be contractually obliged to undergo part-time military training and to be placed on the SAAF Special Reserve. In 1938, a hundred Hawker Hart aircraft, purchased from Britain, started to arrive in the country to be used for the training of pilots. To assist with the training process, a new airbase in Pretoria, the Waterkloof Air Station, was built. This allowed the Swartkop Airfield to be used solely for training purposes.<sup>30</sup>

An insurmountable challenge for Pirow was the difficulty to secure up-to-date weapons as Britain, increasingly concerned about the growing might of Nazi Germany, refused to part with modern armaments. In 1935, 400 Bren guns were ordered by the

South African government. After two years, only 15 had however been delivered.<sup>31</sup> Not even Smuts with his high standing in London could convince the British government to provide the UDF with these machine guns.<sup>32</sup> To deal with the shortage of weapons and military equipment, Pirow set up a War Supplies Board in May 1937. The first step of the Board was to initiate the process to establish a small arms ammunition factory.<sup>33</sup>

In this period of growing concern about the aggressiveness of Nazi Germany, Pirow – with his German background – went out of his way to distance himself from national socialism. He publicly declared his support of democracy. On 6 June 1937, he announced, “South Africa will never depart from its democratic system, and it will be deplorable, therefore, if that system is undermined or rendered impotent.”<sup>34</sup> In the defence budget debate of 7 September 1938, Pirow addressed accusations that he had German sympathies by forcefully denying that he was pro-Nazi:

I am not pro-Nazi and I am not anti-Nazi. I am once and for all in favour of our democratic system, and I do not get hot and bothered about what is going on in other countries.<sup>35</sup>

### **Mission to Nazi Germany, November 1938**

The Sudetenland crisis of September 1938 convinced the Hertzog government that South Africa was ill-prepared to defend itself. The decision was made to send Pirow to London in November of that year to secure modern armaments. The visit provided Pirow an opportunity to offer his services to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to act as a mediator with Hitler to prevent a war. He knew that, in a European war, it would be difficult for South Africa to remain neutral. A war could only shatter the achievements of the UP government and damage his chances of becoming prime minister. On 18 November 1938, in a Berlin meeting, Pirow informed Hermann Göring, head of the German air force, that in a war between Germany and Britain, South Africa would not enter immediately. However, as government-embracing neutrality would struggle to survive, South Africa would be fighting on the side of Britain within six months. He also made it clear that South Africa would be part of the British Empire for the next hundred years or so.<sup>36</sup> In his meeting with Hitler, he was shaken by the dictator’s arrogance, impatience and aggression. In January 1939, Pirow told GH Wilson, editor of the *Cape Times*, that while talking to Hitler he felt like a “second rate Roman Consul talking to John the Baptist”.<sup>37</sup> He informed Sir Ogilvie Forbes of the British embassy in Berlin that his conversation with Hitler had left him pessimistic. He felt that he was talking to a brick wall, and that it was as if Hitler was addressing a meeting of ten thousand people when talking to him. He claimed that Hitler occasionally thumped the table and that he then thumped the table back.<sup>38</sup> Pirow later told Lord Perth, the British ambassador to Italy, that he had made no impression on Hitler and that he was up against a stone wall.<sup>39</sup> On 26 November, Pirow left Berlin. The Germans were not sad to see him go. His warnings that in a war with Britain South Africa would eventually be fighting on the British side meant that he was no longer *persona grata* in Berlin. Dr Rudolf Leitner, Germany’s diplomatic representative in South Africa, was instructed that for the Reichsparteitag in 1939 no special effort had to be made for Pirow.<sup>40</sup>

## London and the efforts to secure modern armaments for the UDF, November 1938

Pirow's visit to London was equally disappointing as he found that Leslie Hore-Belisha, Minister for War, and General Lord Gort, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, were only willing to part with obsolete weaponry.<sup>41</sup> In his meeting with Malcolm MacDonald, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs on 2 November, he demanded the minister's assistance in buying modern weapons. Pirow pointed out that he had to secure at least 1 400 Bren guns, anti-aircraft guns and searchlights, or he would not be able to face parliament and the public in South Africa. To bolster his case, he argued that South Africa's neutrality was becoming increasingly theoretical as war was no respecter of persons or countries, and that the two countries should be together in a war against Germany.<sup>42</sup> MacDonald subsequently arranged a meeting for Pirow with Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence. In their meeting, Pirow used South Africa's willingness to defend Kenya against an invasion by Italy to secure modern armaments. He also emphasised South Africa's considerable financial contribution in erecting coastal gun batteries to protect the Cape sea route, an important trade route for Britain. Inskip remained unmoved. Britain needed the required Bren guns.<sup>43</sup>

In terms of diplomacy and the purchase of weapons, Pirow's visit to Berlin and London achieved little. His self-appointed peace mission was not welcomed in Germany, while it caused embarrassment in Britain. Yet, there was relief in London that Pirow had accepted that in a war with Germany, South Africa would not remain neutral. Ultimately, he managed to allay fears in British circles about his loyalty to the Empire and that he was pro-German. This was evident in an article of Hardie Stewart, editor of *The Torchbearer*, official mouthpiece of the Junior Imperial League in the *Right Bulletin*, organ of the Right Book Club. Hardie Stewart forcefully stated that he hoped that Pirow would be the next prime minister of South Africa as it would be a good thing for South Africa and Britain, "Mr Pirow is a true British subject. His interests are those of the British Commonwealth of Nations."<sup>44</sup>

That Pirow was convinced that South Africa would be involved in a European war was evident in a memorandum from the Quartermaster General of the UDF to the Chief of General Staff on 3 March 1939. The memo stated that six months would elapse after the outbreak of a war before South Africa could become involved on a major scale.<sup>45</sup> On 18 March 1939, three days after Hitler had invaded and occupied Czechoslovakia, Heaton Nicholls, UP MP for Zululand and a passionate defender of the imperial link with Britain, confronted Pirow on his stance should Britain enter a war with Nazi Germany. He recorded his answer in his diary:

My [Pirow] own position is that while I would not fight for the Empire as you would, I am going to fight for South Africa. I believe we shall have no say in the matter. The fight will be forced on us. I do not trust Hitler. I did, before he made this last move. I do not do so now and he must be resisted.<sup>46</sup>

Nicholls concluded that Pirow and Hertzog would not stand for neutrality should a war result from German aggression. That Pirow was sincere in his determination

to oppose Nazi Germany after a period of neutrality was evident from notes that he provided in May 1939 for a UP pamphlet to be released after South Africa had entered a war against Nazi Germany. In these notes, he explained why the country could not be neutral if Germany were to attack Britain.<sup>47</sup>

Despite this failure to secure modern weapons, Pirow confidently asserted during the defence budget debate on 23 March 1939, that South Africa would be able to defend itself in a war. He gave a comprehensive survey of the measures to strengthen the country's defences and announced that the defence programme, as set out in 1934, had been exceeded in most respects. Five years earlier, there were only 22 learner pilots in the SAAF; in 1939, there were 432, as well as an organised reserve of 140 pilots, compared with the 46 in 1934. In 1934, there were 16 ACF infantry battalions; in 1939 they had increased to 37, while there were 150 000 men in the Defence Rifle Associations (the commandos) compared to 118 000 in 1934. For the first time, Pirow publicly announced, to loud approval from the House, that from 1 September 1939 the HMS Erebus, manned by South Africans, was being lent to South Africa by the British government to protect Cape Town. He furthermore pointed out the difficulty in purchasing modern weapons, as Britain was only willing to sell obsolete equipment.<sup>48</sup> On 2 May 1939, after Sauer had accused him of providing a false picture of the state of the UDF's readiness and that South African troops would be mere cannon fodder if they had to meet a well-equipped force, Pirow made it clear to parliament that the army was in no state to participate in a major war.<sup>49</sup>

On 8 May 1939, on Pirow's initiative, the government started a National Reserve registration, a voluntary registration of men, not part of the ACF, who were willing to do military service in a war situation. The *Cape Times* (11 May 1939) enthusiastically reported that the Department of Defence had distributed 250 000 registration forms, while an intake of 1 700 ACF recruits was accommodated to do their military training. The NP-supporting *Die Burger* (29 May 1939), also with a tone of satisfaction, reported that only English speakers and Jews were registering. On 8 August 1939, the newspaper announced with glee that hardly any Afrikaners had registered.

### **Bush carts, 1939**

As part of the measures to strengthen the defence of the country, Pirow played a leading role in the development of the bush cart, a type of Scotch cart with one shaft and two large spoked wheels pulled by two oxen or mules. For a man obsessed with the desire to have the latest weapons, the bush cart seemed an odd acquisition. However, for Pirow, who was convinced that in any future European war involving Italy or Germany, the British colonies of Kenya and Tanganyika would form South Africa's strategic frontier,<sup>50</sup> they were the perfect means to convey material in rough terrain for bush warfare. Here he was influenced by *The South Africans with General Smuts in German East Africa* (1939) of General Jack Collyer, a former mounted infantryman with 50 years of service in Africa and the UDF's former chief of staff during the First World War. Collyer discounted mechanised transport in Africa; only mounted troops could be counted on.<sup>51</sup> The bush carts were formally unveiled at the end of July 1939.<sup>52</sup> On 8



and 9 August 1939, the UDF held a field exercise with 1 000 men and bush carts in the northern Transvaal near Tzaneen. The object of the exercise was to test the bush carts under active service conditions by transporting equipment through virgin bush country with no roads while the air force had to find the convoy from the air.<sup>53</sup> The *Cape Times* special correspondent observing the exercise bubbled over in his admiration and respect for Pirow and declared the manoeuvres exceptionally successful,<sup>54</sup> an attitude shared by the editor of the *Cape Times* on in a leading article “Our Bushveld frontier”:

The combination of the primitive ox-drawn cart on the one hand, and the most modern instrument of warfare on the other may indeed point to a solution of the difficulties peculiar to military operations on our northern frontier and far beyond it. The aeroplane will be indispensable, if only for the purpose of reconnoitring, but motor vehicles and even tanks may have to make way for a sturdier, more elastic conveyance, manned by soldiers of a race that possesses a natural aptitude for what Mr Pirow yesterday called bushcraft.<sup>55</sup>

### **The UDF, August 1939**

In August 1939, the UDF consisted of 260 officers and 4 600 men (of whom 2 080 were in the air force), the SSB had a strength of 1 900 men, and the ACF boasted 950 officers and 14 000 men. The air force had one Blenheim bomber, one Fairey Battle bomber, four Hurricane fighters and 63 obsolete Hawker Hartbeest planes, and 230 training aircraft. With regard to armaments, the army had two obsolete medium tanks, two outdated armoured cars, two armoured trains, a number of artillery pieces with only 941 rounds of ammunition, and eight anti-aircraft guns.<sup>56</sup> Although numerically small and poorly armed, the UDF had undergone a dramatic improvement under Pirow’s control since 1933. As Ian Van der Waag points out, “South Africa’s defences reached a peak in 1939 and were in a better state of preparation than any other time in its peacetime history.”<sup>57</sup> Evert Kleynhans, although critical of Pirow’s lack of strategic planning, concurs and concludes that, in terms of improvements to the military, the period between 1933 and 1939 was a “Pirowian renaissance”.<sup>58</sup> In a series of articles that were to be published in 1937 as a booklet, the military correspondent of the *Cape Argus* praised Pirow’s “tireless zeal and impatience” in improving the UDF from its “quite useless proportions” in 1933.<sup>59</sup>

### **Outbreak of the Second World War and the resignation of the Hertzog government, September 1939**

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, leading to Britain’s declaration of war on 3 September. Pirow told TC Robertson of the *Sunday Times* that it would take at least six months before a decision would be taken by South Africa to declare war.<sup>60</sup> To Pirow’s surprise, Hertzog’s motion of neutrality was defeated in parliament, splitting the UP and ending Pirow’s career as a government minister. The outbreak of the war shattered the political mould. Pirow’s former NP enemies, who continued to loathe him, were now his allies as Hertzog’s followers formed a united party with the NP, called the Herenigde Nasionale Party (Reunited National Party) (HNP). On the other hand,

most of Pirow's former allies in the UP felt betrayed by his support for neutrality and believed that he had taken them for fools by operating under false political colours, and they treated him with icy disdain. The editors of UP-supporting newspapers, feeling embarrassed by its earlier praise of Pirow, participated in a whispering campaign that left the UDF in a mess. This was after Smuts – as the new Prime Minister and Minister of Defence – had informed John Martin, chairman and managing director of the Argus press group, that Pirow had left the UDF in “woeful state of unpreparedness” for any war.<sup>61</sup> These rumours had a political purpose to undermine Pirow who was feared by Smuts as his most dangerous opponent.<sup>62</sup>

Pirow and Smuts had a history of enmity. In the 1929 general election, Pirow had left his safe NP seat in Soutpansberg to confront Smuts in his Standerton constituency. By 1929, rural Afrikaners were no longer willing to support the SAP, especially in the wake of Smuts's opposition to the attempt by the NP to remove black people from the common voters' roll in the Cape Province. Pirow, who described the Standerton contest as a battle in which no quarter was asked for or given, made extensive use of black peril tactics. He accused Smuts of being in favour of the vote for black women. “What a lovely state of affairs it will be when aya [derogatory term for a black woman] goes to the polling booth with a little monkey on her back.”<sup>63</sup> Smuts retained his seat with a small majority of 173 votes. Personal loyalty to him as a hero of the South African War had pulled him through. Between 1929 and 1933, Pirow did not let up in his scathing attacks on Smuts in the House of Assembly, casting sneering doubts on his abilities as leader of the opposition and on his integrity as a politician. As fellow ministers in the Hertzog government after 1933, Pirow and Smuts made a concerted effort to get along. However, the breakup of the Hertzog government provided an opportunity for Smuts to settle an old score.

### **Pirow on the attack**

Pirow, feeling isolated in the HNP and sensitive to the rumours that he had left the UDF in a mess, had a high opinion of himself and expected recognition and respect for his genius. He decided the best way to strengthen his position in the party and parliament was to confront Smuts and smash him in a parliamentary debate. The opportunity arose on 23 January 1940 with Hertzog's motion that the time has come that South Africa's role in the war with Germany should be ended, and peace be restored. In seconding the motion, Pirow launched a vicious personal attack on the prime minister. The day before the debate, an MP had asked him whether it would be a fight with the gloves off. He replied, “not only with the gloves off but with knuckledusters on”.<sup>64</sup> It was no empty threat, as Pirow, who was a master of sarcasm and viciousness to belittle and wound his opponents in debates, attacked Smuts mercilessly. After accusing Smuts of behaving dishonourably in his support of a war against Germany, Pirow defended his own tenure as Minister of Defence.<sup>65</sup> It was a poor speech, unfocused, rambling, and vindictive – creating the perception that he was pursuing a personal vendetta against Smuts. In doing so, Pirow strengthened the alienation of his former supporters in the UP who did not take kindly to his abuse of their beloved party leader. He also did himself no favours with the former NP MPs as he had created the impression that he was pursuing his own

agenda instead of the interests of Afrikaner nationalism. For CR Swart, who had lost his parliamentary seat in the 1938 general election, the speech showed that Pirow was a fool, and that it was a source of derision for friend and foe alike.<sup>66</sup> More ominously, Pirow had aroused the resentment of Smuts who had listened in silence to him, with his face turning red when Pirow was at his most insulting.<sup>67</sup> Smuts was not a person to turn the other cheek, but as a shrewd politician, was awaiting the right opportunity to strike back at Pirow. Until then, he left the counterattacking to his acolytes.

What Pirow did not realise was that his defence of his administration of the Department of Defence provided an opportunity for Smuts to strike at him. Before 23 January 1940, there was only a whispering campaign. Smuts could not afford a public condemnation, as it would elicit the question why he did not raise any concerns about the state of the army while he was in the cabinet with Pirow. There was also the realisation that Pirow could not be held accountable for the inability of the UDF to enter a war immediately. When Deneys Reitz, the Minister of Native Affairs and a close ally of Smuts, met with Anthony Eden in London in October 1939, he pointed out that the UDF was in a deplorable state, but that Pirow had not wilfully run down the armed forces.<sup>68</sup> However, Pirow's blistering attack on Smuts made it possible for the prime minister to unleash a coordinated attack on him. In the lead of the counterattack was PV Pocock, UP MP for Pretoria Central and the chairperson of a committee to investigate South Africa's defence needs. On 25 January, Pocock claimed in the House of Assembly that Pirow had spent none of the money budgeted for defence and that he had left the UDF in a dismal state, leaving the country defenceless. In effect, he accused Pirow of misleading parliament about the true state of the UDF's military readiness, and that his reputation for competence and as a go-getter, was a mere façade.<sup>69</sup> A furious Pirow, who had already used his speaking opportunity in the debate, could only respond with an interjection, "[w]hy don't you ask the Prime Minister?" drawing attention to the fact that, as a fellow cabinet member, Smuts had never criticised his stewardship of the defence portfolio, and had approved of all his defence plans.<sup>70</sup> This was not how the UP supporting press saw it, as in a leading article under the heading "What Pirow didn't" the *Cape Times* (26 January 1940) condemned him for giving the country an army without equipment, artillery without ammunition and an air force without modern planes. The *Rand Daily Mail* dubbed him the "Get nothing done ex-Minister of Defence".<sup>71</sup> It was a shock for Pirow to turn overnight from the blue-eyed boy of the UP-friendly press into what he ruefully described as an "evil person".<sup>72</sup> The shock was aggravated by the lack of support in his own party. For the *Cape Times's* parliamentary correspondent, it was obvious that the former NP MPs enjoyed Pocock's assault on Pirow.<sup>73</sup> A badly bruised Pirow was determined to get back at Smuts. Confident that he could force Smuts to concede that he had left the UDF in a good state, Pirow launched an attack on Smuts on 7 February during the War Measures Bill. His confidence was boosted by the fact that Smuts had retained the high command he had created for the UDF. After condemning him once more for breaking his pledge on neutrality, Pirow challenged Smuts to formulate what was wrong with the UDF.<sup>74</sup> So vehement and personal was his attack that Sauer noted that it was motivated by hatred.<sup>75</sup>

## Smuts's counterattack

Smuts maintained his silence, but behind the scenes, he was preparing a counter-attack with the assistance of General Collyer who had become his military secretary on 11 September.<sup>76</sup> Collyer, a fierce Smuts loyalist, provided him with a detailed memorandum on the state of the UDF in September 1939. The document, compiled early in 1940, was in effect a charge sheet against Pirow, as Collyer held him responsible for the fact that the UDF was unable to fight an immediate war. Ignoring Pirow's statement of 2 May 1939 that the UDF was in no state to participate in a major war, Collyer accused him of exaggerating the preparedness of the UDF to parliament and that his statements were in effect "smoke and mirrors".<sup>77</sup> In his determination to get at Pirow, Collyer resorted to using Sauer's claim that South African troops were so poorly armed that to put them into a combat situation amounted to "nothing less than murder".<sup>78</sup> He ignored Sauer's opposition to the improvement of the UDF as money wasted on British imperial interests. The memorandum was a powerful weapon in the hands of Smuts who was determined to destroy Pirow.

In the defence budget debate on 14 March, a confident Pirow set out to force Smuts to concede that, as a fellow member of the Hertzog government, Smuts had approved and supported Pirow's defence policy, and that Smuts was kept fully informed of the UDF's state of readiness. Pirow rejected the accusations thrown at him as false and unfair, challenging Smuts to provide the facts and figures of his alleged incompetence, or to appoint a parliamentary select committee to investigate his claimed neglect of duty. If the prime minister did not formulate his charges, the country would know that false accusations had been levelled against him.<sup>79</sup> In his response, Smuts protested that he was baffled by Pirow's anger about his silence, as he personally had not laid any charges against him, but in the face of his challenge, he could not remain silent any longer. In a measured tone, he proceeded to savage Pirow's tenure as Minister of Defence as all just grandiose plans and talk. He had no criticism of his five-year plan for the UDF, as it was a good plan, but as Pirow had done nothing but making beautiful speeches, he had failed miserably in implementing the plan. In a mocking tone, with UP MPs encouraging Smuts with loud cheers and laughter, he condemned as a folly the hiring of the HMS Erebus (in September 1939, on the request of Winston Churchill, the loan had been cancelled).<sup>80</sup> In doing so, Smuts distorted events by ignoring the intention to create an anchorage for the monitor at Robben Island by claiming that, with the Erebus moored in Cape Town harbour, it was a greater threat to the city than to any enemy.<sup>81</sup> The firing of its guns would cause great destruction to the docks and would cause half of Cape Town to collapse. Smuts then went on to compare Pirow's 1934 vision and the real state of the UDF in 1939, listing the lack of weapons, including a shortage of 833 Bren machine guns, omitting the fact that not even Smuts could convince the British government to sell them to South Africa.

With a continuous stream of interjections, Pirow attempted to disrupt Smuts's onslaught, but the Prime Minister with contemptuous ease batted them away. Resorting to Collyer's memorandum, Smuts quoted Sauer's "plain murder" claim if the UDF had to face a combat situation. However, the most damaging blow to Pirow came with an

interjection of a UP MP. This was after Smuts had mocked Pirow's intention to create a mechanical battalion, by pointing out that the UDF had only two obsolete tanks, two obsolete armoured cars and two armoured trains. "And bush carts" a UP MP called out.<sup>82</sup> In the aftermath of Germany's destruction of the Polish army with its *blitzkrieg* doctrine of dive bombers and tanks, the bush cart methods seemed comical. With this interjection, UP MPs collapsed into mocking laughter.<sup>83</sup> Smuts then pronounced that he was going to carry out the five-year plan. He concluded on a devastating note:

[T]he fact of the matter is that when the hon. member [Pirow] left the department our defence system even after his five-year plan was something on paper with which we could not go out to face any enemy, it was more of a danger than a protection to the country, and in those circumstances the hon. member has no reason for boasting of his achievements.<sup>84</sup>

Within a few minutes, Smuts had destroyed Pirow's reputation. After 14 March 1940, any speech by Pirow would be interrupted with calls of "bush cart", and mocking laughter. In responding to his speeches, UP speakers would brush it off, as any comment by the creator of the bush cart strategy was not worthy of any consideration.<sup>85</sup> In contrast to the UP's hounding of Pirow, there was little support for Pirow in the HNP's parliamentary caucus. The former NP MPs, after years of being on the receiving end of his sneering sarcasm, relished the fact that Smuts had humiliated him. In his recollections, Pirow admitted that he had found the open pleasure these MPs derived from his savaging far more painful than the attack itself.<sup>86</sup> Sauer was one of those who made no attempt to hide his satisfaction. In a letter to CR Swart, Sauer expressed his admiration for the cool and calm way Smuts had cut Pirow down to size. For him, Pirow's failure in the defence budget debate was final proof that he was a political lightweight:

I never knew that Pirow could be so utterly useless as I now discover ... Blackie [Swart], you must come and help. This utter superficial, frivolous bantam rooster will become a great danger for us in the future. (author's translation)<sup>87</sup>

Smuts's hatchet job on Pirow led to jubilation in the UP-supporting press. *Die Suidersstem* (15 March 1940), which until September 1939 was sycophantic in its admiration of Pirow, praised the speech as "Pirow ontmasker" (Pirow unmasked). The HNP-supporting newspapers were lukewarm in their support of Pirow. *Die Burger* had a tradition of reporting parliamentary debates in the most heroic light for NP MPs. The furthest the newspaper would go was to point out that Pirow was on the defensive against Smuts, and that his debating performances were improving.<sup>88</sup> The lack of support by his own party harmed Pirow, as he was an effective speaker when the political tide and wind were favourable, but not so when he had to deal with a hostile House.<sup>89</sup>

During Smuts's attack, a seething Pirow promised that he would respond during the committee stage of the defence budget. Four days later, he had his opportunity, condemning the prime minister's claims on the state of the UDF as preposterous. However, the main aim of his attack was to damage Smuts's reputation as a war leader by

claiming that the cancellation of the loan of the Erebus had left Cape Town at the mercy of German naval raiders. Against what the parliamentary representative of the *Cape Times* described as “uproarious government laughter”,<sup>90</sup> Smuts once more portrayed the hiring of the HMS Erebus as a costly and grandiose scheme that was more a danger to the city than to the enemy.<sup>91</sup> Smuts kept the pressure on Pirow, as on 15 April, in the Committee of Supply for the Department of Defence, he once more attacked him for leaving the UDF practically speaking, in an unarmed and hopeless state. In effect, Smuts accused Pirow of being a liar, as he had left the country with the wrong impression that “our defence was in a magnificent state”.<sup>92</sup>

### **The Blackwell debacle**

Pirow responded that it was Smuts who was misleading the country with deliberate false statements, as he knew that Britain had refused to sell modern armaments, such as machine guns. As Pirow for once controlled his passions and temper, he levelled the accusation in a tone of sorrow that a former cabinet colleague could attack him in such a way. In this, he was supported by Klasie Havenga, the highly respected former Minister of Finance, who pointed out that Smuts, as a member of the Hertzog government, was jointly responsible for the state of the UDF, especially as Pirow had taken him into his confidence on military affairs.<sup>93</sup> It was an effective counter-attack, but Pirow’s behaviour after Havenga’s speech destroyed any possible positive outcome.

Pirow left his seat when Leslie Blackwell, UP MP for Kensington, started to address the chamber, condemning his attack on Smuts. Blackwell shouted that he had to remain seated and Pirow snarled back, “[a]re you so important” and stormed out of the chamber. An outraged Blackwell exploded, “[t]he hon. member is walking out like a whipped pup, frightened as usual to face the music.” He then proclaimed that the dismal state of the UDF was the result of Pirow’s pro-German sympathies. As proof, it was pointed out that Pirow’s daughter had attended a Nazi labour camp in Bavaria. What Blackwell referred to was that Else Pirow, on her way to Germany, had admitted to the *Daily Express* in London in an interview on 6 June 1939, that at home, the Pirows spoke German and thought in German, and that she thought of Germany as “home” and that it was her lifelong ambition to be a good German.<sup>94</sup> Blackwell furthermore claimed that Pirow’s defence policy was a deliberate attempt to sabotage the security of South Africa, and that he was the local version of Vidkun Quisling. (The debate took place against the background of the German invasion of Norway where Quisling, a former Minister of Defence, played a leading role in collaborating with the German invaders.) Blackwell demanded that, instead of a select committee to investigate Pirow’s tenure as Minister of Defence, the House should impeach him for his neglect of duty and for playing a double game.<sup>95</sup> Blackwell in his memoirs after the war ruefully conceded that it “would be wrong to put him [Pirow] down as a mere Quisling”,<sup>96</sup> but in 1940, he had effectively created the image of Pirow as a German agent. During the parliamentary session, Pirow had not made a single pro-Nazi or pro-German statement and the HNP MPs were outraged by the accusation, but he forfeited their support by not facing Blackwell, a man they viewed with contempt as a beyond the pale jingo.<sup>97</sup> His behaviour ultimately destroyed any remaining possibility of him being a leading figure

in the HNP. A desperate Pirow, marginalised and viewed with contempt in his own party as a spent force, and with his parliamentary reputation destroyed, hitched his ambitions to the seemingly unstoppable military might of Nazi Germany with the founding of the national-socialist New Order (NO) of South Africa on 25 September 1940. By 1943, his gamble on a Nazi victory had failed, as Germany's defeat seemed inevitable. He entered the political wilderness with a reputation as a disastrous and much-mocked Minister of Defence with his bush carts.

### **A case of self-destruction**

Keith Hancock, Smuts's best biographer, concedes that to place the blame for the state of the UDF on the shoulders of Pirow was "perhaps unfair", as he was handicapped as neither the government nor the people of South Africa were willing to contemplate any substantial switch of economic resources to produce military weaponry.<sup>98</sup> Pirow was an able administrator, and before 1940, his management of the UDF was not questioned, as he had improved it. However, as FS Crafford, a Smuts biographer of the 1940s points out, the prime minister's savaging of Pirow served the political purpose of the hour – to boost the confidence of the hard-pressed UP with its small parliamentary majority, to enhance his own reputation as a parliamentary strategist, and to weaken Pirow as a dangerous opponent. Smuts deprived Pirow of the confidence of the electorate by stripping him of his reputation for thoroughness and administrative ability.<sup>99</sup> For the rest of his life, it rankled with Pirow that Smuts, who was informed of his bush cart methods, had used it to destroy him.<sup>100</sup> In reality, the shattering of his reputation was a case of self-destruction. As Blackwell gleefully informed the House of Assembly, "[t]he hon. gentleman who conducts the campaign against the hon. member for Gezina is the hon. member for Gezina himself. He is his own worst enemy in the House."<sup>101</sup>

By turning his administration of the Ministry of Defence into a public issue, Pirow had created the perception that he was a thin-skinned egoist who cared more for his own reputation than for the state of his country, and that he was pursuing a petty vendetta against Smuts. In doing so, he provided an opening for Smuts to attack him, as the prime minister reminded him while putting the boot in during the defence budget debate, "[y]es, the hon. member does not like this accusation and I would never have made it if he had not made this challenging speech of his."<sup>102</sup>

The attack on Pirow was so savage that, according to the journalist GH Calpin, "[p]erhaps on no occasion has a South African minister had to undergo such a scathing indictment." Pirow buckled under the onslaught and overnight, the confident and feared political gladiator collapsed into a self-pitying whinger that either stormed out of the House when under attack, or "glowered in fury and blanched in anger".<sup>103</sup> For Leif Egeland, the UP MP for Zululand and a former friend and admirer, he cut a pathetic figure in the face of these merciless attacks.<sup>104</sup> Most MPs would have concurred with Rudyard Kipling's memorable line in his iconic poem "If" that, if you could meet triumph and disaster and treat these imposters as the same, you would be a man. Pirow's lack of mettle to cope with disaster after years of triumph and success left him a diminished figure in parliament, and especially in the HNP. After the 1940 parliamentary session,

his reputation would never recover despite his attempts to rehabilitate himself with his recollections in the NO's newssheet *Die Nuwe Orde*, and in his biography of Hertzog. He died in 1959 with an established reputation as a disastrous Minister of Defence.

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## ENDNOTES

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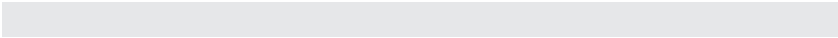
- <sup>1</sup> Prof FA Mouton studied at the University of Pretoria, and lecture modern South African History at the University of South Africa. He is the author of biographies on Margaret and William Ballinger, Schalk Pienaar, FS Malan, and a group biography on the leaders of the South African Parliamentary opposition between 1992 and 1993. This article is part of a biographical project on Oswald Pirow. The author is indebted to Tilman Dederer and Ian van der Waag, as well as the *Scientia Militaria* referees, for their insights.
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# China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative: A quest for sea power

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## Abstract

Much has been written about China's deep ambitions as the country moves towards great power status. The Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) is just one example of how China is flexing its muscles, and if history is to be believed, there is a strong correlation between maritime success and national economic prosperity. The study, on which this article reports, examined China's MSRI through the lens of sea power theory. It was argued that the New Silk Road, which will most likely be backed by a modern blue-water navy, could represent a new era of maritime supremacy. However, to see the MSRI as a pursuit of sea power requires an understanding of how maritime logistics functions as power. The seamless movement of goods across the ocean is at the heart of the MSRI. Therefore, the research question that was pursued related to how maritime logistics functions as a tool for power projection. Although sea power theory recognises merchant shipping as a core element of sea power, it was further argued that scholarly work in critical logistics and mobility studies could enhance our understanding of logistical power. The study therefore aimed to conceptualise the MSRI through the lens of sea power by highlighting maritime logistics as a strategic conduit for power projection.

**Keywords:** sea power, tianxia, logistics, People's Liberation Army Navy, Maritime Silk Road Initiative

## Introduction

The Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) and its cousin project, the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), were announced separately in 2013 by Chinese president Xi Jinping.<sup>2</sup> Together, the two projects are commonly referred to as the "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) or the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI). On land, the SREB aims to bring together China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe by building a thoroughfare or land bridge across the Eurasian landmass.<sup>3</sup> The MSRI is, at least in the imagination, based on the ancient Silk Road that stretched from Fuzhou (a coastal city in Fujian, China) and then went to Southeast Asia through the South China Sea (SCS). From Southeast Asia, the route went through the Malacca Strait into the Indian Ocean, and then via the Mediterranean to Europe.<sup>4</sup> Historians agree that silk was only one of the valuable items that were traded along the ancient Silk Road.<sup>5</sup> According to Andrea, ideas and culture were the historically more significant "commodities" that were traded along these routes.<sup>6</sup> Many scholars analyse the SREB and MSRI concurrently. However,

Blanchard and Flint caution that, given the many differences in political, economic and social aspects, the two initiatives are distinct projects and should be analysed separately.<sup>7</sup>

The MSRI has received much attention since it was announced in 2013. On the one hand, some view the initiative purely as a win-win approach to economic development for China and its partners. For example, Koboević et al. see the initiative as “promoting shared development and prosperity, peace, and friendship, through enhancing mutual understanding, trust, and exchanges”.<sup>8</sup> They go as far as to say that the initiative has no military or political objectives. On the other hand, some are more sceptical of China’s approach to building the MSRI. Thorne and Spevack argue that there is a mismatch between what Beijing wants the world to believe about the MSRI and Beijing’s harboured ambitions.<sup>9</sup> They point out that Chinese analysts routinely prioritise China’s strategic interests in their discussions on the MSRI. Ameyaw-Brobbeey concludes that China’s approach to building the MSRI is questionable.<sup>10</sup> Many developing countries who take up Chinese loans for infrastructural development are left indebted to China. This situation, according to Ameyaw-Brobbeey, increases global security problems, among other issues.

Although such opposing views on the MSRI are undoubtedly provocative, the literature on the subject so far has mostly been descriptive and shunned the use of academic concepts from geopolitics and international relations (IR).<sup>11</sup> Xin Zhang, who views the MSRI from the perspective of world systems theory, is among the few scholars who apply theoretical lenses in analysing the MSRI.<sup>12</sup> Some scholars also focus on the local implications of the MSRI in various locations. Styan, for example, examined the implications of the MSRI for Djibouti.<sup>13</sup> Karim explored the opportunities and challenges of the MSRI for the Bay of Bengal region.<sup>14</sup> Lim discusses the place of Africa in China’s MSRI.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, such work contributes much to understanding the local implications of the MSRI. However, neither opposing nor locally specific scholarly work on the MSRI can help us navigate the complexity of the initiative. Using a theoretical lens could therefore enhance our understanding of the MSRI from a certain perspective. Like maps, theoretical lenses can help us simplify a complicated world.<sup>16</sup> Olivier et al. remind us that theoretical lenses in IR could help explain the social dynamics of the world in which we live.<sup>17</sup> In this article, the author proposes sea power theory as a theoretical lens for analysing the MSRI. The author argues that sea power theory has much explanatory power, which can be further increased by scholarly work in critical logistics and mobility studies.

In 1889, Mahan wrote that whoever dominates the sea with maritime trade and naval power, would have a significant influence in the world.<sup>18</sup> His theory on sea power emphasised, among other things, the intricate connection between maritime trade and naval power. Mahan’s ideas are not foreign in China. His work is widely read by both promoters and sceptics of sea power.<sup>19</sup> For a long time in China, there was a debate about whether China should pursue sea power.<sup>20</sup> However, for China, turning to the sea is no longer an option but a matter of survival. Xin Zhang points out that Chinese capitalism is in crisis and in need of a “spatial fix”.<sup>21</sup> With thirty years of economic growth, China now finds itself with huge surpluses with no local market to absorb them

all. Xin Zhang argues that the MSRI is a way for China to gain access to foreign markets and global resources. Therefore, the sea, as the road that leads to everywhere, is vital for China's 'going out' strategy, and the MSRI is a big part of it. The debate, therefore, is no longer about whether China should pursue sea power, but rather about the direction of its development.<sup>22</sup>

Zhang Wei contends that for China, sea power cannot be pursued in Mahanian fashion, which hinges on the decisiveness of sea battles.<sup>23</sup> He points out that we live in a globalised world where cooperative development is mainstream. For this reason, China has been studying the failures and successes of former great powers in the West, among which is Imperial Germany under Otto von Bismarck. According to Holmes and Yoshihara, Otto von Bismarck is a revered figure in China for adopting a benign and low-profile grand strategy for the development of Imperial Germany.<sup>24</sup> The Bismarckian model of grand strategy is one that promotes cooperative economic growth while allaying suspicion among neighbouring states.<sup>25</sup> China, according to Holmes and Yoshihara, strives to replicate the Bismarckian model of grand strategy.<sup>26</sup> The win-win stance towards the MSRI can therefore be seen as China's ambition to rise peacefully within the international system. As will be argued in this article, sea power for China will not be centred on the navy. Rather, it will revolve around sea-based hyperconnectivity mainly through the MSRI. As Cowen clarifies, China might be better understood as a logistical empire.<sup>27</sup> This, however, does not mean that the navy has become irrelevant. Indeed, as will be discussed later in this article, the conditions for trade – to move goods across the ocean – must be protected.

This study, on which this article reports, aimed to conceptualise the MSRI through the lens of sea power theory by highlighting maritime logistics as a strategic conduit for power projection. To further our understanding of how maritime logistics functions as power, the author turns to the disciplines of critical logistics and mobility studies where scholars are investigating logistics as a logic of capitalism. It is argued that the scholarship in these disciplines could enhance the explanatory strength of sea power theory as far as the MSRI is concerned. In terms of strategy, the naval side of sea power is well developed. However, maritime logistics, as the other side of sea power, still lacks behind in terms of theorisation. For this reason, maritime logistics as sea power might need further elaboration beyond traditional sea power theory.

### **The twenty-first century maritime Silk Road**

The imagination of the twenty-first century Silk Road is based on the ancient trade routes formally established during the Han dynasty in China (206 BC–AD 220).<sup>28</sup> The name itself derives from the primary commodity exported by the Chinese, which was silk. Due to the huge surpluses of the legendary Han dynasty, trade routes were established to connect China with the West and the South, as China sought foreign markets for its products. Today, China wants the same expansion to the West and the South as its surpluses grow again.<sup>29</sup> Proponents of the twenty-first century Silk Road emphasise connectivity through trade, investment opportunities and infrastructural development. The Maritime Silk Road (MSR) covers dozens of countries with a total

population of three billion people.<sup>30</sup> However, Stenberg et al. remind us that creating infrastructure requires residents, communities, governments and physical embodiments of the nation-state.<sup>31</sup> Given this situation, the MSRI faces numerous geopolitical challenges ahead. China has already approached all countries along the sea routes seeking their partnership.<sup>32</sup>

To its partners, China presents the MSRI as a mutually beneficial and collective approach to economic development. While China seeks to boost its growth through foreign markets, the idea is that member states will accelerate economic development through the construction of much-needed infrastructure.<sup>33</sup> Africa has also been included in the overall BRI. As far as the MSRI is concerned, infrastructural development to be undertaken in Africa includes the development of deep-water ports in African cities such as Bizerte (Tunisia), Dakar (Senegal), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Djibouti City (Djibouti), Libreville (Gabon), Maputo (Mozambique) and Tema (Ghana).<sup>34</sup> These ports will connect with the MSR as they are meant to serve large commercial ships coming from Asia. According to Aneja, these ships will be laden with food and industrial products from Asia and will return with raw materials from Africa.<sup>35</sup> Brautigam believes that China's exchange of infrastructure for Africa's natural resources is based on China's own positive experience when China exchanged its oil for Japanese industrial technology in the 1970s.<sup>36</sup> It was the Japanese technology – argues Brautigam – that enabled China to achieve economic growth during the 1980s. So far, Africa's reliance on the exportation of natural resources has proved to be tragic for the continent. Most mineral-rich countries in Africa have not been able to achieve satisfactory economic growth from mining revenues.<sup>37</sup> On the contrary, most countries have performed very poorly, giving rise to what is known as “the resource curse.”<sup>38</sup> The resource curse hypothesis holds that countries rich in mineral resources exhibit poor economic growth compared to resource-poor countries.<sup>39</sup> The role of Africa in the MSRI indeed requires a much-needed discussion.

Djibouti is a good example of China's investments in Africa. Since 2013, China has been investing heavily in ports and railways in Djibouti.<sup>40</sup> For China, the small Red Sea state is key to securing Chinese trade and building a naval presence in the region.<sup>41</sup> In Djibouti, home to China's first overseas naval base, the connection between the MSRI and the navy cannot be missed. Like the MSRI, the proposal to establish the military facility in Djibouti was also put forward in 2013.<sup>42</sup> The timing was significant because one of the missions of the naval base is to secure the BRI.<sup>43</sup> Odgaard points out that in East Africa, China is simultaneously carrying out the mandate of the United Nations in peacekeeping operations, while pursuing its own objectives related to the BRI.<sup>44</sup> Although the Chinese naval base in Djibouti is justified as a logistics support station, the facility demonstrates impeccable military capabilities, such as the capacity to accommodate more than a brigade-strength force, a unique four-layered security fence, and the capacity to handle a dozen helicopters.<sup>45</sup> This goes against the view by some that the MSRI has no military objectives. Even today, where maritime commerce flows relatively unmolested, the conditions for trade must be protected.<sup>46</sup>



In 2014, President Xi paid a visit to the Maldives where a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed to increase trade and tourism in the country. The MOU also meant that the Maldives were now official members of the MSRI.<sup>47</sup> For the MSRI to succeed, China also has to win the trust of wary neighbours, such as Vietnam, Russia and India.<sup>48</sup> According to Khurana, China–India relations will be a crucial determinant of the geopolitical, economic and security environment of Asia. Lately, both countries have emerged as significant economies with growing maritime interests. Therefore, the success of the MSRI also hinges on good relations between China and India, especially on matters concerning the maritime domain.<sup>49</sup> China, therefore, has good reasons why it should seek to emulate the Bismarckian model of grand strategy. Whether or not that is possible, is another matter.

Within the academic community, the views on the motivating factors of the BRI vary greatly. Sternberg et al.<sup>50</sup> made a collection of some of these views, among which are –

- the internationalisation of the Yuan;
- gaining access to natural resources;
- increasing Chinese soft power and goodwill;
- reducing unskilled unemployment in China;
- improving local transportation links; and among others,
- creating an empire.

According to Clover and Hornby, the MSRI is taking shape against the backdrop of a faltering economy and a military rising in strength.<sup>51</sup> The MSRI, and the BRI at large, is increasingly viewed as a way of defining China’s place in the world – which, according to China, is at the centre stage.<sup>52</sup> Nohara argues that there is more to China’s maritime power than material interpretations, such as navies, coastguards and the maritime economy.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, there are cultural considerations that shape the outlook of nations. As Mahan reminds us, success at sea also depends on the character of the people and the government.<sup>54</sup>

It appears that the revival of the Silk Road is happening simultaneously with the revitalisation of the ancient Chinese philosophy of *tianxia*, meaning ‘all under heaven’.<sup>55</sup> According to Zhao, the Chinese concept of *tianxia* is a theory about world politics which was invented about three thousand years ago during the Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BC).<sup>56</sup> *Tianxia* was organised in three concentric circles, with the emperor at the centre, followed by major and minor officials, and finally the fringe ‘barbarians’ on the outermost circle. From the *tianxia* perspective, the country at the centre, which is ruled by the emperor, should care about the well-being of others. Furthermore, *tianxia* has no boundaries and has no self–other division. All are united under the heaven.<sup>57</sup> The BRI seems to be grounded in the cultural context of *tianxia*. As Colin Gray points out, all strategic behaviour is cultural behaviour.<sup>58</sup> For Gray, culture matters because it shapes the process of strategy-making and gives meaning to events. If the MSRI is part of China’s grand strategy – as argued by many – then *tianxia* not only shapes China’s strategy-making but also gives meaning to it.

Along with the *tianxia* view of the world, is the humiliation narrative that serves as a starting point for how China interacts with other nations.<sup>59</sup> China stills feel as if its central role in world affairs was weakened by Western incursions that began with the Opium Wars in the 1840s.<sup>60</sup> As China emerges as a global power, many Chinese scholars wonder whether it is now time to promote and construct *tianxia*, not just for the benefit of China, but also for the whole world.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, connecting the world through the MSRI and SREB seems very much like a construction of a *tianxiaist* world system. This system, the argument goes, is vastly different from the Eurocentric view based on imperialism.<sup>62</sup> In China, there is a growing thirst for Chinese solutions to world problems.<sup>63</sup> Could the BRI and, more specifically, the MSR, be the vehicle for ushering in the *tianxia* world view? After all, history has a lot to say about those who became powerful based on what they did at sea.

### Sea power as a theoretical lens

From the very beginning of recorded history, nations have sought to be powerful at sea.<sup>64</sup> Countries that recognised the value of sea power had and continue to have an economic and strategic advantage over those who do not.<sup>65</sup> Till defines sea power both as an input and an output.<sup>66</sup> As an input, sea power includes navies, coastguards and civilian maritime industries. As an output, sea power is more than just what it takes to use the sea. It is also about the ability to influence the behaviour of others based on what one does at sea. Given these definitions, Till arrives at two conclusions about the nature of sea power. First, he concludes that sea power is more than the navy. It also includes the non-military use of the sea, such as merchant shipping, fishing, shipbuilding, and other maritime-related capabilities. Second, Till concludes that sea power is a relative concept. Nearly all countries have some degree of sea power based on their capacity to build ships, their naval strength, their ability to provide seafarers and other means of exploiting the maritime domain. For Till, the real utility of sea power therefore lies in using the sea as an asset for various purposes.<sup>67</sup>

Mahan – a mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century naval theorist – wrote, “whoever rules the waves rules the world”.<sup>68</sup> In his book, *The influence of sea power upon history*, Mahan argues that the power and prosperity of a nation depend on controlling the world’s sea-lanes. His work influenced the naval strategies of many navies around the world.<sup>69</sup> Even officers of the Imperial Japanese Navy that invaded Pearl Harbour had a copy of Mahan’s book on board their ships,<sup>70</sup> and the book is still read in many naval and military academies around the world. Mahan believed that sea power was a decisive element in determining the course of history. In his book, he refers to how Britain, a small country with almost no natural resources, built the biggest empire in the world on the back of sea power. According to Mahan, the British Empire was founded on sea power, and in turn, sea power was founded on trade. However, Mahan was careful not to present sea power as a standalone element of national power. Instead, he aimed at “putting maritime interests in the foreground without divorcing them from surrounding causes and effects”.<sup>71</sup>

Mahan's thinking on sea power focuses primarily on the navy. In his book, he recognises that merchant shipping is an essential element of sea power. For him, the history of sea power was mostly a military history, while international politics was all about contestation and, if necessary, the use of force to secure the benefits of sea power for one's own people. While developing his theory of sea power, Mahan emphasised the need for foreign stations or ports for projecting power abroad. Without foreign establishments, Mahan contended, the warships of the United States would be like land birds that are unable to fly too far away from their shores. The need for foreign ports relates to the three requirements Mahan proposes for countries bordering the sea – production, shipping and colonies or markets. At the time of his writing, America had significant surpluses, and Mahan was calling for the country to look outwards for foreign markets. For Mahan, the most crucial national characteristic of sea power is the tendency to trade and the production of something with which to trade. Today, some question the relevance of Mahan's thinking on sea power. Writing on naval warfare specifically, Ian Speller argues that, even though naval tactics change over time, there is much continuity at the strategic and operational levels.<sup>72</sup> This suggests that Mahan's work might perhaps still be relevant today.

To succeed upon the sea in the twenty-first century, Till offers four attributes of the sea that a maritime nation must exploit, namely the sea as a resource (as a stock resource), as a medium of transportation (as a flow resource), as a medium of information, and as a medium for dominion.<sup>73</sup> The navy plays a crucial role in ensuring good order at sea, without which it would be nearly impossible to take full advantage of the four attributes of the sea. It was this very connection between the navy and merchant shipping that Mahan emphasised in his theory of sea power. At the time of Mahan's writing, merchant shipping provided the wealth to the nation, and in turn, the nation protected its merchant ships with the navy. Although times have changed since the days of Mahan, the maritime narrative remains. About 90 per cent of global trade is carried by sea, and recently, there has been talk about the emerging blue economy, which has the potential to transform the economies of many nations.<sup>74</sup>

Many parallels can be drawn between America during the days of Mahan and China today. First, by the late nineteenth century, America had all the characteristics of an empire, including an expanded conception of security and a strong rationale for outward expansion.<sup>75</sup> Today, China finds itself in the same situation. With over three decades of fast economic growth, China is showing signs of overproduction, economic stagnation and decreasing returns on capital.<sup>76</sup> With increasing resource demands, China has also expanded its scope of security to include far-flung regions.<sup>77</sup> Second, because of overproduction in nineteenth-century America, a more substantial interest in shipping appeared. Outwards, expansion by sea became a matter of survival for America during that period.<sup>78</sup> Today, China is forced to expand both by sea and land to address the crisis of overproduction and to claim its share of international resources. Like America in the late nineteenth century, China's survival hinges on the ability to move goods to and from distant nations. Therefore, the routes to be established for the BRI are like blood vessels that will sustain China's very livelihood. Third, late nineteenth-century America needed foreign markets to consume its surpluses. Likewise, China is building the MSRI and

the SREB for this very reason. China today is attempting to bring together production, shipping and markets (colonies), which Mahan calls the “three links” of sea power.<sup>79</sup>

What then does China think of its own sea power? How is the view that the rise of China represents a military, economic and ideological threat to the West seen? The Chinese, according to Jian Yang, reject the “China threat theory”.<sup>80</sup> For them, the rise of China is seen in the light of national rejuvenation and the restoration of China’s place in the world. China’s rise, according to the Chinese, is about getting back what was lost and not about gaining anything new.<sup>81</sup> If this is indeed how the Chinese interpret their rise in international relations, their conception of sea power must reflect similar characteristics.

### **Sea power with Chinese characteristics**

Wei and Ahmed argue that China must build sea power with Chinese characteristics.<sup>82</sup> According to them, the first such characteristic is “big-picture highly centralised strategic planning that aligns with China’s national strategy regarding peaceful progress toward a harmonious world and its foreign strategy”.<sup>83</sup> The authors offer more characteristics of Chinese sea power, among which are:

- to embody the core values of socialism with Chinese characteristics;
- to give priority to the maritime economy;
- to emphasise comprehensive security and cooperative security; and
- the limited use of military and paramilitary forces at sea.

Zhang Wenmu, a prominent sea power proponent in China, believes that sea power in the Chinese context is fundamentally different from the Western conception.<sup>84</sup> In his view, sea power according to Western ideas denotes ‘maritime power’. The Chinese conception, however, is about ‘maritime rights’, which pertain to Chinese sovereignty. For Zhang Wenmu, with sea power, the Chinese do not seek maritime power, much less maritime hegemony, but rather seek their share of sea rights which any country naturally possesses. According to the Chinese version of sea power, ‘sea rights’ are considered an extension of national sovereignty. Sea power, therefore, is limited to the means for preserving national interests at sea.<sup>85</sup> In the Chinese version of sea power, Zhang Wenmu explains that the application of naval force cannot exceed China’s scope of sea rights. Among these rights are China’s territorial claims in the SCS. China, along with several other countries in the region, has laid claims to portions of the SCS, which remain unresolved to this day. For China, its claims in the SCS are historically derived and must be pursued as part of China’s maritime rights.<sup>86</sup> According to Fravel, China has increased its diplomatic, administrative and military efforts since the mid-2000s to deter other nations from laying claims to the SCS. Thus far, though, China’s use of its navy in the SCS has been secondary to diplomatic and administrative means.<sup>87</sup> It remains to be seen how competing sea rights in the SCS are settled in the future.

## The other side of sea power

The term 'sea power' still evokes militarism, or more specifically navalism. Sea power and navalism have almost been absorbed into one another to mean the same thing. The reality, however, is that sea power has several components that are difficult to tease apart. Iliopoulos reminds us that sea power is also about geography, geopolitics, geo-strategy, geo-economics and geo-culture.<sup>88</sup> Understanding this is critical for loosening sea power from the ontological confines of navalism. By using 'loosening', the author does not intend to conceptualise sea power without the naval element. Rather, the aim is to point to maritime logistics as the under-examined side of sea power. As discussed earlier, Till provides four attributes of the sea, which, when exploited, brings maritime success.<sup>89</sup> Among these four attributes is the ability to use the sea as a flow resource. Although the MSRI hinges on all four attributes of the sea, the one most relevant to this study was the sea as medium of transportation and exchange. To delve deeper into how maritime logistics functions as power, the author turns to the disciplines of critical logistics and mobility studies. This approach, the author argues, makes up for the lack of theorisation concerning logistical power in traditional sea power theory.

Scholars in critical logistics and mobility studies recognise the military as the progenitors of logistics.<sup>90</sup> They point out that the success of logistics in the military led to it being transformed into a business science in the years after World War II (WWII).<sup>91</sup> Following the war, logistics was recognised as the last unexplored frontier for capital accumulation. In the factories, automation and mechanisation were no longer bringing in the desired profits, and firms were forced to look elsewhere to maximise profits. What then followed was a revolution in logistics where the sites of circulation became the new sites of profitability.<sup>92</sup> The logistics revolution smashed the factory walls and brought together the sites of production and the sites of circulation.<sup>93</sup> Cowen argues that the logistics revolution was a "leap in the calculation of economic space".<sup>94</sup> In maritime logistics, cost savings came primarily from reducing time to loading and unloading ships. There were also profits to be made by reducing labour in favour of mechanising ports. As countries embrace transnational trade agreements to accelerate growth, old ports are being modernised and new ones are being constructed.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, logistical power has become central to national competitiveness.<sup>96</sup> In a world of hyperconnectivity, those nations better able to move goods in a timely and reliable manner gain a competitive advantage over those without such capabilities.<sup>97</sup>

Neilson provides five theses for understanding logistics as power.<sup>98</sup> The **first** is that logistics provides an unexamined background to contemporary capitalist ways of being and knowing. Here he argues that understanding logistics as the unexamined background of capitalism raises many important political questions, among which is the relationship between capitalism and the state. The **second** thesis he offers is that logistics has begun to lead strategy and tactics. Being fundamentally a military concept, logistics played a decisive role in the unfolding of wars and, ultimately, human history. **Third**, Neilson contends that logistical power is political power. He argues that understanding logistics as power requires a rethinking of the political. Even if politics is understood within the Clausewitzian framework that revolves around strategy and tactics, logistics, according

to Neilson, is hidden in the detail. Therefore, to borrow Clausewitz's dictum that "war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means",<sup>99</sup> Neilson's third thesis can be summarised as follows: logistics is the continuation of politics by other means. **Fourth**, logistics negotiates the heterogeneity of global space and time. In other words, logistical power mediates the 'here and there' as well as the 'now and then'. In a logistically globalised world, what happens across the ocean could have instantaneous local effects. The **fifth** and final thesis is that logistics produces subjectivity. One way by which logistics does this is by replacing logistics workers by automatons that make up the totality of profitability in the circulatory system.

Some of the theses provided by Neilson are directly relevant to the discussion on the MSRI. Among these is the observation that logistical power is political power. If indeed logistics is the continuation of political intercourse with the addition of other means, then China – the world's top trader – holds much political influence in the world. The MSRI, which passes through at least 65 countries and includes more than a third of the world's population, will only increase China's political influence in the world. The other thesis that is of direct relevance to the MSRI is that logistics negotiates global space and time. Space is mediated, for example, through the construction of maritime infrastructure that renders the land–sea divide irrelevant. Maritime infrastructure is central to the goal of seamless trade sought by many nations. With China investing heavily in the construction of maritime infrastructure in countries along the New Silk Road, the goal is to achieve unimpeded trade by making spatial limitations a thing of the past.

Trade data also support the view that China is a logistical empire. By 'logistical empire', the author simply refers to the centrality of commodity flows for China's economy. With over 90 per cent of China's trade by volume flowing by sea, maritime trade remains the primary engine for China's economic growth.<sup>100</sup> According to trade data from UN Comtrade, China's trade has expanded at a rapid pace over the last two decades.<sup>101</sup> In 1995, China's total export to the world was valued at US\$ 148.8 billion, with total imports valued at US\$ 132 billion. By 2018, China was exporting over US\$ 2.5 trillion worth of goods while importing US\$ 2.1 trillion.<sup>102</sup> China's total trade in goods accounted for 12,4 per cent of global trade in 2018 as opposed to 3 per cent in 1995.<sup>103</sup> For comparative purposes, the United States, which is the second-largest trader, accounted for 11,5 per cent of total global trade in 2018.<sup>104</sup> Although it is not currently possible to determine with exactitude the value of commodities that will be traded along the proposed New Silk Road, what is clear is that China's political influence will grow proportionally with its logistical power.

However, logistics is not alone in shaping contemporary capitalism. According to Mezzadra and Neilson, finance, extraction and logistics are three economic activities that play a central role in shaping contemporary capitalism.<sup>105</sup> Thus, analysing these three should allow us to discern the contours of capitalist development. Finance, they argue, permeates the rationality of capitalism as a system, linking processes of control and manipulation to the lives of entire populations. Mezzadra and Neilson define logistics as "the art and science of building networked relations in ways that promote

transport, communication and economic efficiencies.”<sup>106</sup> Extraction provides the raw materials that drive the capitalist engine through means such as land grabbing, mining and other means of appropriating nature. The MSRI seems to be organised around these very principles of finance, extraction and logistics. The connection between these economic activities is so intricate that it is almost impossible to separate them. China–Africa relations exemplify this intricate relationship between finance, extraction and logistics. Even before the MSRI was announced, the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) had already determined Africa’s role as a supplier of natural resources to China in exchange for Chinese assistance in sectors, such as healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure and finance.<sup>107</sup> The argument is that Africa can transform its resource curse into a tool for economic development. FOCAC, established in 2000 as a win-win approach to economic development between Africa, and China, is therefore complemented and even exceeded by the MSRI.<sup>108</sup>

For China, maritime logistics represents the next frontier of capital accumulation. There is a growing realisation that national competitiveness depends on the seamless mobilisation of goods.<sup>109</sup> Mobility is key for China to address both its overcapacity problem and to gain access to international resources. With considerable investments spread across the globe, China’s conception of security has also expanded. Cowen points out that, if states invest in the seamless flow of goods, they will also invest in securing the conditions that make free flow possible.<sup>110</sup> There is thus an inescapable link between maritime logistics and maritime security. In addition to China’s naval base in Djibouti, some believe that China will establish more bases along the New Silk Road.<sup>111</sup> This, of course, brings us back to Mahan’s thinking about the intricate connection between maritime commerce and the navy.

### **Protectors of the logistical empire**

One of the first signs that a country has growing maritime interests is the increased spending on maritime defence. Over the past three decades, the Chinese Liberation Army Navy (henceforth referred to as ‘the PLAN’ or the ‘Chinese Navy’) grew in numbers and increasingly became more modern and professional, while expanding its scope of operations.<sup>112</sup> Internationally, China seeks to become an essential player in promoting maritime security. Examples of the PLAN’s overseas operations include anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2008.<sup>113</sup> China is also playing an active security role in the broader Middle East, Africa and the Indian Ocean regions.<sup>114</sup> In addition to assisting maritime security efforts, China also seeks to build a naval presence in the region to balance the activities of other navies, especially the Indian navy in the Indian Ocean.<sup>115</sup>

Domestically, co-ordination among China’s other maritime actors – such as maritime law enforcement agencies, local governments and the maritime militia – has been improving, especially under the Xi Jinping administration.<sup>116</sup> Some Chinese civilian vessels have also been reported to partake in the enforcement of China’s maritime rights in the SCS. This trend of mobilising civilians to defend the country is known as the “people’s war at sea”.<sup>117</sup> Thorne and Spevack state that the people’s war at sea extends

beyond just fishermen and trawlers. It suggests that China's entire merchant marine can be used as an extension of military power. Based on these observations, China's maritime interests are growing and the country is taking drastic steps to defend them.<sup>118</sup>

Looking at the initiative from the Chinese perspective, Thorne and Spevack show that the MSRI is principally about China's interests.<sup>119</sup> Their study looked at the country's port investments abroad and how they are strategically placed to secure China's access to vital sea lines of communication. By using Chinese policy documents, statements by politicians, and the views of Chinese analysts, Thorne and Spevack conclude that the unofficial research on the BRI contradicts the benign narrative of official policy. Ultimately, they argue, Chinese analysts prioritise securing China's core interests over the win-win economic development narrative. The question then is to what extent China is willing and able to enforce its maritime rights through military means.

## **Conclusion**

The study on which this article reports sought to conceptualise the MSRI through the lens of sea power theory. The question that was being pursued, was how maritime logistics functions as power. Three main points are worth reiterating in terms of how this question was addressed. First, as the backbone of global trade, maritime logistics is intricately connected to the economic success of nations. The ability to move goods across borders is key to the trade opportunities of a country. For China, the MSRI presents an opportunity for economic prosperity by moving raw materials and goods in and out of the country. Second, the MSRI requires the construction of maritime infrastructure in countries along the proposed routes. It was argued that infrastructure renders the antithesis between land and sea irrelevant and thus facilitates the projection of logistical power ashore. If logistical power is political power – as it is understood in critical logistics and mobility studies – then maritime logistics has the potential to shape events on land in profound ways.

Third, even in today's world where the merchant fleet flows relatively unmolested at sea, disruption (which is the Achilles heel of maritime logistics) remains a threat. For this reason, countries build navies and coastguards to protect their maritime interests and vital sea lines of communication. Referring specifically to the PLAN's naval base in Djibouti, it was argued in this study that there is indeed a connection between maritime logistics and the navy and, more specifically, the MSRI and the PLAN. Furthermore, as China moves to a more dominant position in world politics, there is a need for a navy that is strong and large enough to match the great power status of the country.

Based on the points above, it can be concluded that the MSRI is a pursuit of sea power. As discussed above, the MSRI encompasses economic, political and military power. China already dominates in maritime trade, and the MSRI is set to further that dominant role. China is also simultaneously building a blue-water navy that is gaining ever more recognition in global peacekeeping and anti-piracy operations. Therefore, as China looks seaward, the development of the PLAN and the MSRI seem to be in lockstep. Mahan's thinking about sea power remains relevant today. Although his tactics



may be anachronistic in today's world, there is undoubtedly a sense of continuity in his ideas at the strategic and operational levels. The development direction of China's sea power is testament to Mahan's seemingly timeless outlook that whoever dominates the sea through trade and naval power holds great influence in the world.

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## ENDNOTES

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# **The Smuts Government's justification of the emergency regulations and the impact thereof on the Ossewa-Brandwag, 1939 to 1945**

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## **Abstract**

The Second World War was a dynamic time in the South African past – a time when war was not only fought against foreign enemies but also at home within the Afrikanerdom. The metaphorical battle on the home front had two sides. The one was resistance against the Smuts government's war effort, and the second was the Smuts government's actions to curb internal unrest. The main attempt to dampen the internal unrest manifested itself in the form of various emergency regulations and war measures. These regulations and measures affected the Ossewa-Brandwag, a dualistic organisation within the Afrikanerdom, which would eventually lead the resistance directly against the war effort. This article delves into the Smuts government's justification of the emergency regulations and analyses the impact thereof on the Ossewa-Brandwag.

## **Introduction and contextualisation**

This year, 24 May 2020 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Jan Christiaan Smuts. This commemoration provided the ideal opportunity for academics, and especially historians, to reflect on aspects of Smuts's life and political career. One such aspect is Smuts's role in the Second World War. In short, "Smuts had to fight a war not only on the military but also on the home front".<sup>2</sup> The battle on the home front would manifest itself mainly in the form of Afrikaner resistance to the war effort and, consequently, the introduction of various war measures, including wartime emergency regulations. Blake notes that the Afrikaner resistance to the Smuts government's war effort is not only about "divided loyalties" but also about "betrayal and revenge".<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the division within the Afrikanerdom during the Second World War is, as Blake maintains, "a story that has not yet been fully told".<sup>4</sup>

Anti-war sentiments, closely linked to Afrikaner nationalism, were so commonplace during the Second World War that Grundlingh refers to it as "a corollary of the general thrust of Afrikaner nationalism at the time".<sup>5</sup> The role Smuts had to play in the Second World War therefore comprised two parts. On one side of the spectrum, he had to manage South Africa's participation in the war, and on the other, he had to ensure that the internal situation in South Africa was controlled so that his position as leader was not undermined.<sup>6</sup> As Hancock notes, two varying yet related attitudes appear in Smuts's

writings, “the mood of an observer, trying to understand events in the outer world and their significance for South Africa; the mood of a participant, trying to discover his own duty”.<sup>7</sup> Despite the complicated situation in South Africa, it is clear that Smuts was definitely aware of world events and he did not hold back his opinions. For example, between 1 October 1938 and 23 August 1939, Smuts delivered a total of twenty speeches on international events and their possible effects on South Africa.<sup>8</sup> Smuts is a complex historical figure on whom much research has already been done and on whom much research can still be done:<sup>9</sup> “[d]ifferent people looked at Smuts from different angles and different backgrounds. All researchers in due course encounter extreme difficulty in analysing Smuts’s complex personality.”<sup>10</sup>

Hans van Rensburg, leader of the Ossewa-Brandwag (OB) (the organisation that would later lead the resistance to the war effort), also had a conflicting opinion about Smuts stating, “in spite of his reputation for coldness of heart, Smuts had a very human side to his nature”.<sup>11</sup> As the leader of South Africa during the Second World War, Smuts undoubtedly had an influence not only on the justification of South African participation in the war, but also on the introduction of various measures to stop domestic unrest. This article, therefore, does not seek to analyse Smuts’s personality, but rather to analyse how the Smuts government – and, consequently, Smuts himself – justified the emergency regulations.

As a large part of this article focuses on the OB, it is necessary to give some context regarding the organisation. Established in February 1939, the OB had its beginnings in the Great Trek centenary celebrations of 1938. The organisation rapidly grew and soon turned into a mass movement within the Afrikanerdom. The OB existed for more than a decade, until it was eventually disbanded in 1954. Starting out as a cultural organisation at the start of 1939, the outbreak of the Second World War quickly led to the OB starting to operate within the political sphere, especially by opposing the Smuts government in its war effort. In short, the Second World War would contribute to the OB taking on the role of a dualistic organisation within the Afrikanerdom.<sup>12</sup> In most instances, the OB even used Afrikaner culture as a political weapon to encourage activism and sabotage against the war effort. These activist actions of the OB largely contributed to the Smuts government’s decision to install various war measures and emergency regulations.

A general analysis of the OB – primarily based on the records in the OB archive – has been offered by Marx. Marx also succeeded in describing the link between Afrikaner nationalism and the rise of the OB as a popular Afrikaner organisation.<sup>13</sup> The internal political situation in South Africa during the Second World War has been examined by Fokkens.<sup>14</sup> The review by Fokkens focuses mainly on the role of the Union Defence Force (UDF) in the suppression of the unrest, and does not really cover how the government justified the implementation of the various emergency regulations.<sup>15</sup> Furlong analysed the Second World War situation within South Africa by exploring the OB, anti-British sentiments, the influence of Nazi ideologies and the role of the National Party (NP) during the war.<sup>16</sup> This article builds on Furlong’s writings by discussing how the Smuts government justified the implementation of these regulations and how the emergency regulations affected the OB specifically. This is an important contribution to the historiography of South Africa’s political situation during the war,



and to the historiography of the OB. In order to make a meaningful contribution to the historiography, the purpose of this article is threefold:

- to explore the Smuts government's justification for these war measures, more specifically the emergency regulations;
- to kaleidoscopically discuss the nature and extent of these measures; and
- to examine the outcome of these measures and regulations on OB members.
- Particular attention is paid to the internment policy and the handling of political prisoners and internees by the Smuts government.

### **The Smuts government's justification of the war measures and emergency regulations**

South Africa's participation in the Second World War, together with the opposition to it and the measures put in place against internal opposition, should be considered in the broader context of the South African population:

The South Africans were not homogenous. They made a distinction between *die volk*, the white people who constituted a nation, and *die bevolking*, the total population, most of which did not belong to the nation.<sup>17</sup>

Certain Afrikaners took the distinction even further by seeing only white Afrikaans-speaking individuals (Afrikaners) as part of the *volk*, and everyone else as only part of the *bevolking*.<sup>18</sup> This distinction must be taken into account to understand the broader historical context within South Africa during the Second World War. Furthermore, it is also important to mention that the study reported here focused solely on the white population (the *volk*) because the war measures mainly affected this group directly.

In September 1939, Smuts won the war debate in Parliament with a difference of only 13 votes.<sup>19</sup> On 6 September 1939, South Africa officially declared war on Germany under Proclamation 197 of 1939.<sup>20</sup> This declaration of war had a direct effect on the OB as an Afrikaner movement.<sup>21</sup> According to Hancock, Smuts was aware of the possible internal opposition to war, and even the possibility of a civil war, "[h]e did not close his eyes to that danger but took precautions against it."<sup>22</sup> For example, Lieutenant G Diedericks, a police officer, was commissioned to set up a special unit with the main purpose of investigating political crimes. This command was received even before the Second World War officially broke out.<sup>23</sup> On top of the internal situation, Smuts also had to deal with South Africa's Defence Force, which was by no means ready for warfare.<sup>24</sup>

At the outbreak of war in 1939, the UDF consisted of only 3 500 personnel, and some 14 000 part-time soldiers belonging to the Active Civilian Force.<sup>25</sup> However, Smuts's plan was to increase these numbers as quickly as possible.<sup>26</sup> Since the Defence Act of 1912 stated that both full-time and part-time soldiers could defend South Africa only within the borders of South Africa, it was necessary to institute the Africa Oath.<sup>27</sup> The introduction of the Africa Oath, or Red Oath, increased numbers to such an extent that in the end, a total of 342 792 full-time South African volunteers participated in the Second World War.<sup>28</sup>

At the outbreak of the war, Smuts was of the opinion that the danger lay far beyond the borders of South Africa. Volunteers who wanted to participate in the war had to note that service could be expected anywhere in Africa. Smuts made a promise in 1939 that all South Africans participating in the Second World War would only fight on the African continent. On 27 January 1943, however, he revoked this promise, and asked the House of Assembly for permission for South African soldiers to be sent to Europe.<sup>29</sup> The motivation behind this is vague, but Liebenberg believes that Smuts's motivation lay in his wish that South Africans "should also make a significant contribution to the war on the continent of Europe".<sup>30</sup> Regardless of the location to which these volunteers were sent, it is important to note that all volunteers had to take the General Service Oath (introduced in 1943).<sup>31</sup> This oath implied that permanent members of the Defence Force could be called to serve outside the borders of South Africa. However, many members decided not to sign the Africa Oath or the General Service Oath because they believed it was their duty only to protect South Africa within the borders of the country.<sup>32</sup> The participation in the war outside the borders of South Africa therefore merely involved volunteers. The volunteers who signed up for participation outside South African borders wore red tabs.<sup>33</sup>

The imposition of the Red Oath caused a rift in the people,<sup>34</sup> and the wearing of the red tabs resulted in a physically visible separation between two groups. The first was Afrikaners and English-speaking whites in favour of South African participation in the Second World War (those wearing red tabs), and the second being Afrikaners who opposed participation (those not wearing red tabs).<sup>35</sup> In short, the red tabs distinguished the "Smuts men" from the anti-war Afrikaners.<sup>36</sup> This rift within the Afrikanerdom was also noticeable to the OB leaders, who on 20 August 1941 stated that they "perceive with anxiety the signs of an imminent split within the Afrikanerdom".<sup>37</sup>

The Germans were also aware of the internal turmoil in South Africa, especially within the Afrikanerdom. In propagandistic terminology, they described the anti-war Afrikaners' objections to war participation as follows, "[w]ith increasing indignation, the South Africans revolted against this oppression."<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Pasemann notes that Smuts was moving further away from the majority of Afrikaners' interests, "[i]n the course of his political work, Smuts moved farther and farther away from his own people, for whose needs, desires and struggles he showed less and less understanding."<sup>39</sup> Despite the internal division and a clear Afrikaner sentiment against war participation, the number of Afrikaners who signed up to take part in the war was "surprisingly high".<sup>40</sup> The Afrikaners who did form part of the pro-war group were in some instances motivated by economic conditions. According to Van der Waag, English-speaking whites participated for "King and country".<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, OB member, JM de Wet, opined that many Afrikaners took the Africa Oath for "bread and butter as well as adventure".<sup>42</sup> It should thus be made clear that wearing a red tab was not necessarily an indication of pro-British or pro-war sentiments, but rather that various contextual considerations also motivated Afrikaners to sign the Africa Oath. Nevertheless, the red tabs still caused a physical separation in the Afrikanerdom.

Because of the growing anti-war sentiments, it was necessary for the Smuts government to use official propaganda. One of the goals was “not [to] alienate the Afrikaner segment of the population”.<sup>43</sup> Various techniques were utilised to achieve this objective, one of which is captured in the following quote:

Every time Oom Jannie Smuts appears on screen the commentary should be in Afrikaans. This will make people of both sections, including those who hold that this is only an English war, engineered by English capitalists, realise that it is an Afrikaner war too ...<sup>44</sup>

The Smuts government, therefore, had a conflicting goal when it came to Afrikanerdom during the war. On the one hand, the government wanted to appease the Afrikanerdom and get them involved in the war, and on the other, the government wanted to do everything possible to prevent and oppose Afrikaner resistance.

Smuts’s motivation behind South Africa’s participation in the Second World War is in itself ambiguous: “[f]rom every previous war, South Africa has emerged a greater country, and this war will prove no exception. Your work will further the tradition of Briton and Boer alike.”<sup>45</sup> These words, part of Smuts’s 1940 speech to soldiers on their way to North Africa, captured the ambiguity behind the government’s wartime participation. The contradictory ideal that a war could benefit the Afrikaner as well as Britain at the same time caused a separation among the *volk*, and even in parliament. Van Rensburg himself was deeply affected by the government’s decision to participate in the war, as his position as administrator of the Free State became increasingly difficult. By the end of 1940, Van Rensburg officially resigned as administrator.<sup>46</sup> Van Rensburg clearly stated the motivation behind his decision to step down:

I had far too much respect for General Smuts to try to beat about the bush with him. I told him that to my mind I would be doing an injustice to both of us if I were to remain Administrator under his Government. All my loyalty was with General Hertzog and I was bitterly opposed to the Government’s war effort.<sup>47</sup>

The differing opinions in parliament were mainly between Hertzog and Smuts. Hertzog’s position during the Second World War is summed up by Hans van Rensburg, “a man who was never against Germany, but who was always for South Africa ...”<sup>48</sup> The separation in parliament thus reflected the rift within the broader Afrikanerdom.

Apart from the separation that was present in parliament, Smuts’s greatest concern lay in the OB. Smuts increasingly viewed the organisation as an underground and dangerous phenomenon.<sup>49</sup> This concern would eventually be expressed in the implementation of various emergency regulations and war measures that closely affected the OB. A contemporary, OL Nel, also argued that the emergency regulations were specifically aimed at the OB:

It is noteworthy that the prosecution of Afrikaners by the Smuts government was directed almost exclusively at officers and members of the Ossewabrandwag.

There were many Afrikaners, who are not members of the OB and who, to use the words of the Government are “anti-British” and “strongly opposed to the Government and its war effort” – and also made no secret of it – and yet they were not interned!<sup>50</sup>

Nel concluded that the introduction of the emergency regulations and the internment of various OB members were aimed at “beating the OB and causing it to die a natural death without officially banning it”.<sup>51</sup> It is a debatable – and somewhat baseless – argument that the emergency regulations were directly aimed at the OB. For the purposes of this article, however, it is necessary to take into account that OB members believed this to be the truth.

Large numbers of OB members resisted the Smuts government’s war effort, “especially as part of the Stormjaers [Storm Troopers]”.<sup>52</sup> As Blynnaut clarifies, the resistance against South Africa’s participation had been brought about in various ways. Violence, anti-war propaganda and passive resistance were all part of the domestic resistance to the Smuts government’s war effort.<sup>53</sup> Although it is taken into account that resistance does not always manifest in the form of violent actions, this article focuses mainly on the Smuts government’s introduction of emergency regulations against domestic resistance and unrest. Because the emergency regulations were mostly directed against the violent elements, the focus of this article is only on violent and semi-violent domestic resistance.<sup>54</sup>

The OB believed that they had no other option than to use violence against the Smuts government. As OB leader Hans van Rensburg states, “violence was a last option” and that it should only be considered in response to the Smuts government’s actions.<sup>55</sup> Whatever the motivation behind the OB’s resistance, Van Rensburg was of the opinion that the OB had a significant influence on the government. Van Rensburg justified this assumption using five separate arguments. First, he opined that the efforts made by these individuals hampered the government’s war effort.<sup>56</sup> As S Boshoff also recounted in 1979:

We were aware of the idea that we were out to sabotage Jan Smuts ... You just weren’t agreeable with the war effort. As long as you can sabotage the war effort in any way possible, you have already fulfilled a certain task.<sup>57</sup>

Van Rensburg’s second argument maintained that the influence of these individuals (the saboteurs and activists) served to strengthen the sentiments of other individuals who were also opposed to the war.<sup>58</sup>

Thirdly, according to Van Rensburg, these individuals made the above impact with a “minimum sacrifice of lives and destruction of property”.<sup>59</sup> Van Rensburg made it clear that the purpose of the sabotage actions were to curb the government’s war effort by keeping as many personnel in South Africa as possible.<sup>60</sup> This sentiment is also supported by Hagemann<sup>61</sup> and Robinson<sup>62</sup> who believe that Van Rensburg and the OB, but especially the Stormjaers, aided Hitler’s war efforts by keeping as many troops as possible in South Africa to stop domestic unrest. This argument, although

widely supported, is somewhat baseless. The Smuts government set various plans into action for ensuring internal security without compromising the fighting forces and recruitment strategies of the UDF. For example, a voluntary organisation, later known as the Civilian Guards, was established to support the government in the preservation of internal security.<sup>63</sup> To ensure that this organisation did not interfere with the UDF, volunteers were only considered if they were above the age of 45, which was the limit for active enrolment in the UDF at that time.<sup>64</sup> Although the OB and Van Rensburg might have been under the impression that widespread sabotage would have tied down large numbers of troops, this was not the case.

Fourthly, the actions of these individuals made the government aware of the idea that internal resistance is inevitable when a large number of civilians are opposed to the war.<sup>65</sup> This argument by Van Rensburg is indeed correct. The fact remains, however, that the Smuts government took precautions and action against this “inevitable” resistance. The precautions and actions took on many forms, including the introduction of the War Measures Act (No. 13 of 1940), the establishment of the Civilian Guards, and the introduction of various internment camps for those who posed a threat to the internal security of South Africa. Fifth, Van Rensburg believed that this activism introduced the “close of an epoch”.<sup>66</sup> The epoch referred to is the struggle between Afrikaner nationalism and British imperialism, with the view that these two factions would rather work together against the “new danger”.<sup>67</sup>

The effect of resistance by the Afrikanerdom, and especially the resistance by the OB, was that the Smuts government felt justified in putting in place certain emergency measures. On 7 February 1940, Smuts officially received parliamentary approval to put emergency measures in place<sup>68</sup> to “ensure the security of the state”.<sup>69</sup> However, it appears that the introduction of the emergency regulations was also motivated by several other driving forces. Terblanche argues that the Smuts government was “committed to prosecuting and victimising the national-minded Afrikaner who opposed the war”.<sup>70</sup> However, the motivations behind the emergency regulations of the Smuts government appear to have been deeper and more significant than anti-Afrikaner attitudes and aims of victimisation. The paragraphs below delve deeper into these motivations. What is undeniable, however, is that the introduction of these emergency regulations contributed to tensions between pro-war and anti-war groups. By November 1940, pro-war groups felt that insufficient action was being taken against the OB. On 1 November 1940, the *Sunday Express* for example, considered whether the OB should be banned because the latter would be in the interest of security in South Africa.<sup>71</sup>

Several violent events erupted between pro-war and anti-war individuals. The battle that broke out between soldiers and several OB members outside the Johannesburg City Hall on 31 January 1941 serves as a good illustration.<sup>72</sup> The next evening, 1 February 1941, another violent riot broke out at the Voortrekker Building.<sup>73</sup> A pro-war group also attacked the headquarters of *Die Vaderland* (a prominent conservative Afrikaans newspaper). The motivation behind this attack was the misconception by some soldiers that the offices of *Die Vaderland* were the headquarters of the OB.<sup>74</sup> The abovementioned violent actions reflect the strong emotions that existed between pro-

war and anti-war factions.<sup>75</sup> The violent actions that broke out between pro-war and anti-war factions between 31 January and 1 February 1941 could have turned into a massacre.<sup>76</sup> Smuts's response to the violence was twofold. First, on 3 February 1941, he issued a Special Order to all troops.<sup>77</sup> Second, Smuts appointed a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the events of both evenings.<sup>78</sup> The recommendation and findings of this Commission were discussed in Parliament on 8 April 1941.<sup>79</sup> The events of 31 January and 1 February led to significant growth for the OB as the events were widely covered by Afrikaans newspapers that mostly praised the OB members for their actions.<sup>80</sup> It also contributed to Van Rensburg's popularity.<sup>81</sup>

War often leads to several unwanted consequences for a nation. Even before the imposition of the Red Oath, Afrikaners were not united. This sentiment is summed up clearly by Van Rensburg's observation on the September 1939 war declaration, "[a] declaration of war always throws a nation into confusion, and rumour-mongering becomes rife overnight, even if the nation is united on the issue."<sup>82</sup> The entry into the war also caused old anti-British and anti-Smuts sentiments, based on the Great Trek (1834–1838), the First Anglo-Boer War (1880–1881), the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), the Rebellion (1914), and the Witwatersrand Rebellion (1922) to flare up within the Afrikanerdom.<sup>83</sup> Although Smuts's reputation as a statesman of the world grew – especially as the Allied war effort has been so successful – his support among Afrikaners steadily declined. The reason behind this was "the growing conviction that he no longer had the interests of the Afrikanerdom at heart."<sup>84</sup> This idea became increasingly popular among Afrikaners, and ultimately contributed to the outcome of the 1948 election.

A great deal of anti-Smuts sentiment is rooted in Smuts's undeniable pro-British sentiments. Even the German political magazine *Zeitschrift für Politik* described Smuts as follows, "[o]ne of the strongest pillars of the British Empire to date is Mr. Smuts, today's Prime Minister of the South African Union."<sup>85</sup> The friendship Smuts had with the Royal Windsor family<sup>86</sup> and the friendship between him and Winston Churchill – a friendship that lasted for almost 50 years<sup>87</sup> – are examples of Smuts's pro-British sentiments. The friendship between Smuts and Churchill was such that Churchill's wife, Clementine Churchill, wrote, "[h]e really cares for Winston, and is a great source of strength and encouragement to him."<sup>88</sup> Smuts himself admitted during a speech before the British Parliament that he regarded Churchill very highly:

I sometimes wonder whether people in this country sufficiently realise what Winston Churchill has meant and continues to mean not only to them but also to the Allied peoples, the United Nations, and to the brave men and women everywhere in the world.<sup>89</sup>

Smuts's close connection with Britain became increasingly clear to the Afrikanerdom during the Second World War. It is undisputed that Afrikaners' observations about Smuts had a drastic outcome on domestic resistance. In some instances, the government viewed anti-British sentiments as enough reason for internment and arrest under the emergency regulations.<sup>90</sup>

Smuts's close ties with Britain and general pro-English attitude had a clear effect on the Afrikanerdom during the Second World War (see Figure 1). The separation that was increasingly evident among the people eventually led to the Smuts government instituting various war measures. In the end, it seems that the Smuts government had considered the introduction of emergency regulations a matter of home security and safety. However, several other motivations are also clear, such as –

- the idea that Smuts was doing everything in his power to assist the British Empire in their war effort against Germany; and
- the impression that the OB posed a real danger to the government, especially as the organisation began to flourish progressively more in the political arena, mainly after Van Rensburg took over as commander in chief of the organisation in January 1941.

The introduction of the emergency regulations did not necessarily dampen the resistance to the war effort, but rather fuelled it. Next, the nature and extent of the emergency regulations are discussed in order to determine how its implementation affected the OB.



Figure 1: Cartoon mocking Smuts's pro-British sentiments, circa October 1939<sup>91</sup>

## Nature and extent of the war measures and emergency regulations

South Africa entered the war without the population voting on the issue. O'Meara argues that, if the white population had been allowed to vote on the issue of war participation, the result would probably have been against war participation.<sup>92</sup> This argument was sustained by anti-war individuals and groups during the war.<sup>93</sup> Because the Afrikaner had no voice in the decision to participate in the war, several anti-war factions arose. This included anyone who opposed the Smuts government's decision, whether it was by means of passive or active resistance.

Due to the various activities that arose in anti-war factions, it was necessary for the government to put in place a number of emergency regulations that expanded and increased over time. As already discussed, the Smuts government had several ways to justify the introduction of these regulations, but it is important to reflect on the nature and scope of these regulations. As Monama puts it, the underground anti-war activities contributed to a variety of regulations being put in place:

Although South Africa was geographically removed from the main theatre of military operations, the multiple security, publicity and propaganda measures reflected the impact of the war conditions, especially given the country's political fractures and societal divisions on the basis of race, class and also gender. The activities of the extra-parliamentary movements, subversive operations, sabotage, and declining morale among the Union troops as well as the prevalence of the social and economic tensions, required the authorities to adopt various measures to maintain control and authority.<sup>94</sup>

The tension that Monama mentions started long before the war, but was exacerbated during the war. This increase in social, political and economic pressure elicited a "more extremist response" from the Smuts government.<sup>95</sup>

The first set of emergency regulations was announced only fourteen days after the declaration of war. This set of emergency regulations allowed appointed senior executives to prohibit meetings that are not of a religious nature.<sup>96</sup> The government also dampened the power of groups to organise themselves militaristically by introducing Proclamation 201 of 1939,<sup>97</sup> as well as the 1940 War Measures Act (No. 13 of 1940).<sup>98</sup> Although these regulations were not strictly enforced immediately, the emergency regulations were systematically developed and expanded to include various elements.<sup>99</sup>

According to Van der Walt, the purpose of the emergency regulations was to "detect underground movements and intimidate the anti-war elements".<sup>100</sup> Despite this observation by Van der Walt, it is safe to believe that the emergency regulations had several motivations other than the detection and intimidation of underground and anti-war factions. Under Emergency Regulation 15 of 14 September 1939 as well as War Measure 47 of 10 December 1941, any individual *suspected* of underground activities or anti-war attitudes could be interned.<sup>101</sup> The internment closely affected several ordinary and prominent members of the OB. The impact of the war measures – and



more specifically the large-scale internment – is given further attention in the next section. In addition to internment, emergency regulations affected various other aspects of everyday life. For example, under the emergency regulations, wearing of uniforms by citizens was strictly prohibited.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, several special courts were set up to prosecute political crimes.<sup>103</sup> Taking into consideration that the OB as well as other movements, such as Oswald Pirow's New Order and the anti-Semitic Gryshemde (Grey Shirts), were increasing their militant nature, the steps taken against citizens wearing uniforms were both justifiable and necessary.

A further embodiment of the emergency regulations was to claim all private firearms under Proclamation 139 of 1940.<sup>104</sup> The motivation behind this was possibly to prevent an armed uprising. Nevertheless, the Smuts government maintained that the motivation behind this was that the government needed the weapons in the war against Germany.<sup>105</sup> By August 1940, about 88 000 firearms had already been confiscated. Many more would follow, as the war would last until 1945.<sup>106</sup> The war measures also affected OB members' employment within the public service. In terms of Proclamation 20 of 1941, the government decided to institute a war measure that prevented all civil servants from being OB members.<sup>107</sup> This war measure "provides that no officer, whether Union, Provincial or Railway official, may remain a member of the Ossewa-Brandwag or participate in its pursuit or proceedings" or "support its policy".<sup>108</sup> The measure further required all public servants to "terminate their [Ossewa-Brandwag] membership within fourteen days".<sup>109</sup> This new measure directly affected OB members who were in the police force.<sup>110</sup> Van Rensburg reacted to this by "honourably dismissing all civil servants" from the OB.<sup>111</sup> According to the official order, the OB saw the motivation behind Proclamation 20 of 1941 as twofold: firstly to "break" the Ossewa-Brandwag and, secondly, to "purify the Public Service of Afrikaner-minded personnel".<sup>112</sup> The OB's motivation behind the honourable dismissal of all public servants seemed to be people-oriented and economically responsible: "[i]t is not in their [public servants'] interest nor in the interests of Afrikanerdom that they be thrown into the street with wife and child without that sacrifice promoting our cause."<sup>113</sup>

In a special report to the government, the Commissioner of Police disclosed substantial information about sabotage actions and the Stormjaers.<sup>114</sup> The Stormjaers was a secret organisation within the OB, while the OB was not illegal or secretive in nature.<sup>115</sup> The Stormjaers can be best described as a "circle within a circle".<sup>116</sup> The special report reads, "[i]n these circumstances it is again stressed that the Ossewabrandwag organisation is a grave danger and should be immediately banned."<sup>117</sup> According to Visser, the only immediate response to this was the passing of a special law, which was enacted on 4 February 1942, that formed part of the emergency regulations. In short, the law stated that any individual who used explosives in the resistance movement against the government could be sentenced to death.<sup>118</sup>

As Visser states, the OB was under the impression that they were the true Afrikaners, the "patriots", while the rest of the pro-war Afrikaners were the "traitors".<sup>119</sup> The Stormjaers offered "active resistance to the war effort" and consequently both secrecy and weapon ownership were crucial.<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, for the purposes of this article, it

is necessary to take into account that the OB and the Stormjaers were not synonymous, “the relationship between the OB and the Stormjaers was complex”.<sup>121</sup> Although the Stormjaers emerged from the OB, the Stormjaers subsequently developed on their own.<sup>122</sup> As already mentioned, the dynamic between the Stormjaers and the OB was complicated, and can undoubtedly be the focus of numerous research endeavours in the future.

The Smuts government’s efforts to curb domestic resistance thus sparked a vicious cycle, a cycle in which every action of every anti-war faction was met with resistance by the government and, in turn, every action of the government was met with reaction by the anti-war faction. Van Rensburg did not view the sabotage actions of OB members as acts of violence, but rather as “violent reactions” against the internment and arrest of fellow OB comrades.<sup>123</sup> Robinson supports Van Rensburg’s position in a 1988 leaflet on an OB Museum exhibition. Robinson also believed that the sabotage actions “were committed as a sign of protest against the government’s internment policy”.<sup>124</sup> The nature and extent of the war measures and emergency regulations, therefore, became closely related to the OB and the broader Afrikanerdom. The above paragraphs should serve as proof that the emergency regulations took various forms. By viewing it kaleidoscopically, it is possible to understand its nature and scope better. The exact impact of the measures and regulations is explored in depth in the next section.

### **Impact of war measures and emergency regulations on OB members**

The impact of the war measures and emergency regulations on OB members is a significant aspect of South African history. Despite its decisive contribution to history, several aspects have not yet been explored. An example of this is the high treason cases against Afrikaner saboteurs operating during the Second World War. With the exception of Robey Leibbrandt,<sup>125</sup> these aspects of the South African experience of the Second World War have been “largely forgotten”.<sup>126</sup> It is for this reason, as Blake rightly notes, that the history surrounding these saboteurs should again be placed on the historical agenda. Part of this history is not only how the emergency regulations affected the saboteurs, but also the OB as an organisation, as well as its members.

The impact of the emergency regulations on the OB was felt throughout the Second World War. On 1 February 1940, the commander in chief of the OB at that time (Colonel JC Laas) received a letter from an OB member, Mrs JE Theron, in which she highlighted various concerns about the OB as an organisation and requested answers. She cited her Afrikaner nationalism as the reason behind her concerns.<sup>127</sup> Laas’s response to Theron’s letter clearly indicated the difficult position of the OB at the time. In a challenging political domestic climate, in the midst of a world war, the OB had to strengthen itself as a newly created organisation of less than two years old. Laas answered Theron as follows:

Just don’t lose sight of the fact that our organization is still in its early stages, and we need all the love and sympathy of our people to make it a success, otherwise it can fail so easily, and our enemy will be heartily victorious. They

are already well aware that here is an element to be taken into account, because no one can deny that we are on track to seize the people's hearts and interests, and our one hope is that the Afrikaner suicide weapon of "division" will not succeed in cleaving again.<sup>128</sup>

There can be no doubt that the introduction of the Smuts government's emergency regulations affected the OB as an organisation. With the introduction of the emergency regulations, several prominent members of the OB were interned as early as May 1940.<sup>129</sup> Laas's observation that the government was aware that the OB was "an element to be taken into account" was therefore accurate.<sup>130</sup> On 17 June 1940, *Die Burger* (a local newspaper) reported that about 1 600 people were being held in camps.<sup>131</sup> By 12 November 1940, that figure had more than doubled to about 4 000 people. This included Italian and German prisoners of war and South African internees.<sup>132</sup>

However, the OB only started to get involved at a political level in 1940. Several factors contributed to this swing towards becoming a dualistic organisation. These factors included (but were not limited to):

- the Smuts government's decision to partake in the war;
- the confiscation of private arms;
- the detention of several OB members (especially Stormjaers) in internment camps;
- police raids; and
- the effect internment had on various OB families who were suddenly left without a breadwinner.<sup>133</sup>

All these, along with various other emergency regulations, affected the OB as an organisation as well as its members. The internment caused great bitterness within the Afrikanerdom, as OL Nel says:

If the methods of the Smuts government are studied from all sides, one gets the impression that the motive was to keep certain Afrikaners behind barbed wire and the question of whether they were guilty, or innocent, was not even mentioned at all.<sup>134</sup>

A further tantalising point for the internees and political prisoners was that the reasons for internment and the handling of appeals against internees often extended over long periods,<sup>135</sup> as Nel puts it:

The fact that some interns had to wait up to six months to get their "reasons" for internment and more than twelve months before their "appeal" was finalised is proof enough that there was no rush at all to release the men.<sup>136</sup>

As already mentioned, the families of internees were severely affected by internment, especially when the internment lasted for months without any stated reason on the part of the government. With the internment of OB members, several households were left

without any source of income.<sup>137</sup> The OB was affected by this because several members (especially women and children) were left without money. The impact of the internment in this case resulted in the formation of the Noodhulpfonds (Distress Relief Fund). In short, the Noodhulpfonds was primarily established with the aim to provide and care for the families of internees, political prisoners and fugitives.<sup>138</sup> The aim of this article is not to delve into the Noodhulpfonds. It is, however, necessary to take into account that the emergency regulations affected not only saboteurs and activists, but also the families of these individuals. As an organisation, the OB was in this sense also affected because members had to find a way to “support the wives and children of the internees”.<sup>139</sup>

It is therefore clear that not only the Stormjaers and ordinary OB members were directly affected by the measures, but also their families. The 1940 women’s march, which involved about 9 870 women, reflected the unity that emerged within the OB and the broader anti-war Afrikanerdom. The women’s march mainly revolved around the implementation of the Africa Oath and the fact that some Afrikaners did not want to sign the oath (see Figure 2).<sup>140</sup> The demonstration also embodied the opinion that South Africa’s participation in the war could not have made a significant difference, so there was no need to jeopardise the lives of several soldiers unnecessarily.<sup>141</sup>

Men who refused to sign the Africa Oath were put under immense pressure and were exposed to the danger of possibly losing their jobs. The women’s march of 1940 symbolised women’s support for their husbands and sons not to sign the Africa Oath merely out of fear of dismissal.<sup>142</sup> A petition for neutrality was presented by a deputation of three women at the Union Buildings. JH Hofmeyr, Minister of Finance and acting Prime Minister in Smuts’s absence, received the petition.<sup>143</sup> There were more to women’s involvement than only the march and petition. Other petitions were signed, and several telegrams were sent. This allowed Afrikaner women to express their views on South Africa’s decision to partake in the war.<sup>144</sup> However, the government did not respond to these petitions because it was “contrary to the decisions of Parliament”, according to Smuts.<sup>145</sup> The women’s march should therefore be seen as proof that the emergency regulations had affected not only the radical OB members, but also the women in the organisation.

**Sandenkingspamflet**  
van die  
**Vroue-optog in Pretoria**  
op  
**Saterdag 22 Junie**  
**1940**



*Die Versoekskrif wat namens u aan die Hoogedele Regering gerig word lui as volg :*

**N**AMENS die Afrikaanse Moeders, Vrouens en Dogters en die tienduende wat in die gees aanwesig is en ons versoekskrif steun, wens ons u Hoogedele Regering in alle beskeidenheid en met die diepste erns waaroor ons beskik te versoek om:

(1) Nie langer toe te laat dat met dreigemente van ontslag, verplasing of water vorm van benadeling ookal druk uitgeoefen word op burgers van ons staat ten einde hulself beskikbaar te stel vir militêre diens buite die Unie, hetsy deur private werkgewers of deur die staat nie.

(2) Om onmiddellik 'n eerbare en regverdige vrede met die lande met wie ons in oorlog verkeer, te sluit."

Aan iedere vrou en dogter wat deelneem aan hierdie optog stuur ons die volgende boodskap:

Laat ons stil en waardig ons versoek vir vrede en vryheid van dwangmaatreëls in ons land aan die Hoogedele Regering rig. Ons volg die weg wat ons voorgeskryf word onder protes, maar kalm en waardig want die Afrikanervrou sal sodoende van 'n agterstraat 'n voorstraat maak en waar ons ook die amfiteater by die Uniegebou geweer is, sal ons op die grasperk aan die voet van die Uniegebou ons bede tot God rig.

Laat ons geweld nie met geweld antwoord nie, maar ons harte is vol en ons sal onthou.

Ons versoek u om nie aanleiding te gee tot enige steurnis nie en om in doodse stilte te gaan. Stiptelike uitvoering aan alle versoeke deur die luidspreker tot u gerig sal die Afrikanervrou waardig wees.

Ek sien haar wag, geduldig, sonder woord,  
Ek sien haar wen, vir man en seun en broeder,  
Want haar naam is Vrou en Moeder!

JAN CELLIERS (in „By die Vrouebetoging”.)  
Mev. H. C. STEYN,  
Namens die Reelingskomitee.

(Bewaar hierdie pamflet vir die nageslag.)

VOORTREKKEKUNST, S.P.A.

Figure 2: Leaflet commemorating the Women's March of 22 June 1940 in Pretoria. The leaflet contains the petition addressed to the Union Government.<sup>146</sup>

In addition to the large-scale internment of several members of the OB, as well as the fact that several members refused to sign the Africa Oath, the organisation was also affected by rumours and accusations by the government against the organisation. The problem was already visible in 1940 under Laas's leadership.<sup>147</sup> The OB Groot Raad (High or Supreme Council) and Colonel Laas protested against such statements and

sent a letter to Smuts.<sup>148</sup> Although the spreading of rumours and accusations did not officially form part of the emergency regulations, it was still an example of the effect that the actions by the Smuts government had on the OB. Rumours and allegations were quickly converted into action, for example, the government set up various committees to investigate espionage and Nazi links within Afrikaner organisations, such as the OB. The OB's strong militancy and rapid growth made it one of the main focal points for the government's internal security investigations.<sup>149</sup> Intelligence reports from these committees revealed pro-German sympathies and even interaction between OB members and Nazi secret agents. These reports and rumours led to anxiety within the government regarding Nazi infiltration within South Africa, which in turn led to various police raids and the spreading of more rumours pertaining to the OB's links with Germany.<sup>150</sup>

In 1941, under the leadership of Van Rensburg, the problem of false rumours continued to be an issue within the OB. Van Rensburg and the Groot Raad decided to act. In Public Order number 1/41, it was stated that "a defence organisation" was formed to investigate "rumours and accusations against the Ossewa-Brandwag movement, or against prominent leaders of our people".<sup>151</sup> Each commander within the OB had to nominate an officer to "report in writing" these rumours and accusations.<sup>152</sup> This officer had to hold the rank of field cornet and was known as the "information field cornet".<sup>153</sup> Order number 31/41 of the OB's Cape branch also announced a policy on reports, allegations and inquiries regarding the OB. This order required that "any allegation, whisper story or attack directed at the Ossewabrandwag" and higher officers should be reported immediately.<sup>154</sup> This illustrates that the government's actions during the war – even actions that did not specifically form part of the emergency regulations – directly affected the OB as an organisation.

The war participation and subsequent war measures also negatively affected the relationship between the National Party (NP) and the OB. The rift between the NP and the OB is evident in the letters sent to Van Rensburg. On 8 September 1941, JHH de Waal, a Pretoria attorney and an ardent OB member, said that the OB should no longer tolerate the actions of DF Malan (leader of the NP at the time). De Waal asked whether an "order can be issued that all OB members also resign from the party of which such a villain is the leader".<sup>155</sup> Meanwhile, Malan and the NP initially tried to maintain a relationship with the OB. In a letter Malan sent to Van Rensburg on 24 November 1941, it appeared that the motivation behind this collaboration was in the interest of the Afrikaner *volk*. Malan urged Van Rensburg to work together to fight the divide within the "national-minded Afrikanerdom", and to avoid the "total destruction" thereof.<sup>156</sup> The upcoming election of 1943 only added to the tension between the OB and the NP. The OB tried to distance itself from the 1943 election by maintaining that party politics should be considered an "imported British [political] system" that is "unnatural to the Afrikaner".<sup>157</sup> Van Rensburg stated that the OB had "no obligation and no need" to entangle itself in the political drama of the election.<sup>158</sup> Despite the OB's attempts to distance itself from the election, it still had significant influence amongst the Afrikaner segment of the voting public, and thus found itself amidst the political drama without being a political party.

In addition to the rift between the NP and the OB, the war participation and measures also had an effect on several activist OB members, especially the Stormjaers. Members of the Stormjaers were regularly charged with treason, for example in 1942, a total of 58 Stormjaers were charged.<sup>159</sup> Examples of Stormjaers charged with treason include the infamous J Visser and H van Blerk saga, both of whom were arrested under the emergency regulations in connection with the May 1942 bombing of the Benoni post office, in which a young male passer-by died.<sup>160</sup>

Subsequently, both Visser and Van Blerk were sentenced to death for the Benoni bombing.<sup>161</sup> Pressure was put on the government by various sources to reconsider the death penalty of these individuals. On 1 August 1942, it was announced that the death penalty of both individuals was changed to life imprisonment.<sup>162</sup> According to Fourie, the motivation behind this decision was threefold:

- first, Smuts did not want to turn Visser and Van Blerk into Afrikaner martyrs;
- second, the upcoming election (1943) served as motivation not to turn the Visser–Van Blerk saga into a political weapon; and
- third, Smuts was aware that the execution of these individuals could lead to an increase in domestic unrest.<sup>163</sup>

Another example of a commuted sentence by the Smuts government was evident in the sentencing of Robey Leibbrandt. Leibbrandt is best known as a South African Olympic boxer who participated in the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Leibbrandt returned to Germany two years after the Olympics and later joined the German Army's war effort.<sup>164</sup> In 1941, Leibbrandt was ordered to head Operation Weissdorn, a secret operation aimed at overthrowing the Smuts government. In the attempt to do so, Leibbrandt tried to make contact with the OB, and more specifically the Stormjaers, but OB leader Hans van Rensburg was indifferent towards Leibbrandt. After failed attempts to infiltrate the Stormjaers, Leibbrandt formed an organisation known as the Nasionaal Sosialistiese Rebelle (National Socialist Rebels). The organisation managed some sabotage actions against the Smuts government's war effort but nothing close to Operation Weissdorn's aim of a *coup d'état*. Leibbrandt was eventually arrested and tried for high treason. On 11 March 1943, Leibbrandt was sentenced to death.<sup>165</sup> As in the case of Visser and Van Blerk, the initial death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.<sup>166</sup>

After the war, Afrikaner unity slowly started to mend. With the assistance of cultural organisations like the Afrikaner Broederbond (Afrikaner Brotherhood), national unity (*volkseenheid*) was once again on the rise.<sup>167</sup> Despite the rift between the OB and the NP, as well as the unique placing of Leibbrandt within the internal turmoil in South Africa during the Second World War, several political prisoners obtained their freedom after the 1948 election under NP rule, including Visser, Van Blerk and Leibbrandt.<sup>168</sup> The declaration to release political prisoners was officially issued on 11 June 1948.<sup>169</sup> In 1948, with the success of the National Party, Afrikaner unity and Afrikaner nationalism, which had gone through a strong division during the war, were systematically restored.<sup>170</sup>

## **Evaluation: Justifying the emergency regulations and the impact thereof on the OB**

Nel concluded that the introduction of the emergency regulations and the internment of various OB members were aimed at “beating the OB and, if necessary, letting it die a natural death without banning it”.<sup>171</sup> From Visser’s observation, it seems that Smuts strategically controlled the OB during the Second World War, as “[m]ore active interest would only have served to consolidate and strengthen the OB and perhaps create unwarranted martyrs.”<sup>172</sup> What Visser failed to observe, was that the Smuts government nevertheless managed to create martyrs through the implementation of the emergency regulations and especially the internment policy. Some of these emergency regulations were considered “tyrannical” by many Afrikaners,<sup>173</sup> who opposed these measures with resistance, creating a general climate of resistance, which was met in turn with more measures to ensure internal security.

The effective implementation of emergency regulations ensured that the internal security of South Africa was maintained adequately during the war, and despite some internal sabotage, the Smuts government’s war effort was mostly unhindered by the internal resistance. With a German defeat evident near the end of the war, the OB’s collapse as a political force within the Afrikanerdom became inevitable. Ironically, the war, which initially served as a catalyst for the OB’s popularity within the political sphere of the Afrikanerdom, eventually contributed to the steady demise of the organisation. Like many other quasi-military organisations, most of the OB’s members were absorbed into the NP.

The Smuts government’s emergency regulations directly and indirectly affected a large number of people. However, Smuts could have done much more to the internal turmoil if he wanted to. The reason why nothing more was done could possibly be attributed to a desire to prevent a full-scale rebellion or civil war.<sup>174</sup> Whatever the case, it is clear that Smuts’s actions towards domestic unrest during the Second World War provoked hostility among Afrikaners. The manifestation of this hostility towards Smuts was evident in the election results of 1948. On 28 May 1948, two days after Smuts’s defeat in the general election, Van Rensburg wrote to Smuts stating that he “contributed to some extent” to the defeat that Smuts had just suffered.<sup>175</sup> Various socio-economic conditions, as well as the popularity of the NP’s racial segregation policy, also contributed to the 1948 election results.

This article does not maintain that the NP’s electoral victory can be attributed solely to Smuts’s emergency regulations, but rather argues that the actions of the Smuts government during the war provoked hostility amongst the Afrikaner segment of the voting public. In this sense, the implementation of the emergency regulations altered the political landscape for the Afrikanerdom. During the war, the OB, as an anti-British and pro-Afrikaner organisation, operated within a complex socio-political landscape. It was not unique in its pro-Afrikaner stance or in its anti-war sentiments, but rather functioned like many other Afrikaner structures that also catered for the needs and desires of the general Afrikanerdom. The rift within the Afrikanerdom of the early 1940s gradually



started to mend after the war with the “cooperation of various Afrikaner powers” and political driving forces,<sup>176</sup> reaching a significant climax with the NP’s electoral victory in 1948. As the 1948 election shaped the South Africa known today, it is important to reflect on the role players such as the OB and Smuts played in the outcome of that result.

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Anna La Grange is currently affiliated with the North-West University (NWU). She completed her MA in History degree (cum laude) at the NWU in 2020. She also completed her BA degree in Heritage and Cultural Tourism Management (cum laude) in 2016, and a BA Honours degree in History (cum laude) in 2017, both at the NWU. Apart from research and teaching, she is also very passionate about archives, including archival organisation, research on archives and research on the future of archives that stems from her participation in the processing of the Ossewa-Brandwag Archive in Potchefstroom.
- <sup>2</sup> WK Hancock. *Smuts: The fields of force, 1919–1950*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, 331.
- <sup>3</sup> A Blake. *Wit terroriste: Afrikaner-saboteurs in die Ossewabrandwagjare*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2018, 92. Quotes have been translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- <sup>5</sup> A Grundlingh. “The King’s Afrikaners? Enlistment and ethnic identity in the Union of South Africa’s Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939–45”. *The Journal of African History* 40/3. 1999. 353.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.
- <sup>7</sup> Hancock *op. cit.*, p. 308.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.
- <sup>9</sup> For a recent publication on Smuts, see JA du Pisani, D Kriek & C de Jager (eds). *Jan Smuts: Van Boerseun tot wêreldverhoog*. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2017.
- <sup>10</sup> O Geysler. *Jan Smuts and his international contemporaries*. Johannesburg: Covos Day, 2001, xxi.
- <sup>11</sup> H van Rensburg. *Their paths crossed mine*. Cape Town: Central News Agency, 1956, 73.
- <sup>12</sup> For a general idea of the history of the OB, see AJH van der Walt. *‘n Volk op trek: ‘n Kort geskiedenis van die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van die Ossewa-Brandwag*. Johannesburg: Publicité, 1941; HG Stoker (ed). *Ager tralies en doringdraad*. Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1953; Van Rensburg *op. cit.*; GC Visser. *OB: Traitors or patriots?* Johannesburg: Johnathan Ball, 1976; PF van der Schyff (ed). *Geskiedenis van die Ossewa-Brandwag*. Unpublished report. Department of History, PU for CHE, 1984; P de Klerk. “Afrikanerdenkers en die beginsels van die Ossewa-Brandwag”. *Journal for Contemporary History* 14/1. 1989. 43–81; PF van der Schyff (ed). *Die Ossewa-Brandwag: Vuurtjie in droë gras*. Potchefstroom: PU for CHE, 1991; C Marx. “The Ossewabrandwag as a mass movement, 1939–1941”. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20/2. 1994. 195–219; C Marx. *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner nationalism and the history of the Ossewa-Brandwag*. Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008; C Blyghaut. “Volksmoeders in die kollig: Histories–teoretiese verkenning van die rol van vroue in die Ossewa–Brandwag, 1938 tot 1954”. MA thesis. North-West University, 2012; C Blyghaut. ““Die hand aan die wieg regeer die land [The hand that rocks the cradle rules the land]”: Exploring the agency and identity of women in the Ossewa-Brandwag, 1939–1954”. *South African Historical Journal* 67/1. 2015. 47–63.
- <sup>13</sup> Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel ... op. cit.*; Marx, “The Ossewabrandwag as a mass movement ...” *op. cit.*
- <sup>14</sup> AM Fokkens. “Afrikaner unrest within South Africa during the Second World War and the measures taken to suppress it”. *Journal for Contemporary History* 37/2. 2012. 123–142.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123–142.
- <sup>16</sup> PJ Furlong. *Between crown and swastika: The impact of the radical right on the Afrikaner nationalist movement in the fascist era*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1991.

- <sup>17</sup> Hancock *op. cit.*, p. 330.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330.
- <sup>19</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, p. 13; O Geysers & LCA Pruis. *Die Suid-Afrikaanse politieke geskiedenis in beeld*. Bloemfontein: Instituut vir Eietydse Geskiedenis Publikasie, 1976, 47; Blake *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- <sup>20</sup> FL Monama. "Wartime propaganda in the Union of South Africa, 1939–1945". PhD dissertation. Stellenbosch University, 2014, 4; FL Monama. "South African propaganda agencies and the battle for public opinion during the Second World War, 1939–1945". *Scientia Militaria* 44/1. 2016. 147; Visser *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- <sup>21</sup> LM Fourie. "Die Ossewa-Brandwag in die Suid-Afrikaanse politiek, 1939–1952". In PF van der Schyff (ed), *Geskiedenis van die Ossewa-Brandwag*. Unpublished report. Department of History, PU for CHE, 1984, 2–3.
- <sup>22</sup> Hancock *op. cit.*, p. 324. The precautions taken would manifest themselves in the form of various war measures and the emergency regulations.
- <sup>23</sup> Blake *op. cit.*, p. 57.
- <sup>24</sup> A Lentin. *Jan Smuts: Man of courage and vision*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2010, 137.
- <sup>25</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, p. 30.
- <sup>26</sup> BJ Liebenberg. "Van die Statuut van Westminster tot die Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 1931–1961". In CFJ Muller (ed), *500 jaar: Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*. Pretoria: Academia, 1968, 380.
- <sup>27</sup> Grundlingh *op. cit.*, p. 362.
- <sup>28</sup> I van der Waag. *A military history of modern South Africa*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2015, 175. For more information on the racial distribution of the volunteers, see Van der Waag *op. cit.*, p. 176. The white participation in the war can be further divided into Afrikaans speakers and English speakers.
- <sup>29</sup> Liebenberg *op. cit.*, p. 381.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>31</sup> Van der Waag *op. cit.*, p. 175; Visser *op. cit.*, pp. 30–31.
- <sup>32</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, p. 31.
- <sup>33</sup> Van der Waag *op. cit.*, p. 175.
- <sup>34</sup> K Shear. "Tested loyalties: Policies and politics in South Africa, 1939–63". *Journal of African History* 53/2. 2012. 179; H Strydom. *Vir volk en Führer: Robey Leibbrandt & Operasie Weissdorn*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1983, 1.
- <sup>35</sup> Liebenberg *op. cit.*, p. 382.
- <sup>36</sup> Hancock *op. cit.*, p. 333.
- <sup>37</sup> Ossewa-Brandwag Archive (hereafter OBA), Kommandant-Generaal collection, 2/4, file 19: Correspondence, 20 August 1941. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>38</sup> ME Pasemann. "Jan Christiaan Smuts". *Zeitschrift für Politik* 30. 1940. 114. Translated from German.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116. Translated from German.
- <sup>40</sup> Grundlingh *op. cit.*, p. 354.
- <sup>41</sup> Van der Waag *op. cit.*, p. 175. This sentiment is also reflected by Lambert, who states that white English-speaking South Africans "had taken great pride" in the Union's participation in the war. See J Lambert. "'Their finest hour?' English-speaking South Africans and World War II". *South African Historical Journal* 60/1. 2008. 80.
- <sup>42</sup> OBA, Tape recordings, interview transcript, tape number 9, 1973: HM Robinson/HC van Rooy/JM de Wet, 2. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>43</sup> S Chetty. "Imagining national unity: South African propaganda efforts during the Second World War". *Kronos* 38/1. 2012. 120.
- <sup>44</sup> As seen in *Ibid.*, p. 120, originally seen in EG Malherbe. "Recognition of the Afrikaans element in propaganda", EG Malherbe collection, KCM 56974 (544), File 438-11 KCAL.

- <sup>45</sup> Quote taken from Geyser & Pruis *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- <sup>46</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- <sup>47</sup> Van Rensburg *op. cit.*, p. 166.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- <sup>49</sup> Van der Waag *op. cit.*, p. 174.
- <sup>50</sup> OL Nel. *Ager die doringdraad in Koffiefontein*. Johannesburg: L&S Boek- en Kunsentrum, 1948, 56–57. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>52</sup> C Bignaut. “‘Goddank dis hoogverraad en nie laagverraad nie!’: Die rol van vroue in die Ossewa-Brandwag se verset teen Suid-Afrika se deelname aan die Tweede Wêreldoorlog”. *Historia* 57/2. 2012. 84. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>53</sup> Bignaut, “Volksmoeders in die kollig ...” *op. cit.*, p. 206.
- <sup>54</sup> For more information on passive resistance, especially among women in OB, see *Ibid.*, pp. 206–237. To find out more about the anti-war propaganda distributed during the war, see C Marx. “‘Dear listeners in South Africa’: German propaganda broadcasts to South Africa, 1940–1941”. *South African Historical Journal* 27/1. 1992. 148–172; Monama, “Wartime propaganda ...” *op. cit.*; also Monama, “South African propaganda agencies ...” *op. cit.*, pp. 145–167.
- <sup>55</sup> Briefly touched upon by A Venter. “Die politieke oortuigings van Hans van Rensburg (1898–1966): Kontinuiteit en verandering”. *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 48/1. 2008. 51.
- <sup>56</sup> Van Rensburg *op. cit.*, p. 264; Behrens is also of the opinion that the OB’s actions have held several troops in South Africa, in such a way that hampered Smuts’s war effort. OBA, Tape recordings, interview transcript, tape number 57-57A, 1985, JFJ van Rensburg/KJH Behrens/HM Robinson/HM van der Westhuysen/HJR Anderson, 29.
- <sup>57</sup> OBA, Tape recordings, interview transcript, tape number 137, 1977: LM Fourie/S Boshoff, 2. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>58</sup> Van Rensburg *op. cit.*, p. 264.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>60</sup> Fourie *op. cit.*, p. 67. Not only did the sabotage actions require more people in South Africa to prevent resistance, but through selective sabotage of trains and railroads, the transport of troops to port cities was also impeded.
- <sup>61</sup> A Hagemann. “Very special relations: The ‘Third Reich’ and the Union of South Africa, 1933–1939”. *South African Historical Journal* 27/1. 1992. 141–142.
- <sup>62</sup> OBA, HM Robinson collection, 4/19, “Die Ossewa-Brandwag-uitstalling: ’n Perspektief”. Unpublished pamphlet, PU for CHE, 1988, p. 5. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>63</sup> FL Monama. “Civil defence and protective services in South Africa during World War Two, 1939–1945”. *Historia* 64/2. 2019. 100–101.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- <sup>65</sup> Van Rensburg *op. cit.*, p. 264.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264–265. With “new danger”, Van Rensburg refers to black nationalism and communism.
- <sup>68</sup> Bignaut, “Volksmoeders in die kollig ...” *op. cit.*, p. 211.
- <sup>69</sup> HO Terblanche. *John Vorster – OB-generaal en Afrikanervegter*. Roodepoort: CUM Boeke, 1983, 99. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>71</sup> EB Dawson. “Why the delay in dealing with the Ossewa?” *Sunday Express*. 1 November 1940.
- <sup>72</sup> *Die Transvaler*. “Soldate veroorsaak moeilikheid”. 1 February 1941; Visser *op. cit.*, pp. 35–37; For Van Rensburg’s view and interpretation of the events of 31 January to 1 February 1941, see Van Rensburg *op. cit.*, pp. 177–183.

- <sup>73</sup> *Die Transvaler*. “Die Burger val Genl. Smuts skerp aan”. 3 February 1941; Visser *op. cit.*, pp. 35–37.
- <sup>74</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, p. 38.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- <sup>76</sup> Blake *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- <sup>77</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- <sup>80</sup> See for example *Die Transvaler*. “Soldate veroorsaak moeilikheid” *op. cit.*; *Die Transvaler*, “Die Burger val Genl. Smuts skerp aan” *op. cit.*
- <sup>81</sup> Fourie *op. cit.*, p. 14.
- <sup>82</sup> Van Rensburg *op. cit.*, p. 148.
- <sup>83</sup> H Giliomee. “The growth of Afrikaner identity”. In H Adam & H Giliomee (eds), *The rise and crisis of Afrikaner power*. Cape Town: David Phillip, 1979, 114.
- <sup>84</sup> Geyser & Pruis *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- <sup>85</sup> Pasemann *op. cit.*, p. 113. Translated from German.
- <sup>86</sup> Geyser *op. cit.*, p. 161.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxix, 95.
- <sup>88</sup> Lentin *op. cit.*, p. 139. For more information on Smuts’s friendship with Churchill, see *Ibid.*, pp. 138–142.
- <sup>89</sup> Anon. “General Smuts on the War”. *Journal of the Royal African Society* 42/167. 1943. 59.
- <sup>90</sup> Nel *op. cit.*, p. 1.
- <sup>91</sup> OBA, JP de Villiers collection, 1/2, file 7: *Die Vaderland*, cartoon, “Die Nuwe Bedeling”. Translation of Afrikaans text in cartoon: “And now ladies and gentlemen we end the Afrikaans program and broadcast a statement by General Smuts!”
- <sup>92</sup> D O’Meara. *Volkskapitalisme: Class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934–1948*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 121.
- <sup>93</sup> FS Crafford. *Jan Smuts: ’n Biografie*. Cape Town: Edina Works, 1947, 350.
- <sup>94</sup> Monama, “Wartime propaganda ...” *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- <sup>95</sup> O’Meara *op. cit.*, p. 128.
- <sup>96</sup> Van der Walt *op. cit.*, pp. 42–43.
- <sup>97</sup> OBA, Grootraad collection, 1/4, file 37: Staatsbeleid, oorlog en noodregulasies.
- <sup>98</sup> Fokkens *op. cit.*, p. 127.
- <sup>99</sup> Van der Walt *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>101</sup> OBA, HM Robinson collection *op. cit.*, p. 7; Blake *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- <sup>102</sup> Hancock *op. cit.*, p. 338; Van der Walt *op. cit.*, p. 18; Blake *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- <sup>103</sup> OBA, HM Robinson collection *op. cit.*, p. 8; Blake *op. cit.*, pp. 55–56.
- <sup>104</sup> OBA, Grootraad collection *op. cit.*; see also Fokkens *op. cit.*, p. 127.
- <sup>105</sup> Liebenberg *op. cit.*, p. 382; Terblanche *op. cit.*, p. 99; Marx, “The Ossewabrandwag as a mass movement ...” *op. cit.*, p. 201; C. Marx, “Dear listeners ...” *op. cit.*, p. 159; Blake *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- <sup>106</sup> Blake *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- <sup>107</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 2/4 file 19: Correspondence. Order no. 5/1941, 5 March 1941; *Die Oosterlig*. “Regering sal skroef stywer aandraai”. 10 February 1941; *Rand Daily Mail*. “You can’t serve two masters”. 19 February 1941; *Die Volksblad*. “Belet om lede te wees van Ossewa-Brandwag”. 1 March 1941; *Die Suidersstem*. “Ossewa-Brandwag in ban gedoen”. 1 March 1941; *Sunday Express*. “OB ban affects thousands of state employees”. 2 March 1941; Fokkens *op. cit.*, p. 128; Marx, “The Ossewabrandwag as a mass movement ...” *op. cit.*, p. 216; D Prinsloo. “Dr. H.F. Verwoerd en die Ossewa-Brandwag, 1938–1952”. *Kleio* XVII/1. 1985. 73–85. The theme is also briefly touched upon by Venter *op. cit.*, p. 75.

- <sup>108</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 2/4, file 19, 5 March 1941 *op. cit.* Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*; *Die Vaderland*. “Minister Lawrence kry wye magte”. 4 February 1941. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>110</sup> A van Lingen. “Ossewa cannot be banned in Civil Service”. *Sunday Times*. 1 December 1940; *Die Volksblad*. “Polisie belet om lid te word van Ossewa-Brandwag”. 23 November 1940.
- <sup>111</sup> Blake *op. cit.*, p. 60. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>112</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 2/4, file 19, 5 March 1941 *op. cit.* Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>114</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, p. 104.
- <sup>115</sup> For existing research on the *Stormjaers*, see Visser *op. cit.*, p. 104; Fokkens *op. cit.*, pp. 130–132; Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel ... op. cit.*, pp. 353–362; JJ Badenhorst. “Die organisasiestruktuur van die Ossewa-Brandwag”. MA thesis. PU for CHE, 1985, 59.
- <sup>116</sup> OBA, Tape recordings, interview transcript, tape numbers 3–5 & 120, 1973: HC van Rooy/HM Robinson/LM Fourie/JS Coetzer/AS Spies, p. 69.
- <sup>117</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105.
- <sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- <sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- <sup>120</sup> JJ Badenhorst. “Vroeë organisasiestruktuur van die Ossewa-Brandwag”. *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis* 12/3. 1987. 63.
- <sup>121</sup> Blake *op. cit.*, p. 67.
- <sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- <sup>123</sup> Van Rensburg *op. cit.*, p. 263.
- <sup>124</sup> OBA, HM Robinson collection *op. cit.*, p. 5. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>125</sup> For more information on Robey Leibbrandt see A Blake. *Robey Leibbrandt: 'n Lewe van fanatisme*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2019.
- <sup>126</sup> Blake, *Wit Terroriste ... op. cit.*, p. 227.
- <sup>127</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 1/2: Miscellaneous, 1 February 1941. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>128</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection 1/2: Miscellaneous, 5 February 1940. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>129</sup> Bignaut, “Volksmoeders in die kollig ...” *op. cit.*, p. 211.
- <sup>130</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 1/2: Miscellaneous, 5 February 1940.
- <sup>131</sup> *Die Burger*. “1,600 mense in kampe”. 17 June 1940.
- <sup>132</sup> *Die Volksblad*. “Internering deur regering verskerp”. 12 November 1940.
- <sup>133</sup> Fourie *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- <sup>134</sup> Nel *op. cit.*, p. 55. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>135</sup> Van Rensburg *op. cit.*, p. 149.
- <sup>136</sup> Nel *op. cit.*, p. 50.
- <sup>137</sup> C Bignaut. “From fund-raising to Freedom Day: The nature of women’s general activities in the Ossewa-Brandwag, 1939–1943”. *New Contree* 66. 2013. 126; Bignaut, “Volksmoeders in die kollig ...” *op. cit.*, p. 169.
- <sup>138</sup> For more information on the Distress Relief Fund, see C Bignaut. ““Skep julle kommando’s in reddingslaers om! Een vir almal, almal vir elkeen!”: Die Ossewa-Brandwag se maatskaplike beleid van Sosiale Volksorg, 1943–1952”. *New Contree* 74. 2015. 72–89.
- <sup>139</sup> OBA, Tape recordings, interview transcript, tape number 157, 1978: LM Fourie/KJH Behrens, p. 8.
- <sup>140</sup> Bignaut, “Volksmoeders in die kollig ...” *op. cit.*, p. 208.

- <sup>141</sup> *Die Burger*. “Smeekstem van vrou”. 24 June 1940.
- <sup>142</sup> OBA, A Potgieter collection, 1/4, “Die oproep van 1940”; see also Blignaut, “Volksmoeders in die kollig ...” *op. cit.*, p. 208.
- <sup>143</sup> OBA, A Potgieter collection, 1/4, “Die onderhoud by minister JH Hofmeyr”.
- <sup>144</sup> For exact figures on the amount of signatures recorded in petitions, and telegrams sent, see Blignaut, “Volksmoeders in die kollig ...” *op. cit.*, p. 210. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>145</sup> Blignaut, “Volksmoeders in die kollig ...” *op. cit.*, p. 210. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>146</sup> OBA, Photo collection, record number M2529.
- <sup>147</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 1/2: Miscellaneous, 9 February 1940.
- <sup>148</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 1/2: Miscellaneous, 13 February 1940.
- <sup>149</sup> FL Monama. “The Second World War and South African society, 1939–1945”. In T Potgieter & I Liebenberg (eds), *Reflections on war: Preparedness and consequences*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2012, 50.
- <sup>150</sup> K Fedorowich. “German espionage and British counter-intelligence in South Africa and Mozambique, 1939–1944”. *The Historical Journal* 48/1. 2005. 209–216.
- <sup>151</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 2/4, file 19: Correspondence, 27 January 1941. Translated from Afrikaans.
- <sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>154</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 2/4, file 19: Correspondence, Ossewabrandwag Kaapland Order no. 36/41, 10 September 1941.
- <sup>155</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 2/4, file 19: Correspondence, 8 September 1941.
- <sup>156</sup> OBA, Kommandant-Generaal collection, 2/4, file 19: Correspondence, 24 November 1941.
- <sup>157</sup> OBA, KJH Behrens collection, 2/11: Meetings and reports, minutes of the *Grootraad* meeting held on 11 and 12 March 1943, pp. 5–6.
- <sup>158</sup> OBA, Pamphlet collection, 2, “OB-uitgawes nommer 3 van 1943: Die Ossewa-Brandwag en die parlamentsverkieping, die soldate en die kommunisme”, p. 3.
- <sup>159</sup> OBA, OB-maatskappye collection, 11/8/52: “Die Kroon teen PP du Plessis en 51 ander hofverslae”; also see HM Robinson collection *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- <sup>160</sup> For an in-depth discussion on Visser and Van Blerk, as well as the bombing of the Benoni Post Office, see Blake, *Wit terroriste ... op. cit.*, pp. 106–116.
- <sup>161</sup> Fourie *op. cit.*, p. 82.
- <sup>162</sup> OBA, OB-koerante collection, *Die OB*, 5 August 1942, pp. 5–6; and *Die OB*, 12 August 1942, p. 4.
- <sup>163</sup> Fourie *op. cit.*, p. 83.
- <sup>164</sup> Blake, *Robey Leibbrandt ... op. cit.*, pp. 24–50.
- <sup>165</sup> OBA, OB-maatskappye collection, 11/8/53 to 11/8/63: “Die Kroon teen Robey Leibbrandt hofverslae” vol. 1–11. For more information on Leibbrandt, see Blake, *Robey Leibbrandt ... op. cit.*, p. 2019 and Strydom *op. cit.*
- <sup>166</sup> Blake, *Robey Leibbrandt ... op. cit.*, pp. 200–203.
- <sup>167</sup> For more information on the Afrikaner Broederbond and its role in the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, see D O’Meara. “The Afrikaner Broederbond 1927–1948: Class vanguard of Afrikaner nationalism”. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 3/2. 1977. 156–186.
- <sup>168</sup> OBA, OB-koerante collection, *Die OB*, 16 June 1948, p. 3.
- <sup>169</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, p. 196; OBA, HM Robinson collection *op. cit.*, p. 9; Prinsloo *op. cit.*, p. 85.
- <sup>170</sup> Geyser & Pruis *op. cit.*, p. 48.
- <sup>171</sup> Nel *op. cit.*, p. 57.
- <sup>172</sup> Visser *op. cit.*, p. 142.
- <sup>173</sup> OBA, Grootraad collection, 1/2/12: Agendas en notules. Minutes of the OB *Grootraad* meeting, 1 October 1942.

<sup>174</sup> Fourie *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>175</sup> Smuts papers, 88, 304, Letter from JFJ van Rensburg to Jan Smuts, found in J van der Poel, *Selections from the Smuts papers*, vol. VII, 205.

<sup>176</sup> OBA, Grootraad collection, 1/3/21: Uitvoerende Raad agendas en notules. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 1948.





# Doing research on ‘sensitive topics’: Studying the Sweden–South Africa Arms Deal

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## Abstract

The conventional arms trade is a sensitive topic that is often shrouded in secrecy. As with most aspects of so-called ‘high politics’, processes connected to conventional arms trade habitually take place behind closed doors between a relatively small and tightly knit group of individuals. Gaining access to such people is an enormous challenge for any researcher. Moreover, building rapport with key decision-makers takes a long time, and it requires considerable effort and resolve. This article recapitulates the approach and method of a study done on conventional Swedish arms trade with South Africa. It provides insights into several substantive issues related to such research, in particular, aspects connected to elite interviewing and research ethics. The bulk of the article covers matters related to research design, access to elites, the limitations associated with elite interviewing, and the interview process that was adopted during fieldwork. The discussion on research ethics is closely, but not exclusively, connected to elite interviewing, and here the article reflects on various ethical considerations as well as the harsh reality of researching sensitive topics, such as conventional arms trade.

**Keywords:** arms trade, foreign policy, sensitive topics, elite interviewing, Sweden, South Africa

## Introduction

Reflexive accounts of the challenges associated with researching highly politicised policy domains remain rare. Such accounts are particularly scarce in studies on so-called ‘sensitive’ topics that adopt ‘elite’ interviewing as the primary method of data gathering. As Lancaster<sup>2</sup> recently observed, “there has been little examination of the particular challenges associated with ‘elite’ interviewing [...] encountered by policy researchers”, and “the ways in which this research is conducted”. The present article adds to the small but established body of literature on elite interviewing regarding ‘sensitive’ topics by providing a reflexive and methodological account of the processes, practices and challenges associated with researching one highly politicised policy domain, namely conventional arms trade. I draw on examples from a study that was designed to explore ideals and interests (and their interrelationship) in foreign policy. An in-depth case study of this issue examined Sweden’s 1999 JAS-39 Gripen<sup>3</sup> fighter aircraft deal with South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Theoretically, the study responded to the long-standing debate in foreign policy analysis about whether ideals or interests drive foreign policy. Speaking directly to research that has aimed to bridge the ideals–interests divide, the investigation set out a framework of analysis that encompassed both ideals and interests as well as the relevant contextual forces that affect foreign policy behaviour. Empirically, the study provided an in-depth account of what the policymaking elite in Sweden was thinking and doing regarding the export of the Gripen to South Africa in the aftermath of the Cold War. It was argued that the Gripen deal with South Africa is an interesting case study for two reasons: It involves long-standing, deeply held ideals in Swedish foreign policy behaviour towards a country in the so-called ‘Global South’ as well as compelling (consequential) interest-driven calculations regarding the political economy of arms trade. Overall, the investigation illustrated how these aspects driven by ideals and interests stood side by side in this scenario and were dealt with and reflected in Sweden’s foreign policy regarding its decision to sell advanced fighter aircraft to South Africa.

There exists extensive literature on the Swedish arms trade, and there is documentation publicly available for investigating this subject matter, *inter alia*, parliamentary protocols; acts, bills and statutes; government statements and communication; reports from government agencies; and reports by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, very little attention has been paid to the actual practice of selling advanced weapons products to the Global South in the post-Cold War era – increasingly Sweden’s main area of export concern.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, the Swedish policymaking elites’ motivations and (often unofficial) actions driving these arms trade processes have yet to attract significant analysis in contemporary academic literature.

In conjunction with preparatory theoretical and empirical work and review of the literature related to the Sweden–South Africa Gripen deal<sup>6</sup> – including broader aspects related to Swedish foreign policy and arms trade – I undertook 64 semi-structured elite interviews between October 2012 and May 2016.<sup>7</sup> Due to the particular focus of this study, the interview process targeted individuals with in-depth knowledge of weapons manufacturing and/or trade and foreign policy-related matters. Most of the interviews were conducted with current and former elites in government, parliament, the wider arms industry, trade unions, the military, and some special advisors for government. The present article provides a retrospective discussion of the strategies used for the investigation and draws into full view some of the challenges I encountered with this research.

The article proceeds as follows: the first part discusses the research design, and here justifications are provided for why the single case study design was adopted. In the second part, the discussion turns to the type of methods used to obtain empirical evidence. It is argued here that, while documentation on Swedish foreign policy and arms trade is available, there is insufficient data concerning the actors, their rationales and their relationships with other actors in these processes. It is for this reason that semi-structured elite interviews acted as one of the main primary data sources of the study. The third part reflects on aspects regarding research ethics and the harsh reality of investigating arms trade, while the fourth part concludes the article.

## Research design: Single case study of foreign policy behaviour

Case studies can be useful to understand complex social phenomena,<sup>8</sup> and the single case design can be particularly helpful to generate a deep understanding of the complexity of a social phenomenon.<sup>9</sup> While most social phenomena are complex, examining conventional arms deals is extremely challenging, which creates difficulties for constructing parsimonious explanations. The social, economic and political implications connected to conventional arms deals are not only enormous; they also intersect and diverge in complicated ways. As Ikegami-Andersson<sup>10</sup> noted, researchers interested in the weapons industry and arms trade and its intersections with varied actors and/or structures (national, transnational and international) are often discouraged from setting up any comprehensive explanations because such practices are so complex. Nevertheless, a single case study of a significant foreign policy decision, event or process (such as arms trade or other matters of so-called ‘high politics’) can generate in-depth knowledge and provide a better ‘general’ understanding of analytical propositions.<sup>11</sup>

The choice of a single case study design in this study was motivated by two interrelated factors:

- the under-researched Swedish component of the South African Arms Deal, and the wider foreign policy implications of that arms sale;
- getting the direct accounts of decision-makers regarding ‘sensitive’ foreign policy-related issues is a valuable source of information and can produce rich depth, but ultimately, interviewing is a time-consuming, delicate and expensive process.

### *The Swedish component*

The broader 1999 South African Arms Deal<sup>12</sup> has been extensively researched over the past twenty years. With more than ten thousand newspaper articles, dozens of journal articles and several books on the topic, it is arguably one of the most written-about events in the post-apartheid era. Most of the research on the ‘Arms Deal’ has focused on the South African rationale for purchasing sophisticated conventional weapons worth billions of dollars (USD) both in terms of micro-level empirical investigation and macro-level conceptual analyses. The majority of the accounts have, in one way or another –

- examined the decision-making processes within the post-apartheid political apparatus;
- critically assessed why national (conventional) security was favoured over human security;
- explained how a small network of power elites unduly benefited from the procurement processes; and
- evaluated the various social, economic and political effects of the Arms Deal on South African society at large.

What have been underexplored thus far are the rationales of those European states that sold the weapons to South Africa (especially France, Italy, Germany and Sweden). The Swedish case was particularly interesting for three reasons.

First, the purchase of 26 Gripens from Sweden was the most expensive and lucrative of all the Arms Deal's contracts, constituting a fifth of the overall price.<sup>13</sup> However, it was also one of the most under-researched cases in the academic literature – particularly from a Swedish foreign policy perspective. Although some previous studies highlighted the strong historical relations between Swedish political and societal elites and the post-apartheid African National Congress (ANC) government in the context of the Arms Deal,<sup>14</sup> they did not provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the rationales of the Swedish policymaking elite for the Gripen deal due to their primary focus on South Africa's incentives for buying the Gripen.

Second, by investigating the Sweden–South Africa Gripen deal, it became apparent that such a study would fill an important gap in the academic literature on Swedish foreign policy towards post-apartheid South Africa. As one of Sweden's largest trading partners in Africa<sup>15</sup> – and one of its most adored allies – it was interesting that no in-depth analyses had been conducted regarding strategic issues related to, inter alia, trade, security and development and/or technological cooperation after the transition to democracy in 1994. While this study did not aim to fill such a substantial gap in its entirety, it did seek to provide unique insights about a significant foreign policy decision vis-à-vis post-apartheid South Africa. After all, the export of major conventional weapons, as Andrew J Pierre once noted –

[I]s far more than an economic occurrence, a military relationship or an arms control challenge – *arms sales are foreign policy writ large (original italics)*.<sup>16</sup>

Third, the Swedish component of the South African Arms Deal was thought-provoking because it involved two previously assumed distinct logics in Swedish foreign policy behaviour: small-state realism (an emphasis on national interests) and liberal internationalism (normative commitments to duties beyond borders). It is often argued that these two foreign policy traditions have served distinct purposes over the years.<sup>17</sup> Small-state realism reflects the Swedish government's geostrategic interests in Europe – marked most notably by armed neutrality, which is maintained, among other things, by a substantial military system that has the capability and impetus to manufacture and export conventional war material. Liberal internationalism, on the other hand, reflects the Swedish government's progressive foreign policy ideals, which have traditionally manifested strongly in the Global South. This second tradition has materialised in many different shapes and forms, but one of its prominent legacies is the 'special relationship' that was formed with South Africa. While it is often said that countries share a 'special relationship' – Britain and the United States being a good example – the bond between Sweden and South Africa is unusually strong.

The 'special relationship' was primarily shaped by events that occurred between the 1960s and 1994 when Sweden supported the liberation struggle movement against

apartheid in Southern Africa. Support of the ANC-led struggle against apartheid largely reflected domestic values, and the belief that was garnered during this protracted period was that Sweden had a moral obligation to extend solidarity beyond its borders to those who were oppressed and disenfranchised.<sup>18</sup> As the study on which this article reports suggested, Swedish–South African post-apartheid relations cannot be fully understood outside of the abovementioned historical framework or the ongoing ideological process that it engenders. These underlying factors meant that a study of the Sweden–South Africa Gripen deal had to be placed in a broader historical context and not only considered for a ‘snapshot analysis’. Such an empirical and conceptual move is essential because as Merle Lipton reminds us, history is, after all, an important part of the consciousness of any society. It contributes to the beliefs of society, shapes its understanding about itself and the world, and provides some indication of who its friends and who its enemies are.<sup>19</sup>

There are, of course, competing accounts and significant pushback against binary interpretations of Swedish foreign policy as being ‘realist’ in the so-called Global North and ‘idealist’ in the so-called Global South. From these and other critical interpretations follow the argument that support for both liberation struggle movements and armed neutrality entailed elements of realism and idealism.<sup>20</sup> Yet, despite persuasive critical interpretations of Swedish foreign policy as involving idealism and realism over time, little attention has been paid to how these aspects have systematically played out in Sweden’s post-Cold War foreign policy behaviour regarding conventional weapons trade. While Sweden’s post-Cold War military policy has received serious scholarly attention – in particular, its military activism in the context of international solidarity and multilateral security cooperation – far less attention has been given to how bilateral conventional weapons trade with developing countries in the Global South can be understood and interpreted in this evolving post-Cold War foreign policy context.

In its broadest sense, this single case study aimed to make a contribution to knowledge by arguing that Sweden’s arms trade with the Global South should not be understood in the widely used (and often implicit) explanation that it represents a shift from foreign policy ideals to interests. Instead, such a process reflects something more profound, namely a dual strategy that is consciously pursued by elites where ideals and interests are mutually constituted. Such a dual foreign policy stance – consisting of cosmopolitan and statist objectives as it relates to the production and circulation of advanced weapons products – distinguishes Sweden from most cognate non-aligned and neutral states, such as Ireland, Austria, Finland and Switzerland.

### *Getting the direct accounts of decision-makers*

One of the stated aims of the study reported here was to look behind the official policy processes and investigate elites’ accounts of what they were thinking and doing. Such an undertaking was important because, as Glynn and Booth observe, public archives are often incomplete, and they tend to draw the researcher’s attention to the formal administrative process of policymaking rather than the substantive causes and effects.<sup>21</sup>

In the present study, interviews were preferable to surveys because it provided an opportunity for finding out “how people frame their views, why they hold those views and how they make connections or demonstrate disjunctions among discrete opinions”.<sup>22</sup> As was indicated above, most of the interviews were conducted with high-ranking officials and experts in various organisations. These individuals may also be referred to as ‘elites’. When I refer to ‘elites’, I refer to people whom I chose to interview because of who they were (their social status) and the position they occupied in a particular organisation at the time. In other words, these people were not selected randomly or anonymously.<sup>23</sup> The cluster of elites, in whom this study was particularly interested, comprised configurations of actors who had substantial influence on and power over decisions regarding arms manufacturing and trade in the context of foreign policy behaviour.

Interviews with elites were particularly helpful since it provided me with unique insights into the subject under investigation – information that only a few possessed. Such individuals tended to have privileged access to information, understood decision-making processes and had personal experience of strategies and group behaviours. As Esther Nir<sup>24</sup> asserts, “interviews with members of the political, economic, or social elite provide valuable data that is typically hidden from public purview”. The reason for this is “information on how elites perceive situations and make key decisions provides a unique perspective that often cannot be obtained through other data collection methods”.

Lilleker,<sup>25</sup> among others, argues that interviews “can provide the means for expanding upon data and will add greater depth to scientific analysis of an event and phenomenon”. However, interviews should also be reinforced by other forms of empirical data. In the present study, I made use of data triangulation, which allowed me to look at the case from several different viewpoints. Data triangulation essentially helped me to provide a better picture of what was being researched, and ultimately, a more plausible causal analysis of Swedish foreign policy behaviour in relation to the Gripen deal with South Africa. Nevertheless, in this study, interviews were used for obtaining rich depth. By only appraising policy documents, one cannot get the personal accounts of people who are or were involved in arms contracts as was argued above. After all, to explain the motivations of actors, we need a deep understanding of the social situation, which would require an ex-post explanation where the analyst must immerse him- or herself into the subject. One crucial way of doing that is by interviewing those involved in the case under investigation.<sup>26</sup>

Very few analyses on arms trade (in the context of foreign policy behaviour) provide in-depth interview material about the rationale put forward by the policymaking elite. However, there are good reasons for this: arms deals are usually shrouded in secrecy and negotiations habitually take place behind closed doors among a relatively small and tightly knit group of elites. Gaining access to such people is an enormous challenge for any researcher. Moreover, building rapport with key decision-makers takes a long time and requires considerable effort and resolve. Research methods literature often refers to elite interviewing as time-consuming and financially draining. Such observations are not ‘clichés’; they are accurate. As Seidman<sup>27</sup> importantly noted, “interviewing

research takes a great deal of time and, sometimes, money”. He qualifies this statement by acknowledging, “any method of inquiry worth anything takes time, thoughtfulness, energy and money. But interviewing is especially labour intensive.”

As a South African (that is, an outsider), I had cursory knowledge at first of Sweden’s culture, language, political system, and geography. Acquiring in-depth knowledge of such aspects took time, and these issues were important for carrying out in-depth research. A seemingly ‘simple’ trip to Stockholm often took several weeks to plan. Setting up interviews with key decision-makers often took months. Learning the Swedish language and political system took years. Gaining such knowledge was important because it smoothed the data-gathering phase. Although several policy documents in Sweden have been translated to English, there are still a vast number of protocols, bills, laws, government reports and parliamentary proceedings related to the South African Gripen deal that are still in the original language. Knowledge of the language, in particular, steadily improved the data-gathering process because it helped me to read this important primary material, which also helped me to think deeper about the interview process.

Knowledge of the Swedish language further provided me with manoeuvrability and confidence during the interviews. For example, respondents often changed to Swedish during interviews when sensitive issues related to defence and/or security were being discussed. Interestingly, in these situations, elite respondents rarely asked whether I understood the language or what was actually being said. Richardson<sup>28</sup> observed that, when the researcher’s command of the language in which the interviews are conducted improves, confidence in interacting with elite respondents also increases. This, he argues, produces in-depth knowledge of the subject under investigation.

One can, of course, make use of interpreters to carry out elite interviews, especially if the aim is to conduct a comparative study in cross-national and cross-linguistic settings. However, there are several drawbacks and challenges with such a choice. First, interpreters can threaten the validity of findings despite adequate preparation and validity checks. Kapborg and Berterö,<sup>29</sup> for example, observed how a researcher “may not know whether the interpreter has summarised and/or modified the responses” from interviewees. One significant problem in this regard is ‘gatekeeping’. Williamson et al.<sup>30</sup> argue that gatekeeping can occur “when an interpreter selectively fails to relay participants’ responses that are believed by the interpreter to reflect negatively on their ethno-cultural group.” Second, interpreters can undermine trust, especially when sensitive and confidential issues are discussed. As Hilary Drew<sup>31</sup> points out, “the addition of this third person may undermine the trust and rapport that the researcher must work hard to secure”. Without being prompted, one of my elite respondents in the study reflected upon this exact issue during an interview when he argued, “without trust, you have nothing” (interview #49, October 2015)<sup>32</sup>. Finally, as most of the literature suggests, using interpreters are expensive. In this study, I did not have the financial resources to cover such costs. Nevertheless, the lack-of-resources argument can further be viewed through the lens of efficient resource use. All studies have limited resources, and one takes strategic decisions on how to make the most of them. Thus, it was not

exactly a weakness of my study that I lacked resources. On the contrary, the strength of this study was that I used the resources I had efficiently.

Taken together, the aspects listed above influenced my decision to favour a single case study design over others. These ‘justifications’ may, of course, be subject to intense scrutiny. However, as with all scientific investigations, pragmatic decisions had to be made regarding the aim of the study. In this regard, Karen Ross emphasises:

[A]ll research studies are a complex mix of opportunism, compromise, serendipity and skill. Surely what is as, if not, more important is the motivation behind the study, the ethical stance which informs the design, the ideology and theoretical frames which determine the focus.<sup>33</sup>

### **Semi-structured elite interviews**

According to Seidman,<sup>34</sup> semi-structured ‘elite interviews’ are the most efficient way of obtaining information about policymaking. Such interviews tend to balance rigidity and flexibility, acting as a guide for setting questions in a structured format while still allowing for a situation where the interviewer can “prompt for more information” outside of the structured questions.<sup>35</sup> Many new and unexpected issues resulted from the interviews, especially when sensitive topics – such as weapons exports or security policies – were discussed. The semi-structured format was therefore preferable since I could not always anticipate which type of responses would be given to sensitive questions and had to be open to adapt and make changes as the interview progressed.

The critical reader may ask why 64 interviews were conducted. Why not 44 or 74? The reader may also enquire how one would know whether 64 interviews were enough. Seidman<sup>36</sup> contends that there are two important criteria for “enough”, namely sufficiency and saturation. Sufficiency considers whether there are sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants and sites of the targeted population. As was indicated already, the sample for this study was rather varied and included a diverse group of respondents with a wide range of responsibilities and expertise. The point of saturation, to put it candidly, was reached when I began to hear the same information being reported and no longer learned anything new or extraordinary from the interview process. In what follows, I discuss aspects concerning access to respondents and the limitations I experienced in this regard, and I reflect on the interview process during my fieldwork.

#### *Access and limitations*

Interviewing high-ranking officials or experts can be a daunting task for a junior researcher with little experience of such practices. Such a task is even more daunting when the subject under investigation relates to sensitive matters regarding so-called ‘high politics’ (national security, trade or law), and the research is conducted in a ‘foreign setting’ and in a foreign language.

Setting up interviews with elites often took several weeks or months. However, once rapport with key individuals had been established the process accelerated. As



Bogner et al.<sup>37</sup> observe, elites tend to be well connected, and they regularly provide researchers with contact details of people in their professional networks. In some instances, they even initiate contact with others on the researcher's behalf. This type of sampling is often referred to as 'snowball sampling'— a technique frequently used in populations that are difficult for researchers to access.<sup>38</sup> There is substantial literature on the scope, significance, viability and failures of snowball sampling; however, most studies agree that this referral practice is a useful strategy for expanding the researcher's social network.

Being new to Sweden and possessing limited knowledge of the topic under investigation, my first sampling approach was to ask people in my professional circles to put me in contact with individuals who had knowledge of arms trade, weapons manufacturing processes and/or issues related to security and foreign policy. Consequently, in the opening stages of the research process, I contacted academics, journalists and persons working at civil society organisations.

Those initial contact sessions were invaluable because it helped me to sort out my ideas on the topic and gain useful knowledge before moving on to semi-structured elite interviews. It should be noted that, due to the unofficial and unstructured nature of these initial contact sessions, I did not include them in the official interview record appendix. In other words, they were considered 'off-the-record' discussions since these individuals did not occupy decision-making positions regarding matters relating to security, defence and/or foreign policy. Nevertheless, many of these individuals provided me with contact details of 'intermediary' persons who, in turn, would put me in contact with relevant people. The latter was a valuable process to get the ball rolling at the beginning of my fieldwork. The snowball sampling process noticeably changed after I had gained access to a relatively small number of elite respondents. What followed was a process where an 'intermediary' was no longer necessary because elite respondents would put me in direct contact with one or two of their close colleagues. Once I was in the so-called 'inner circle' of the political, military and industry elites connected to the matters related to the arms trade and/or foreign policy and/or security, the process accelerated.

Being a South African investigating matters related to Swedish foreign policy and security was most advantageous in terms of access. One of the most beneficial aspects was that several experts and high-ranking officials in Sweden admitted (somewhat surprisingly) that they would not have responded to my initial emails or telephone calls if I had a typical Swedish name or surname (despite being referred to them by a known colleague or studying at a prominent Swedish university). Being regularly inundated with requests for interviews, many elite respondents cited "interview fatigue" with Swedish journalists and scholars. Others considered my request "intriguing" and "unusual" because South African scholars are not typically known for studying matters related to Swedish security and foreign policy. Richardson<sup>39</sup> experienced something similar in his research on the significance of the disputed Southern Kuril Islands for post-Soviet Russian national identity. In his study, he reflected on a "certain curiosity from the [Russian] elite as to why a researcher from the United Kingdom [...] was interested in such a seemingly obscure topic". These and other examples seem to suggest that

being an ‘outsider’ can be beneficial and rewarding. As Karen Ross observed, being an ‘outsider’ can, at times, mean that you are “either non-threatening or exotic, or both”.<sup>40</sup>

Coupled with what I experienced as these so-called ‘outsider’ and ‘exotic’ elements was South Africa’s special relationship with Sweden mentioned earlier. Discussions regarding the ‘special relationship’ often proved to be beneficial for gaining access to some high-ranking officials, especially those who were involved in the various anti-apartheid movements in Sweden over the years and those who had worked closely with the South African government and other NGOs since the democratic transition in 1994. Such personal experiences were also habitually discussed at length during interviews, and it usually acted as a useful platform for talks on a broad range of foreign policy issues.

Although I gained access to former and current high-ranking officials in government, state departments, parliament and other relevant organisations in Sweden, getting these individuals to talk openly about weapons contracts was sometimes challenging. As Feinstein<sup>41</sup> notes, getting respondents to talk about sensitive and ‘secret’ defence-related matters is a challenge for most researchers. Due to allegations of corruption and misconduct during the Sweden–South Africa Gripen deal, respondents were hesitant at times to comment on specific defence-related contractual agreements (more on this below). Yet, even in those instances where respondents contacted me afterwards and asked to retract an official statement or to change the wording of something they had said, it still meant that I had the background information. As Thomas observed:<sup>42</sup>

[A]nything I receive is better than nothing; I may grind my teeth at not being able to report some data, but I would much rather know what I cannot say than to not know and then be forced to speculate.

Admittedly, such individuals were in the minority and, despite the challenges listed above, most respondents in Sweden were willing to speak about the Gripen deal with South Africa and broader issues related to Swedish foreign policy. Not only did I gain unusual access to elites in Sweden, but interviews tended to be longer (some lasting two hours or more), usually more in-depth and respondents were generally more forthcoming than those interviewed elsewhere.

In South Africa, for example, the process was noticeably different because access to people of importance was often denied or interviews cancelled at the last minute. In those cases where access was granted to high-ranking officials in government and other state departments, bureaucratic red tape habitually caused interruptions, inter alia, being subjected to comprehensive security checks at government buildings, which created considerable delays and often affected the interview process in a variety of ways. In other instances, respondents in South Africa agreed to meet on condition that the interview took place in public settings, such as cafés, restaurants, pubs and even casinos – not at their place of employment. Approximately half of the twelve interviews in South Africa took place in such public settings and sometimes late at night. Apart from a few occurrences, respondents in South Africa generally tended to be more reserved than

those in Sweden and often refused outright to comment on ‘sensitive’ security-related matters for reasons on which I will elaborate later.

### *Process*

It was advantageous to start my elite interviews with informal discussions, which often lasted approximately ten minutes. So-called ‘small talk’ was helpful to ease into the discussion and assess the respondent’s demeanour. Respondents often talked more freely about themselves and work-related issues when informal questions were asked. Mosley<sup>43</sup> provides valuable insights into how “just talking to people” can be a useful tool in political science research. Not only did this create a relaxed environment during the interviews; it also revealed interesting and relevant details about the respondent. However, when more formal or sensitive questions were posed, the demeanour of the respondents often changed, and the tone of the interview became structured and reserved. During most of the interviews, I saved the difficult and sensitive questions until the end, when a degree of rapport had already been established with the informant.

Since elites tend to be busy and occupied with various important tasks, every effort was made to get background information from other sources before the interview took place. Hence, I was often over-prepared for interviews, especially towards the latter stages of my fieldwork. In the opening stages of my fieldwork, I often irritated respondents by asking them to repeat information that they knew was readily available elsewhere. Good background research did not only minimise irritation; it also assisted in accessing elites and often acted as a flattering technique. Elites were routinely impressed when I listed their record of accomplishments, which indicated that I had read their curriculum vitae, website, book, article, report or debate transcript, or I informed them that I had discussed their work or decisions with colleagues.

That being said, preparedness and expressed knowledge of a topic comprise an awkward balancing act and a fine line to walk despite the commitment to being prepared for interviews as discussed above. It was evident throughout the research process that a certain level of inexperience and naivety was beneficial at times. Asking deep questions about a sensitive topic in a manner that conveyed my ignorance often led to lengthy and comprehensive answers. In fact, some respondents even took the opportunity during such occasions to boast extensively about themselves and their role in a specific event. Furthermore, several respondents went into considerable detail, explaining so-called ‘secrets’ during moments when I professed genuine ignorance of a topic or event.

While most of my interviews were recorded, some respondents expressed their preference for not being recorded during the session. In such circumstances, I took notes. Taking notes can potentially put the interviewer at a disadvantage because it prevents one from fully focusing on what is being said. However, directly following an interview where the respondent did not want to be recorded, I would piece together what was said and, where agreed on beforehand, I would email the notes to the respondent to ensure that everything was in order. In those cases where I was unsure of a particular statement in Swedish – especially when the interview was not being recorded – I followed a process of oral verification during the interview or written verification afterwards.

Thomas<sup>44</sup> asserts that elites are often in favour of being recorded during interviews and, in my study, that was mostly the case (notably in Sweden). I also preferred to record the interviews for the reasons discussed below.

Recording interviews allowed me to focus completely on what was being said and how it was said. When one writes extensively while the respondent is speaking, one tends to leave out important information, focus on the wrong information (influenced largely by pitch and emphasis) or fail to assess the demeanour of the interviewee while he or she is explaining a topic or event. Body language and facial expression can, at times, be a good test of whether the informant is comfortable with the question and it can often signal whether the line of enquiry should become more surgical (that is, probing) or whether one should opt for more general questions.

Recording the interviews was also useful, as it tended to get respondents to speak a great deal – something I realised from the early stages of my fieldwork. Here I followed Seidman's advice about "listening more and talking less"<sup>45</sup> because getting respondents to describe or explain a topic in detail and having a full record of that detail is beneficial for various reasons. When respondents discussed a topic, concept, event or word with which I was not familiar, I did not necessarily need to interrupt them for clarification since I could revisit the recording several times to make sure I understood the context in which it was described. When making notes by hand, one cannot always revisit the interview and understand the context within which certain things had been said – especially several years after the interview had taken place. Besides, I preferred not to contact respondents afterwards to clarify what was being said during a recording unless it was absolutely necessary.

Recording the interview also allowed me to have the exact wording of what was said. This meant that I did not have to summarise, paraphrase or even correct grammar. The exactness of what was being said was important since it assisted me during the coding and processing stage, and it allowed me to take advantage of the important differences between interviewees' responses. If I only had a summary of a concept or event mentioned in the interview, with no further explanation to refer back to, I would forfeit the richness of diversity.

Recordings were also beneficial because they allowed me to capture the precise way certain topics or events were explained. For example, a pause, a throat clearing, a sarcastic comment, a joke, an unexpected muttering, a hesitation, a stammer – these were all helpful in capturing the moment in its full richness and diversity.

One limitation of the interview process in Sweden, however, was a slight language barrier. Although I have a decent grasp of the Swedish language, there were misunderstandings at times, which often occurred due to my lack of understanding of some regional accents. Several interviewees were kind enough to speak in English, but this inevitably meant that certain meanings and nuances were lost or left out during the interviewing process. In those situations where communication in English became problematic, I encouraged respondents to speak in Swedish. However, as I mentioned

previously, many respondents also routinely switched to Swedish when sensitive issues were discussed.

In South Africa, the language barrier was less problematic, even though some respondents spoke English with a ‘thick accent’ – something to which I have become accustomed over the years. It is rather disconcerting to admit that I conversed with Swedish respondents (both in Sweden and South Africa) in their native tongue – a language I have been exposed to for only a few years – but could not converse with many South African respondents in their native tongues – languages to which I had been exposed for most of my life. One can, of course, only speculate, but it is interesting to contemplate how much more could have been achieved in the study had I been able to conduct some of my interviews (or initial contact) in isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho or Setswana among others.

#### *How questions were asked*

The main purpose of the interview questions was to capture how ideals and interests shaped Sweden’s foreign policy behaviour regarding the Gripen deal with South Africa. To that end, questions were asked based on the analytical framework guiding the study. It was acknowledged from the outset that there can be no guarantee that one is asking the ‘right’ questions. Questions also have much to do with the type of relationship one forms with the respondents. As Robert Weiss points out:

What is essential in interviewing is to maintain a working partnership. You can get away with phrasing questions awkwardly and with a variety of other errors that will make you wince when you listen to the tape later. What you cannot get away with is failure to work with the respondent as a partner in the production of useful material.<sup>46</sup>

My general strategy was to approach respondents in a relaxed, outgoing but professional manner. Due to the secrecy involved in arms trade and the associated corruption scandals frequently related to such practices, respondents were often tense or defensive at first. Following Christopher Williams’s<sup>47</sup> advice on how to interview powerful people, I routinely eased these apprehensive atmospheres by telling a joke, talking about the weather, discussing the architecture of the building, enquiring about the pictures and/or photos on the wall in their office or providing an opinion about the quality of coffee or food we were consuming during an interview, among other things. As was stated earlier, ‘just talking to people’ is a valuable tool in political science research. Starting with informal questions or discussions was essential for ‘breaking the ice’. High-ranking officials typically told me that I only had 45 minutes or one hour for the interview. Then I would get them to talk about themselves or their achievements, and that one hour often became two hours or a beer after work or supper that evening.

It was useful to memorise my questions as much as possible, and not look at my question sheet while the respondent was talking. In the opening stages of my data-gathering phase, I often did the latter. However, I noticed that this was unproductive

because it created an artificial or mechanical process in which the respondent did not feel valued or being listened to but rather as just another number on my interview list. In addition to aspects already mentioned, I also had an internal strategy for asking questions – one which I based on the format of a rugby match:

I always started with a broad question where I allowed the respondent to speak at length (this was the ‘warm-up phase’). I then moved to ask questions that were more clearly in line with my study (this was the first 30 minutes of the rugby game – the phase where one assesses one’s opponent). I then followed the previous procedure but incrementally channelled my questions towards my analytical framework (this was the three-quarter mark of the match, a crucial period in any rugby game where tactical decisions and the execution of strategy become vital). In the penultimate phase of questioning, I would ask explicit and probing questions directly related to my analytical framework in conjunction with relevant follow-up questions – often in quick succession (this was the final fifteen minutes of the rugby match – the so-called make or break phase – where one exhausts all of one’s resources to get the required result). In the closing phase, I would shift back to asking a broad question or two (this was the ‘cooling-down phase’). The closing phase was often the most rewarding and revealing because respondents would answer the broad question but often return to a previously asked probing question and then, as an afterthought, elaborate on that in more detail as the atmosphere was more relaxed at that stage.

The rugby match strategy suited me well and allowed me to guide my questions in a specific manner. It also provided me with adequate scope to adjust my questions as the process unfolded. The important point to make here, however, is that as the research progressed, the relative importance of questions changed, and the formulation of questions became sharper. The questions primarily became more defined throughout the research process because I regularly alternated between data collection and analysis; that is, I did not conduct interviews over a four-year period and then analysed all the data retrospectively. I examined and reflected upon the interviews in consignments throughout the process. Such a method was vital for reformulating my interview questions in order to obtain new but relevant data as far as possible. It should also be noted here that documentary work was conducted throughout the research process and in conjunction with the interviews. Although interviews acted as one of the main sources of original primary data, they were often conducted in order to double-check and/or clarify information from written sources and to obtain new information about direct participation in matters related to defence and foreign policy.

### *The impact of time on validity*

The Sweden–South Africa Gripen deal was a complicated affair covering some 18 years – arms deals are normally long-drawn-out affairs. Even though the official contract was signed in 1999, the final payments for the Gripen deal only concluded in 2019. Moreover, due to the lifespan of fighter aircraft – typically 30 to 40 years – continuous agreements were negotiated between the buying and selling party. For these reasons, reporting on the exact details of the events was sometimes challenging.

Given the historical nature of this case study, respondents were asked (and expected) to provide details about events that had occurred a long time ago. This lapse in time meant that there was a possibility that important information might have been left out or altered during the interview process.

As time passed between the events and the interviews, there was also a possibility that circumstantial factors might have coloured the recollections of some of the respondents. A practical example of this is the negative publicity the Sweden–South Africa Gripen deal received in the aftermath of the contract being signed. As discussed throughout the study, the Gripen deal had been subject to intense scrutiny and criticism both in Sweden and South Africa (and internationally, for that matter). Respondents were well aware of these criticisms and some often went to great lengths to profess their innocence or non-involvement in corrupt practices. These criticisms frequently influenced the manner in which some answers were provided. Furthermore, respondents frequently admitted that they would not have spoken to me if I were investigating the corruption scandals connected to the Gripen deal (more on this below). Although the latter was not unusual, there was a possibility that some answers were tailored and channelled towards particular events and/or actions and not others.

Despite these challenges and drawbacks of the interview process, it nevertheless provided me with a rare insight into what elites and policymakers were thinking and doing. Besides, the interview sample of this study was rather substantial (64 interviews), and the use of data triangulation was a useful tool to establish the potential gaps between words and deeds. In addition, having the direct wording from the policymaking elite helped me to assess the oft-stated economic-technical matter of fact aspects and problematise the common-sense assertions provided by respondents. However, even if some of the responses were coloured by *ex post* factors, the interview material provided in this study was very rich and diverse. In several parts of the study, extraordinary statements regarding foreign policy decisions were frequently made by the policymaking elite – aspects that have not been reported in previous research. Such material provided a unique insight into how people in positions of power think and act.

### **Research ethics and the harsh reality of investigating the arms trade**

As a researcher, I have a general duty to avoid harm, tell the truth and show “principled sensitivity to the rights of others”.<sup>48</sup> I also need to take into consideration aspects concerning my own well-being and safety. Arms procurement processes, as was argued already, are sensitive topics for both the respondents providing valuable information during interviews as well as the researcher who is entrusted with this delicate information. It would be incorrect to think that elites or the institutions they represented do not deserve the same ethical considerations as any other research respondents or institutions. To conduct ethical and safe research, I carried out the process in line with the Ethical Guidelines of the Swedish Research Council for social science research (Vetenskapsrådet).

The first objective of an ethical and safe research process was to communicate the aim and purpose of the study with respondents before they participated in interviews and to obtain informed consent. It was not my intention to deceive respondents about the true nature of the research carried out in this study even when it meant that some individuals would turn down requests for participation.

Second, it was decided to conceal the identity of my respondents in order to avoid any possible harm that may arise after publication. According to the Chatham House Rule, one can make such arrangements since the researcher is not required to identify the individual or the affiliation of the respondent. While I did list the type of actors interviewed during the research process in an appendix document, I did not refer to any particular individual or his or her affiliation in the empirical sections of the study. Instead, interviews were numbered and dates for the interviews were provided. For example, a direct quotation or general statement would be cited as (interview #34, May 2015) or (interview #7, May 2013). Where necessary I used the terms ‘senior’ or ‘high-ranking’ to provide some indication of rank or position, but this was kept to a minimum. The decision to conceal the identities of my respondents opened this study to further scrutiny and it was acknowledged that such a move had significant implications for the conceptual framing and research design of the wider investigation. But given the sensitive nature of conventional arms trade, it was a decision that had to be made in order to gain the trust of my respondents<sup>49</sup> – many of whom provided me with confidential information, much of which I was not able to report.

Third, I acknowledged and respected the fact that experts and high-ranking officials were often constrained by organisational processes and legal practices that aim to guard the interests of these against public scrutiny. When respondents did not want to comment on specific topics, I respected their preferences and moved on to another topic. These ethical considerations potentially had an effect on the scientific rigour and validity of the study. However, due to the nature of the event under investigation, the latter was a trade-off that I was willing to make.

In this study, I encountered little formal or informal gatekeeping practices from institutions and individuals – a practice often experienced by researchers interested in ‘sensitive’ policy processes. There were instances where I had to communicate the aims and purposes of my study with a senior official’s colleague, secretary or spokesperson, but this rarely influenced access and did not have any measurable effect on participation. Although I was extremely fortunate in that regard, I did, however, encounter something more profound: overt and covert threats from third parties.

During the data-gathering phase of the study, it became clear that there are forces in both Sweden and South Africa who want to silence researchers and critics interested in matters concerning arms trade. Several people – known and unknown – warned me throughout the research process to take caution when investigating arms trade matters. At times, these warnings materialised as explicit verbal threats. For example, following a presentation of my work on the South African Gripen deal in Uppsala, Sweden, an unknown person approached me, removed his name badge, enquired about my personal



details and said, “[d]o you enjoy your job? Because if you continue like this, your job and your life in Sweden will be destroyed. We can make sure about that.”

A similar incident occurred during a formal gathering in Stockholm. At this event, an unknown person approached me and said:

There are people out there who will not like this kind of research, not at all. If I were you, I would look for something else to write about. If you don't, they will make sure that you are discredited.

When I asked whether he was such a person, he smirked and walked away. In South Africa, I was also regularly reminded to “tread carefully” and to “avoid certain questions” that could land me in “trouble with the authorities”. While I took the necessary precautions during my fieldwork, I did not allow these overt and covert threats to deter me from carrying out the empirical research for this study. Whether these threats could eventually materialise is a matter of speculation and a risk I was willing to take.

In 2013, the ANC-led government proposed a so-called Protection of State Informational Bill (colloquially known as the Secrecy Bill). This bill aims to prevent investigations into sensitive government actions with the purpose of guarding state officials against answering questions relating to so-called ‘state interests’. Investigations into the broader 1999 Arms Deal fall under such activities. The purpose of this legislation is ultimately to curb and protect the dissemination of state information. The leaking of official state documents, which are determined to fall under the category of ‘sensitive information’, can lead to severe legal penalties. Investigators caught with such information could spend up to 25 years in jail in South Africa. This is mainly relevant to cases where state corruption or ineptitude is revealed.<sup>50</sup>

The so-called Secrecy Bill has broad definitions of security, national security and state security – none of which is particularly clear. In addition, the bill is ambiguous about what constitutes confidential or top-secret information. For these and other reasons, the empirical investigation in this study did not focus on corruption as a research aim. The assumption was rather that corruption was and is fundamentally built into the global weapons trading industry.<sup>51</sup> Most of the 1999 South African Arms Deal studies thus far have focused on matters of corruption in one way or another. While it is important to highlight such issues as a public duty, the studies have caused some complications for researchers interested in examining strategic decision-making regarding matters related to defence and foreign policy where South Africa is involved.

Of all the verbal and written post-publication criticisms directed at this study on the Sweden–South Africa Gripen deal, the lion’s share focused on my lack of researching (or bringing more critical attention to) corruption. In light of that, I want to use this opportunity to clarify why corruption was not an overarching research aim in the study. My reasons for not researching corruption were not only driven by ethical, legal and safety concerns; there were important conceptual and methodological reasons as well.

Corruption in the conventional arms trade is (or can be) an intervening variable. It is not an independent variable. The global arms trade is indeed a notoriously corrupt business, but corruption is not the driver of the conventional arms trade. Consider it like this: corruption cannot explain *why* countries such as Sweden, Germany or Italy, amongst others, manufacture and export highly advanced conventional weapons products. It can, however, explain *how* elements of a particular arms deal contract were secured. In other words, corruption is a *how* feature of arms trade because it can only describe (parts of) how a deal might take place. It does not and cannot explain the wide array of preferences and logics of the political economy of arms trade, that is, the deeper underlying forces that drive foreign policy decisions regarding the export of conventional weapon systems. Besides, the focus on corruption as an independent explanatory variable of the conventional arms trade is reductionist because the relevant processes involve a host of complex foreign policy concerns where issues such as “security, human rights and international order interact most directly with economic concerns such as trade, jobs and profits”.<sup>52</sup> Considering the above-mentioned and other comments, I tried my utmost to focus on strategic decision-making aspects regarding the political economy of arms trade in the context of foreign policy behaviour.

## Conclusion

The study on which this article is based, aimed to provide a reflexive account of some of the strategies used and challenges faced when investigating a highly politicised ‘sensitive topic’, namely conventional arms trade. Studies on this topic but also on related topics rarely bring into full view the processes and practices involved in such research, especially aspects regarding elite interviewing. Lancaster importantly notes that reflexive accounts of these research processes are “essential for better understanding the dilemmas of research which are too often sanitised or lost in other methodological descriptions”.<sup>53</sup> Some might consider such reporting as ‘a risky enterprise’ because it “may leave researchers exposed and vulnerable”.<sup>54</sup> However, I argue that, while the findings of social scientific investigations are important, we, as researchers, also need to reflect honestly and openly about the methodological choices we make (and for which reasons), the strategies we adopt during fieldwork, and the multitude of complex challenges we face during our research.

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> K Lancaster. "Confidentiality, anonymity and power relations in elite interviewing: Conducting qualitative policy research in a politicised domain". *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 20. 2017. 94.
- <sup>3</sup> The Gripen is often referred to as 'Griffin' in English. The Swedish acronym JAS (jakt, attack och spaningsuppdrag) translates to "hunting, attack and reconnaissance".
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- <sup>5</sup> See WS Coetzee. "Sweden's weapons exports paradox". In K Björkdahl & A de Bengy Puyvallée (eds), *Scandinavian humanitarianism in the 21st century: Do-gooders and the end of aid*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021 [forthcoming].
- <sup>6</sup> These included, inter alia, official speeches and statements, policy documents, government reports, journal articles, newspaper articles, books, other electronic sources, etc. The Arms Deal Virtual Press Office (<http://www.armsdeal-vpo.co.za>), a website dedicated to archiving virtually every Swedish, British, German, French, Italian and South African newspaper article, legal document and journal article run on the broader Arms Deal (12 002 at the last count), was perhaps the most important source of information in this regard. The Arms Deal Virtual Press Office is maintained by members of the public whose main purpose is to disseminate information related to the broader 1999 South African Arms Deal.
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- <sup>9</sup> See G Allison & P Zelikow. *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban missile crisis*. New York, NY: Addison-Wesley, 1999.
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# “This is war, isn’t it?”

## Fear and mortality from El Wak to El Alamein, 1940–1942

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### **Abstract**

During the Second World War, soldiers experienced fear and became aware of their mortality as a result of those factors that were unfamiliar to them. Where memoirs or other narratives are available, it is possible to interpret soldiers’ expressions of fear and mortality and to determine the ways in which they began to deal with these emotions in different war situations, whether in battle, in confronting disease or in handling difficult environmental conditions. In this instance, the East African campaign and the campaign in North Africa form the background to the investigation into soldiers’ experience of fear and mortality as expressed in their writings.

**Keywords:** East African campaign, North African campaign, medical services, fear, mortality, Second World War.

### **Introduction**

We all admit to a degree of “bomb happiness”. After our first action in Somaliland in December 1940, the term was unknown to us. No man in those heady days of success against the Italians in East Africa would have applied it to himself – and yet, peculiarly enough, we were more afraid of gunfire in those days, those far-off days of our inexperience than we are now.<sup>2</sup>

These were the diarised words of James Ambrose Brown on 7 August 1942 when his regiment was stationed somewhere between El Alamein and the Egyptian border. At the time, the 8<sup>th</sup> Army casualty list had reached 750 officers and 12 500 men. By the end of the campaign, the Union Defence Force (UDF) had a total of 23 625 casualties, of whom 2 104 were killed, 3 928 wounded and 14 147 taken prisoner.<sup>3</sup> In the months before, Brown had participated in or had witnessed various battles in Libya, had experienced air raids by German Stukas at Gazala, and had seen the fall of Tobruk from his position at El Hamra. In other words, his diary entries were based on valid war experience. Undoubtedly, the war in the Libyan Desert was more eventful in terms of battle activity than his experiences in the Italian colonies in East Africa had been; yet, in Brown’s own estimation, in East Africa, his fear of battle was great and had diminished in the Libyan Desert.

It was not only during combat that men became anxious. Daily life during any campaign could be negatively affected by factors such as climate, terrain, disease and the ability of medical units to provide the necessary services.<sup>4</sup> In Brown's own words, "inexperience" also informed soldiers' sense of fear, and as such, the number of battles and their intensity in either one of the two campaigns are irrelevant. What is relevant is the individual's ability to adapt to the environment and his exposure to and ability to cope with fear in battle. Some men, for instance, gained battle experience in East Africa, while others only saw combat when they reached North Africa. In extreme cases, some were taken prisoner without ever participating in battle. In general, fear of the unknown in anticipation of battle most occupied the minds of the men. In writing about his experiences, Brown was making sense of the events he had witnessed and in which he had participated, and he was not alone in expressing emotions in his writings, as a number of diaries and memoirs provide narratives that indicate fear and awareness of mortality among soldiers.<sup>5</sup>

Fear was a common experience among soldiers during the Second World War. An American study conducted during the war in two combat infantry divisions found that three-quarters of men complained of trembling hands, 85 per cent were troubled by sweating palms, and 89 per cent tossed sleeplessly in their beds at night. Frightened soldiers experienced epidemics of diarrhoea, as was the case among American soldiers landing at Iwo Jima. During the Second World War, most men felt fear, and it manifested in behaviour, affected morale and undermined loyalty among men.<sup>6</sup>

The East African campaign and the battles in the Libyan Desert are the geographical focus of the investigation on which this article is based. Benito Mussolini's empire in East Africa was the target of the campaign there, but over time, the misleading titles of the early, and limited, relevant historiography emphasised aspects and obstacles presented by distance and terrain rather than those presented by the enemy forces. This created the perception that the battles in East Africa were insignificant when measured against those fought in North Africa around Bardia, Sidi Rezegh, Tobruk or El Alamein.<sup>7</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> Army in North Africa confronted a determined enemy in the Afrika Korps but eventually succeeded in ridding the continent of both the Italian and the German forces, clearing the way for the Allies' Italian invasion and securing the Suez Canal.<sup>8</sup> Looking at the campaigns from the point of view of military doctrine, strategy and statistics, the East African campaign indeed may have seemed less demanding. However, when historians turn their gaze towards the soldiers' experience, each enemy encounter and every possible threat to life gains a new meaning that is unique to each soldier. In this sense, Gustav Bentz' work on both the East and North African campaigns offers an excellent point of departure for experience among UDF volunteers.<sup>9</sup> Focusing on the role of South Africans, David Katz and Evert Kleynhans offer a mix of soldiers' experiences and military doctrine, while Andrew Stewart rewrote the history of the East African campaign from an international perspective.<sup>10</sup> To date, there has been no research specifically on the experience of fear among UDF men, but Jonathon Fennell looked at the issues of morale, courage and cowardice in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army in North Africa, among whom was a large contingent of Commonwealth forces, including South Africans.<sup>11</sup> Like Joanna Bourke's research on emotion in war, Fennell's research also shows a link between morale, fear and disposition towards combat.<sup>12</sup>



For soldiers, trust in medical services was a significant factor in their awareness of mortality, and consequently, the ability of medical units to carry out their work effectively forms an important part of this article.<sup>13</sup> Archival documents on the South Africa Medical Corps (SAMC) are plentiful in the Department of Defence Archives in Pretoria. Especially useful is the CF Scheepers collection, which formed the basis of an earlier attempt to document the Union's military medical history. Other collections include the *Geneesheer Generaal* (GG) [Surgeon General] Diary, the Director General Medical Services (DGMS), and the medical collections (MED). The Union War Histories (UWH) collection may offer some useful material if time and patience allow. The war diaries of medical units such as field ambulances, casualty clearing stations and military hospitals provide a sense of their work and therefore serve as a pointer towards the extent to which servicemen could rely on these facilities. While these primary sources are valuable, the work of Mark Harrison provides in-depth analyses into many different aspects of medical services, including that of disease and battle casualties in the First and Second World Wars.<sup>14</sup>

This article interprets soldiers' written expressions of fear in battle, fear of disease, and fear of environmental threats in terms of their awareness of mortality during the East and North African campaigns. Participation in battle is an experience that causes, amongst other things, severe anxiety, nightmares and panic attacks, often resulting in a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>15</sup> However, it would seem that research on soldiers' emotions during combat is inconclusive in this regard. Some studies reveal that soldiers experience a mixture of fear and elation during combat, deriving pleasure from destruction and killing, while simultaneously confronting their own mortality. Other studies conclude that the so-called enjoyment of combat is nothing more than a psychological mask for the "natural reluctance of recruits to kill", which, in some cases presents as "animalistic inheritance".<sup>16</sup> As such, fear during combat may be viewed as a valid indicator of the awareness of personal mortality. However, in the case of the East and North African campaigns, perceptions on the prospect of death extended beyond combat, and included threats in the form of illness and environmental factors. These factors are the basis for the analysis of the examination of soldiers' awareness of fear and mortality presented in this article.

By the time the Second World War started in 1939, perceptions of death and dying had evolved to the extent that the acknowledgement of fear of death had become unacceptable. In American hospitals, for instance, doctors administered morphine to ensure that dying patients were stripped of the ability to experience fear. At the same time, a life lived at anything less than to its full extent was unacceptable, and many, including servicemen, would have claimed that death was preferable to that of a lesser life.<sup>17</sup> As fear and pain, physical or mental, are not quantifiable, the aim is not to compare soldiers' experiences of East with North Africa to determine which campaign was more demanding, but to document their perceptions of mortality in an effort to deepen our understanding of the individual lived experience of the rank and file. Emotions are unique to individuals and difficult to define. Aspects related to experiences of mortality cannot be viewed as historical data, but invisible and intangible emotions do become discernible in written narratives and provide opportunity for interpretation.<sup>18</sup>

Although many servicemen found it very difficult to express their emotions in words, it is nevertheless an essential theme, which requires investigation. As Joanna Bourke put it, “emotions may be nebulous, contradictory and complex, but they are the very stuff of human action and agency”.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, if we wish to understand individuals’ wartime experiences in terms of their awareness of mortality, we must attempt an analysis of their emotions as expressed in written narratives. This article follows the diary accounts, memoirs and personal correspondence of a number of rank and file men as they traversed the rugged East African landscape and the desert of North Africa.

## East Africa

Following the Union’s somewhat hesitant entry into the war on 6 September 1939, the volunteers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division were mobilised to the East African front in July 1940.<sup>20</sup> For most of the men, the campaign represented their first experience of war, and while their training may have prepared them for route marches and guarding duties, it is doubtful whether it would have prepared them mentally for the chaos of battle.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the medical services were also in for a few unpleasant surprises, not only because the Medical Training School had been closed since 1919, but also because their numbers were inadequate to provide a comprehensive medical service in the first year of the war.<sup>22</sup> At the time, South Africa had two military hospitals within its borders, but the entire medical corps had to be enlarged and improved to meet the needs of those on the home front and those on the battlefield. By mid-1940, the medical services were able to set up two casualty clearing stations (CCS) in Kenya along with a military hospital near Nairobi.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, the foreign landscape and the unfamiliar climate of East Africa presented problems that affected the movement of men and the way in which medical services were able to operate. While the UDF were victorious in all its battles in East Africa, the medical services nevertheless had to deal with 270 casualties.<sup>24</sup> For field ambulance staff, the terrain presented unique challenges when dealing with casualties. Wide plains in some areas allowed them to limit the carrying of wounded to a minimum, as the ambulance vehicles were able to approach the Regimental Aid Posts (RAP) with relative ease. In the mountains of Abyssinia, however, “stretcher ambulances” were used to transport the wounded over long distances, increasing the risks associated with shock and the inevitable negative consequences thereof. In some cases, “light sections” of a field ambulance would be sent to casualties to offer initial treatment before stretcher transportation began.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the men had to contend with aggravating conditions. Water, for instance, usually a life-giving force, became a health threat in East Africa. In his memoirs, Bernard Schwikkard remembered how they –

[C]amped at a place called Wajir-Samaliland [sic], famous for its well water. If anybody drank the water without boiling it, he would suffer from what was known as Wajir Clap. Apparently this felt as if one was passing barbed wire.<sup>26</sup>

Unknown to Bernard, the high mineral content in the water was the cause of the pain.<sup>27</sup>

However, once the East African campaign came to an end, Brigadier AJ Orenstein, Director General of Medical Services, was eager to present a positive report to the British Army Medical Services, stating that the campaign resulted in what he considered low casualty numbers, which, in his opinion, was the result of the advice gained from medical officers (MO) who had served in the First World War in East Africa and Mesopotamia.<sup>28</sup> Deaths from diseases, excluding malaria, added up to 338, while 39 men succumbed to malaria. Battles caused a total of 186 deaths while 181 men died in accidents.<sup>29</sup> At the time, prevention of malaria was not widely in use, as quinine was believed to have many adverse side-effects. In addition, rumours circulated that quinine caused impotence, resulting in men not taking the drug when it was available to the forces in East and North Africa.<sup>30</sup>

The first battle casualties were admitted in December 1940 following the raid on El Wak.<sup>31</sup> Matron ME Hawkins, also known as ‘Bloody Bill Hawkins’ noted that –

[The] bulk of patients (all European) were Medical – there were few battle casualties except amongst Italian POWs [prisoners of war]. They were nursed by our own staff and were handed over to NO.3 E.A. [East Africa] Hospital when we left for Egypt. The first battle casualties were Transvaal Scottish from El Wak.<sup>32</sup>

The Royal Natal Carbineers (RNC) who, together with the Transvaal Scottish, participated in the attack, were also among the first casualties.<sup>33</sup>

In the days before El Wak, many of the inexperienced UDF rank and file were apprehensive, yet in Brown’s view, they were unable to voice their fears.<sup>34</sup> Following almost five months of training and long marches towards their objective, the eventual infantry assault was preceded by an unsuccessful bombing raid carried out by an Italian bomber and an equally unsuccessful shelling of the Brigade Headquarters. However, once the actual assault started, it was over in 80 minutes, and the destruction of enemy materiel began in all earnest. The next morning, a Caproni bomber was shot down as it attempted to salvage Italy’s honour.<sup>35</sup> Among the UDF troops, there were also casualties, with two deaths and two wounded from the ranks of the RNC.<sup>36</sup> The entire event was proclaimed a victory, and while this was technically correct, it was also important for morale and for the Prime Minister, JC Smuts, to gain home front support for the war effort. Yet, the rank and file who had participated at El Wak were left with the knowledge that future attacks would also entail long marches through very difficult terrain, with their essential equipment bunched together on transport convoys, which – if discovered and destroyed by the enemy – would leave them exposed and defenceless.<sup>37</sup> For these men, the idea of death was essentially still part of the “strange world governed by strange rules [...] where, out in the darkness or just over the hill, strangers wait whose job it is to kill you”.<sup>38</sup> It was from this basis that the subsequent offensives were conducted in East Africa and, although the men had the experience of a victory behind them, they remained aware of the hardships that lay ahead and of unknown or unexpected danger and possible death.

In January 1941, near Mount Marsabit, Paradise Lake, Staff Sergeant CN Nell heard that a unit from his regiment had been ambushed by “Italian Somalis [...] the casualties on our side were (slight, being) one officer killed and ten other ranks wounded”.<sup>39</sup> Obviously, Nell had reflected on the meaning and use of ‘slight’, and amended his diary entry by scratching it out. Nell speculated that as many as 40 of the enemy forces could have been killed in the incident, while Orpen puts the number at 20. The attack on the regiment lasted two hours. Among the wounded was the ambulance driver, and because the roads were in such a bad state, it took 36 hours before any of the wounded could receive treatment at Marsabit.<sup>40</sup> By that time, the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulances, one of which served as a CCS, had been at Mount Marsabit for one month, and while it is likely that 40 casualties would have been manageable for the number of field ambulances, the medical staff were also dealing with 1 080 cases of illness and accidents at the time.<sup>41</sup>

Hardly a month later, Nell wrote about an incident that unnerved all the men in his unit. While on patrol near the Abyssinian border, in an area, which he described as inhabited by “hostile blacks, wildlife and beasts”, the sound of loud explosions stopped the unit in its tracks and sparked speculation on the cause thereof.<sup>42</sup> At first, the men assumed that it had been an air raid on Moyale, but later they speculated that it was an Italian air raid on a nearby UDF unit. Unable to confirm the facts, there was disquiet in the camp even when it became silent and when a sudden cry for help rang out, the already frayed nerves caused a sense of panic among the men. Nell described the scene as follows:

Suddenly a distressing and inhuman cry cut through the night and then with deathly anguish the words “help, help!” and all kinds of bent figures hasten to the trenches. At the same time guns are loaded. Then came the words “snake bite, quick, doctor.” Many sighs of relief are heard and everywhere small groups gather. Their voices sound unnatural and empty. Their eyes follow the light approaching from the cliff edge. Slowly it comes nearer, the victim on a stretcher. Two bandages, one on his arm and the other on his leg. His face is deathly pale.<sup>43</sup>

An hour later, a soldier woke from a nightmare, ran into the darkness, shouting, “snake, snake!” Nell ended his diary entry with a description of the moon casting ghost-like shadows.<sup>44</sup> The day’s experiences of air raids, friendly or otherwise, the realisation of the many natural dangers, and the effect of naïve speculation caused everyone in this unit to become very anxious.

Sydney Stuart served with the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance of the South Africa Medical Corps, and shortly after the successful incursion at Hobok, the field ambulance treated its first serious casualty. While encircling Fort Mega, a UDF member stepped on a land mine, which blew off one of his legs. As Stuart’s field ambulance had by this time evolved into a mobile surgical unit, they operated on the man, amputating both legs. The man died the following day, in Stuart’s view, due to shock.<sup>45</sup> Stuart was trained in first aid techniques and, undoubtedly, his skills would not have extended to serious

surgical cases. It is perhaps for this reason that his narratives are limited to clinical and chronological lists of references to battles and illnesses, while his descriptions of natural scenery are more extensive.

When Brown's unit crossed the Juba River in February 1941, he was only 19 and his contact with enemy forces was limited. He did, however, encounter death at this point, and for him, the aftermath of the battle deeply affected him. He recalled –

[The] Somali dead, most of them soft-faced boys, were dragged to a huge pit ... I dragged some of them myself and we tumbled them in. An appalling jumble of arms and legs. My own officer turned away sick [...] one did it without understanding what one was about. This is war, isn't it?<sup>46</sup>

It is worth noting that Brown wrote about this experience on 19 April 1942, by which time he had experienced more intensive battles in North Africa. He was reminded of the Juba experience as he sat listening to a friend's casual description of the shooting of two German Afrika Korps members, and the killing of two more with hand grenades. The disparities between the Juba experience and that of the North African experience with regard to the way in which the men had come to view death obliged Brown to assess the realities of war. It was at this point that he began to question the way in which the volunteers had been influenced by the “‘Wonder Books of Empire’ and the Great War where it was all made to look stirring and the ‘the right thing’”.<sup>47</sup>

In the meantime, the RNC encountered an Italian unit at Gelib on 22 February 1941, and here they were confronted with the realities of enemy deception and death among their own men. Italian forces pretended to surrender, only to fire on the unsuspecting Carbineers in what became known as the white flag incident. It was only three days later that news of the casualties at Gelib reached Colonel RE Barnsley, the Deputy Director Medical Services (DDMS), but confusion resulted in even longer delays for evacuations. The first telegrams called for assistance with “14 lying and 24 sitting cases”<sup>48</sup> at Gelib. A Valencia aircraft was dispatched for their evacuation, but it returned without any casualties.<sup>49</sup> In the confusion, the wounded were sent to Afmadu. In an effort to avoid further delays, Barnsley went to Afmadu himself to find that the wounded from Gelib had been transferred “in person by the Adjutant Director Medical Service (ADMS) in ambulances to Afmadu”.<sup>50</sup> As a result, the aircraft had to be rerouted to Afmadu to convey the wounded to Kismayu. As an extra precaution, Barnsley sent 2 CCS to Gelib.<sup>51</sup>

A sergeant in the RNC, Derrick Norton, did not mention any of confusion relating to medical services following the attack at Gelib, but his letters revealed how he adjusted his view of the enemy and of war following his close encounter with mortality. In his first letter following the incident, Derrick wrote, “I am still OK and doing fine – will see you at home soon.”<sup>52</sup> Yet, two weeks later he wrote:

[T]he news from up this end [is] not all pleasant. You probably have seen the bad news and I don't want to talk about it – we are all trying to forget about it. A lot of us were very lucky but let's not talk about it.<sup>53</sup>

The idea that luck played a role with regard to death on the battlefield was not unique to Derrick; yet, it helped him make sense of events that on the face of it seemed senseless. Writing on the issue of morale and the idea of luck, a British field marshal declared in 1989, “soldiers fear wounds more than they do death, about which they tend to be fatalistic”.<sup>54</sup> Following the white flag incident, war became a prosaic activity for Derrick and his opinion of the Italian forces fell, writing angrily:

[T]hey are a cheeky lot of devils too and if I had anything to do with them I would give them all a damn good hiding first to teach them how to behave. [...] we have caught thousands of prisoners – we are tired of the sight of them running around with white flags [...] there is still work to be done up here and we may have to do it.<sup>55</sup>

Unknown to most rank and file would have been the relative ineffectiveness that characterised the medical services at the time. Although the medical services had the advantage of First World War experience in East Africa, it was clear that in some cases lessons had to be learnt again.<sup>56</sup> In this regard, Barnsley’s report for February 1941 is insightful. Travelling between the medical posts, he gained insight into specific weaknesses and his recommendations and comments show how the medical services had to adapt their practice to meet the needs created by battles, climate and landscape. His notes also show how the bad state of the roads, the lack of water and the shortage of competent staff adversely affected the work of the medical units. For instance, on 12 February, Barnsley navigated the “unspeakable” road between Garissa and Liboi, only to come across a “singularly ineffectual young officer” at Hagadera.<sup>57</sup> Much to his irritation, the officer shared a tent with a “bibulous looking RAMC [Royal Army Medical Corps] Corporal, who appeared to be in complete control of the proceedings!”<sup>58</sup> Barnsley was of the opinion that it would be in the best interest of all if the medical posts could be done away with completely, but he also realised that it would not be possible as many convoys passed in the vicinity and it was practical to have a MO at Hagadera.<sup>59</sup> Another reason why the post was important was the availability of water, which had increased the daily allowance to a gallon (about 3,8 litre) per man and a half gallon (about 1,9 litre) per radiator for each vehicle. Without this water, the advance towards Kismayu would have been impossible.<sup>60</sup>

In the same report Barnsley recommended that night evacuations would ease the journey for the patients as the heat would not affect the men as much, and fewer convoys on the roads would make the journey more bearable as there would be less dust. On his return journey on 14 February, Barnsley was again confronted with what seemed like incompetent or uncaring medical staff. At Liboi, casualties who were supposed to have been evacuated by air a month earlier were still at the staging post. One man still had a bullet lodged in his thigh, a result of a skirmish on 8 January. The MO had not taken any measures to procure means of evacuation and “apparently he was prepared to wait until aircraft descended from Heaven!”<sup>61</sup> The reason for the MO’s inaction was that he was not sure whether to send messages forward to Division or backwards to Garissa. The result was that the patient’s condition worsened and that an infection increased his pain. On Barnsley’s orders, the man was evacuated to Garissa. Matters at Hagadera had also

not improved since his first visit, as there were no drugs or dressings available to the MOs there, “and it does not seem to have occurred to them to send to 2 CCS for any.”<sup>62</sup> For those men whose medical conditions warranted evacuation to the Union, things did not go smoothly either, as it was not possible to board ships for sea evacuations, because there were no suitable crafts to convey patients to ships. On his recommendation, 7 CCS was sent to Kismayu to deal with patients before embarkation; however, Barnsley was not optimistic, closing his report by saying, “the future policy is so uncertain that I am sure it would be bad policy to open up fully. Furthermore, the Afmadu – Kismayo [*sic*] Road would certainly be fatal for serious cases”.<sup>63</sup>

Ironically, Barnsley’s frustration in arranging evacuation of casualties by sea were matched by those on the ships attempting to find patients to remove to the Union. Dr John Hickley, serving on the hospital ship *Amra*, became increasingly perplexed as efforts failed to assist casualties during March 1941, the ship’s first expedition to the East African theatre. Hickley’s notes reveal that communication and coordination of evacuation efforts were almost non-existent. Arriving at Mogadishu from Mombasa, he was surprised to discover that “no one ashore seemed to know of our coming [and the] reason for our arrival here not known by the authorities, and all communication down between here and Nairobi”.<sup>64</sup> Hickley and the others on the *Amra* were eventually successful in transporting casualties from Mogadishu and Mombasa to Durban, but stories of “the high morale of our troops, the appalling shortage of water, the sand, the flies and instances of Italian cruelty and treachery” caused some unease for Hickley.<sup>65</sup> Witnessing the bad conditions in the hospital in Kismayo, “bad water ... flies, and mosquitos” added to his concern for the casualties, but not enough to dissuade him from searching high and low for a Persian rug, which he was eager to purchase.<sup>66</sup>

The language of fear in soldiers’ narratives was gradually replaced by the language of cynicism as the battles in East Africa met with more resistance from Italian forces. In April 1941 at Combolcia Pass, for instance, UDF forces fought for six days before the enemy capitulated, very unlike the earlier battles that often lasted less than a day. Brown noted how men described this battle as a game of “last touch” in between descriptions of fellow soldiers being slain in the battle.<sup>67</sup> Overall, the language is matter of fact and describes the main events of the battle, and less so the experience of fear. It would also seem that, at this point of the campaign, killing had become a routine task, as is illustrated by a description of a lone truck with two occupants, one manning a mounted machine gun and a driver who approached the UDF troops. Although the outcome of the battle had already been determined, the decision was made to destroy the truck, although “no one ever knew the purpose of that vehicle [...] a rifleman tossed a Mills grenade into the back and an Eritrean deserter [...] shot the driver dead in the cab”.<sup>68</sup> This event stands in stark contrast to those of a few months earlier when Brown described “the young [UDF] victors, so many of them fresh from the playing fields of school [...] were shocked and sickened by the carnage” as they buried Italian men in marked and unmarked graves at Juba.<sup>69</sup>

## North Africa

In November 1941, the 8<sup>th</sup> Army first encountered the German and Italian forces in Libya.<sup>70</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> South Africa Division was part of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army; however, they did not have the benefit of the East African experience, as this Division arrived directly from the Union. Among them were the men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Transvaal Scottish, with Dick Dickinson and his diary in their midst. Dickinson's record shows that mortality had been uppermost in his mind, even before he had left the Union. While still at the Zonderwater training base, Dickinson recorded that he "dreamt of coming out of the war physically disabled [and had] thoughts of action and death and disfigurement for life".<sup>71</sup> However, once on board the ship that took him to North Africa, he coped with the reality of the situation by focusing on the "grand adventure" of his new life in the military.<sup>72</sup>

Even for those who had the benefit of earlier experience in East Africa, it did not seem to matter, as in at least one case the battles in East Africa were judged insignificant. For Bernard Schwikkard, who arrived in Egypt at about the same time as Dick Dickinson, the "[m]osquitoes and lions were our biggest enemies there [in East Africa as] the Italians were so poorly armed and quite frankly, not that interested in sacrificing their lives."<sup>73</sup> Bernard made this assessment with the benefit of hindsight many years after his war experience, but the way in which he glanced over his experiences in East Africa in his memoirs, indicates that he regarded his North African experience as more noteworthy. Ironically, it was while on leave in Cairo that he first described feelings linked to the awareness of mortality. He recalled:

Egypt was a different world for us [...] The cities of Cairo and Port Said were teeming with brothels and prostitutes [...] fortunately on my first visit to Cairo I visited the Science Museum. There we were provided with information about various diseases. We were also invited to look out of a window at the people passing by in the street and identify people who showed symptoms of the various diseases exhibited in the museum. This was certainly enough to frighten me off for life!<sup>74</sup>

While many soldiers became victims of venereal diseases, syphilis was the most prevalent, and some men viewed everything and everyone with suspicion, for example, a number of men avoided soft-skinned fruits, as "someone wondered whether they wouldn't be riddled with syphilis like the camels".<sup>75</sup>

For Dickinson, illness presented a threat and an irritation. He recorded in his diary:

Frank [was] taken to hospital yesterday with enteritis and a temperature of 103. Quite a few of us complain of pains in the stomach. In conditions like this sickness is inevitable – I wonder if this is the start of an epidemic? [...] I was suddenly troubled with Gyppo tummy. This stomach trouble has affected most of us. We're not quite sure of the cause – water, food, sand-flies. Any one of these or a combination of more than one. I should imagine it is the same process of acclimatization through which our stomachs must go before we are



at one with the changed conditions. Once our stomachs have stood the strain everything will be OK. I only hope we don't have to unravel the process when we return home, because the pains are fairly powerful, moving on to distraction. The boys in Abyssinia went through the same racket, I am told.<sup>76</sup>

While adapting to new circumstances could lead to temporary illness, the desert was judged by the medical services to harbour fewer threats in terms of disease and to increase the recovery rate as it had been “uninhabited by man or beast and the sand therefore [...] free of pathogenic organisms”.<sup>77</sup> JL Hartzenberg, a member of the 6<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance and also a veteran of the East Africa campaign, recalled that it did not take long for the men to adapt to the conditions in North Africa, but that it was there that they had to deal with many more battle casualties than had been the case in East Africa.<sup>78</sup>

The Libyan battles against the German Afrika Korps and their Italian allies were very different from those fought in East Africa and the “steady stream” of casualties came in from the front in ambulances or ambulance trains and once initial treatment was provided, many were sent on to the No. 15 Scottish Hospital in Alexandria.<sup>79</sup> For the most part, the medical services were better prepared and the hospitals in Egypt were a semi-permanent centre for the treatment of disease and battle wounds. At this time, the various Allied nations active in North Africa were in the process of establishing military hospitals. Mobile surgical units, mobile blood transfusion units and field ambulances were also being established in anticipation for the battles in the Libyan Desert.<sup>80</sup> These mobile units ultimately allowed medical services to offer more immediate treatment to casualties as they were being set up in closer proximity to the battlefield.<sup>81</sup> While the military hospitals were set up outside of the battle zones, the medical personnel had to adjust to the desert circumstances, the most demanding of which were the long distances that casualties had to be transported. Other improvisations included “underground hospitals” as recalled by Sydney Stuart.<sup>82</sup> According to him, the wards consisted of slit trenches covered with sand bags. In Stuart's experience, most of the casualties during November 1941 were burn cases as the German troops were using “flame throwers”.<sup>83</sup> Injured men received fleeting treatment before they were evacuated to a CCS. Stuart's memoirs show that casualties were transported with whatever means available, creating the impression that the medical services were not fully prepared for what awaited them in these battles. What Stuart did not mention in his memoirs was that it could take up to eight hours or longer for a wounded soldier to reach the base, increasing the likelihood of shock factors, such as thirst, exposure to heat, fatigue, a lack of sleep and virulent pyogenic and anaerobic infections. Surgical shock was treated with blood transfusions, and these were therefore administered in the field where possible.<sup>84</sup>

Stuart's participation in the evacuation of these men from Tobruk must have been an alarming and unnerving experience, as his training only extended to first aid. However, as was his habit, his descriptions of events did not include overtly emotional expressions, saying:

[T]hese [injured] troops were evacuated from Tobruk to Mersa Matruh by South African mine sweepers amongst others, and at certain times we

congregated in force with ambulances, troop carriers, etcetera at the harbour to collect and evacuate these wounded to the casualty clearing stations and other points as required.<sup>85</sup>

The use of minesweepers to assist with evacuation of casualties confirmed the shortage of field ambulances at that time, as was reported by a medical committee in January 1942. According to the report, field ambulances were “insufficiently mobile and insufficiently flexible for the function which it is called upon to fulfil”.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the main function of a field ambulance was emphasised to be that of transportation of casualties to places where surgical procedures could be carried out, as “the Field Ambulance does not normally undertake major surgical procedures”.<sup>87</sup> As such, the report recommended that surgical teams be attached to each field ambulance.<sup>88</sup> In Stuart’s case, however, surgery was carried out by field ambulance members, as in one instance, he assisted in treating a man with “his whole arm being severely shattered”.<sup>89</sup>

While the medical corps may have been aware at the time of their inability to provide adequate care, the rank and file devoted little space in their writings to the presence of medical staff on the battlefield. It is therefore not possible to determine whether the presence of medical services provided comfort to men preparing for battle. For them, the threat of instant death as a result of battle remained constant, and like Norton, Dickinson adopted a fatalistic attitude towards survival or death in battle. In one instance, for example, he interrupted a diary entry on the topic of swollen glands to write about rumours of battle casualties caused by a bombing raid. According to the rumour, there were “2 killed and 2 trucks damaged [...] the plane was probably returning from Alex[andria] and he found he had some spares, and dropped them. Somebody was unlucky.”<sup>90</sup> Dickinson continued his previous narrative by writing:

[T]he glands are still swollen and I am again off parade [...] every now and then we hear of someone or several guys being killed. I suppose that death in wartime is just a matter of luck. I heard of a lad in the 1<sup>st</sup> Jocks who had a lucky escape in Abyssinia. A bullet scorched his chest, leaving a scar. He came to Egypt and was hit by a truck and killed. Why is a man saved so miraculously in the first place to be killed so miserably in the second?<sup>91</sup>

Dickinson’s philosophical musings on destiny was comparable to his attempts at making sense of the military experience. For him, living in close quarters among others, and with the threat of death a constant in the back of his mind, led him to believe, “when we live together like this in unpleasant conditions it is the little things that one man does that will crack another man up – not the conditions”.<sup>92</sup> Despite his irritation, he still considered morale to be positive, writing at El Alamein, “[when] we have been thoroughly victorious in North Africa, I shall say our sense of humour won the campaign for us”.<sup>93</sup> Many years later, Dickinson reflected on his experience, saying, “the army, it’s a great leveller, it brings you down”.<sup>94</sup>

The desert terrain required new combat strategies and the boredom of digging defensive trenches were relieved by air raids and skirmishes that often saw soldiers

adopting unorthodox survival tactics as they were confronted with enemy forces with more advanced armaments than those used in East Africa. The Battle of Sidi Rezegh in November 1941 saw almost the entire 5<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Brigade destroyed or captured by German forces, and it was here that many came face to face with the realities of battle and death.<sup>95</sup> For Nell, who had come through the East African campaign, encountering German Stuka bombers in the desert was a dreadful and nerve-racking experience:

[Y]ou hear the shrill whistle come closer as he dives down vertically and you are convinced that he chose you personally as his target. The next moment the bombs explode and his pounding suddenly takes on an anxious distressing sound as he struggles to come out of his sharp dive.<sup>96</sup>

Once the Stukas had gone, Nell realised how close he came to death when he saw bullet holes in the ground about a meter away from him.<sup>97</sup> In contrast, a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade recalled, “we were too busy to be frightened the first time a squadron of Stuka dive-bombers descended upon us”.<sup>98</sup> Their efforts to shoot down the German pilots were not very successful, and the same man later admitted, “the enemy aircraft [...] had a clear superiority”.<sup>99</sup>

Medical units were not spared as chaos overtook battlefields. Newman Robinson, a member of the 10<sup>th</sup> South Africa Field Ambulance active at Sidi Rezegh, recalled how –

[We had] been machine-gunned by Messerschmitt [fighter aircraft], and had stared with alternating elation and dismay at aerial combats being fought out right over our heads. The surgical team with which I was working had been operating day and night on casualties from air raids ...<sup>100</sup>

In a similar description, the MO with the 5th South African Brigade described how men fought on with inadequate tank and artillery support. His brigade was devastated by a German Panzer Division, which “drove right through Brigade Headquarters”.<sup>101</sup> In a more graphic description, Lieutenant Colonel BP Purchase, also a MO, described events at Sidi Rezegh as “terrific” [*sic*] and “our fellows were shot down like dogs while attending to the wounded”.<sup>102</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance had a different experience, and Stuart recalled how the German forces “recognised the requirements under the Geneva Convention and ceased fire as they moved through our lines in their tanks”.<sup>103</sup>

During periods of rest, inexperienced soldiers looked towards 8<sup>th</sup> Army men who were perceived to be battle hardened and therefore had a better understanding of war. Dickinson, for instance, spent many hours listening to men who had seen combat in the European theatre. Men from the Indian, Polish, Australian and New Zealand Divisions regaled him with stories of, amongst others, flamethrowers in Greece and of the accuracy of the German snipers at Tobruk, which at the time was besieged. Dickinson admitted, “we are unblooded [*sic*] [...] know little and it is difficult to conjure up the truth [about rumours of] the acts of cruelty ... men and boys emasculated ...”.<sup>104</sup> For Dickinson, however, tales of battle and the related dangers of wounds and death would

remain in the realm of rumour, as he was captured at Tobruk in June 1942 without ever participating in battle. In seeking the advice of experienced soldiers, Dickinson was trying to “conjure up the truth” from what was for him unknown. This method of dealing with fear is comparable to the experience of civilians who experienced bombing raids. For civilians, fear was present as they anticipated an attack, but less so when the air raid actually took place.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, for combatants, the first actual battle experience came as a revelation, as was the case with Jack Mortlock, a member of *Die Middelandse Regiment* (DMR). Mortlock did not experience the East African campaign and following his first battle experience at Halfaya Pass early in 1942, he realised –

[M]ost of us felt quite relieved that we knew what to expect next time. I have yet to meet the man who enjoys a modern battle, but I still remember how grateful I felt when I found that I wasn't anymore frightened than my pals around me. I found that they ducked as often as I did and swore just as volubly when bullets were whistling past.<sup>106</sup>

Fear did not dissipate, but in sharing the experience of fear and the likelihood of death with others, the situation became bearable.

As men gained battle experience, their desire to survive became priority; however, doing what was necessary to survive may have created perceptions of fear in some and of cowardice among others, and in some instances, the complex mix of reactions overwhelmed men and they were then regarded by the military authorities as “men of poor stamina”, as stated in a report by Orenstein.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, survival remained paramount, and in memoirs, the line between fighting soldier and war victim became obscured, just as Samuel Hynes found in Second World War combatants' narratives.<sup>108</sup> In November 1941, near Sidi Rezegh, Bernard Schwikkard for instance discovered that the order to shoot at German Stukas was pointless as his .303 rifle was completely ineffectual. For the sake of survival, he found “it was obvious that the wisest thing to do was to lie down, pretend that I was dead and wait for the Stukas to do their worst”.<sup>109</sup> Bernard's actions during battle did not indicate combat stress or PTSD; instead, it showed that he was in fact displaying rational behaviour.<sup>110</sup> Doing what was necessary to stay alive prompted criticism from officers who seemed inclined to place the lives of their men in danger. In Bernard's words, their colonel, “this man of great bravado wanted nothing more than to die in battle [leading the men] forward standing upright, carrying his pistols in his hands shouting at us to stand upright and not to take cover like cowards”.<sup>111</sup> For rank and file like Bernard Schwikkard, survival was clearly more important than bluster. They also did not care whether they were perceived as fearful by superiors or fellow soldiers. This state of mind further informed their decision to surrender the next day as “our options were to die or surrender”.<sup>112</sup> Following his capture, Stuart held a similar view with regard to survival and perceptions of fear and bravado. As he was made to drive a truck full of fellow POWs, a Scottish major tried to convince him to slow down and let the convoy move on, giving them an opportunity to escape. Unbeknown to the Scot, a German guard was sitting next to Stuart, armed with “some sort of sub-machine gun [and] I thought discretion was the better part of valour”.<sup>113</sup>

After many months of waiting, Dickinson's unit eventually moved towards battle, and he described the event as "very serious and grave".<sup>114</sup> The next day he experienced an enemy attack for the first time as they were shelled, but the German aim was not accurate and again Dickinson viewed it as fate, saying "I suppose it was our luck [...] nevertheless [the shells] still came too close to ensure a continuous healthy life."<sup>115</sup> The next encounter with German artillery resulted in a greater number of casualties for Dickinson's unit. The experience left him nervous and "when it was over I chain-smoked ten cigarettes".<sup>116</sup> Nervous tension and thoughts of inflicting death on the enemy were relieved by dark humour as the men wrote names on the mortar bombs they sent over, "Bert sent one from Iris and a report came back from the observation post that she was making a funny noise as she went over."<sup>117</sup> However, thoughts of superior German tactics remained with Dickinson and when alone at night, he became fearful at the idea that perhaps the Allies were not adequately prepared to deal with the tactics of the Afrika Korps, which were perceived by some as superior. Fear of battle remained a constant with Dickinson, and even after surviving the Sidi Rezegh offensive, he still "found [his] one false tooth chattering" during battle.<sup>118</sup> As Dickinson gained battle experience, he wrote less about "luck" but he remained acutely aware of mortality – his own and that of those around him. Seeing the names of the dead in a newspaper, "seem[ed] to hit me more than when in action when we knew they had been killed [...] to see it in cold black and white print is to realise more fully the loss".<sup>119</sup> For many soldiers, however, dealing with fear and anxiety during battle became intolerable, and by April 1942, Orenstein wrote to the adjunct directors of the Medical Services of both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> South Africa Divisions, stating that the number of anxiety neurosis and hysteria cases among South Africans was abnormally high. According to the consultant psychiatrist –

[A number of men were] unsuited to withstand the rigours of desert warfare [and added that] men of poor stamina are not only useless in themselves but act as an ineffective nuclear affecting the morale of other people ...<sup>120</sup>

After Sidi Rezegh, the battlefield moved again to Bardia, Sollum and then to Halfaya Pass, which became known as Hellfire Pass amongst those in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army. It was at Sollum in January 1942 that an MO attached to the 14<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance noted in his report:

[T]he morale of the fighting troops is largely dependent upon the trust and confidence in the Medical Services. [For] this service to function properly [they] must be kept in the picture as far as the military situation permits and the conveyance of information is as vital to the medical service as to any other branch of the service.<sup>121</sup>

While information relating to the battle was obviously vital for medical services, the extent to which rank and file were reliably informed about the capabilities of the medical services is not known.

The fall of Tobruk on 21 June 1942 was disastrous for the 8<sup>th</sup> Army as an estimated 33 000 men were taken prisoner, along with the loss of a strategically important

harbour.<sup>122</sup> Having already asked for the reinstatement of the death penalty for cowardice and desertion, Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief Middle Eastern Forces, again asked for this measure, as the number of men deserting from the 8<sup>th</sup> Army increased rapidly in the summer of 1942. Statistics indicated that 1 728 were absent, but this number does not discriminate between the different British and/or Commonwealth forces.<sup>123</sup> In the days before the defeat, Brown's unit was in position on the perimeter, and with news that the Afrika Korps had started its attack on Tobruk, they were put on standby to move across the Egyptian border to Mersa Matruh. Nevertheless, Brown was shaken by the events, writing:

[T]here is no panic or fear here; only anxiety for our chaps in Tobruk and a sense of stunned amazement [and his thoughts were with] the masses of men, arms and material in the town [...] today Tobruk is a death trap ...<sup>124</sup>

Among many UDF men who became POWs at Tobruk, however, the experience of capture apparently did not include fear. Instead, a deep sense of incredulity seemed to have been the most pervasive emotion, and UDF soldiers' memoirs abound with bitter disappointment at becoming captives without a reasonable opportunity to defend themselves.<sup>125</sup>

The losses suffered at Tobruk put enormous strain on the medical services of all the Allied nations within the 8<sup>th</sup> Army. The demand on the medical services increased to such an extent that casualties were sent to any available medical service, regardless of the fact that usually troops of specific nationalities would be sent to their own military medical services.<sup>126</sup> The evacuation towards the Egyptian border did however create an opportunity for the medical services to reorganise and to adopt measures that helped improve the morale of the men, a case in point being the improvement of hygiene conditions at the El Alamein position, which, according to one hygiene officer, resulted in the overall good health of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army and helped prepare them for the battle against the Afrika Korps later in 1942.<sup>127</sup>

For Brown and others who were not captured, the end of June brought another opportunity to engage with the enemy. The defeat at Tobruk motivated Brown and, although his fear of battle did not abate –

[He and others were] filled with excitement at the news that we are going forward to engage the enemy [...] I am afraid, I have to admit it. We are all feeling the same but our fear is overwhelmed by the urgent necessity of our task. We will stop the enemy.<sup>128</sup>

In addition to admitting to his fear, Brown may have felt reassured, as by that time, he had also found in Major General DH (Dan) Pienaar, officer commanding of the 1<sup>st</sup> South Africa Division, a leader who was empathetic towards his men. According to Brown, Pienaar would “not commit his men to the ‘follow me lads, I’m right behind you’ school of slaughter”.<sup>129</sup> In the end, though, Brown was not included among those who fought that night and it was months before Brown actively participated in battle. In

the meantime, he experienced frequent enemy bombing raids and each time he admitted to a range of emotions, from fear to apprehension and adventure. By early August he believed

the element of chance plays a tremendous part in our lives [...] we have arrived at a stage, we old timers, where we can judge to a near thing just where shells will land [...] To duck and dive away [from fire] would be an admission of fear [and] it is not done!<sup>130</sup>

By this time, he believed that they were all “indifferent to physical danger [as they were] mentally dulled by continued exposure to gunfire”.<sup>131</sup> Ironically, as was the case with Bernard Schwikkard, it was while on leave in Cairo that Brown became acutely aware of his mortality. After seeing a film entitled *Blood and Sand*, he experienced “a sudden, penetrating sensation of fear [and heard a voice saying] ‘you are going to die’”.<sup>132</sup> However, by 23 October, the day before the battle of El Alamein began, Brown’s attitude had changed and he felt as if he was “on the threshold of my greatest adventure [and] felt positively bloody-minded”.<sup>133</sup> Unfortunately, the reality of battle quickly crippled his adventurous spirit when an ammunition pit took a direct hit, killing several of his friends. In bitter disillusionment, Brown concluded, “killing the enemy is not war; war is seeing your pals die”.<sup>134</sup>

## Conclusion

During the East and North African campaigns, the experience of fear and the awareness of mortality were unique to each soldier. From the outset, each rank and file soldier confronted the unknown and the unfamiliar, which manifested tangibly in the terrain, climate and the presence of death. For those in the medical services, these conditions brought new challenges with regard to illness and physical health of the men. Less discernible were the emotions of soldiers, visible only in their writings and reminiscences. In their private texts, men confronted their fears, and for many, the lack of battle experience, whether they were in East or North Africa, represented the unknown, which in turn manifested as fear. A lack of knowledge about diseases, such as syphilis, was also expressed as fear or anxiety in diaries and memoirs.

The available evidence points to a pattern of behaviour among the men with regard to the way in which they dealt with their emotions while on campaign. The inexperienced men who arrived in East Africa during 1940 underwent a period of adjustment as they were exposed to a new landscape, climate and living conditions. In addition, because they had never before participated in battle, fear of the unknown – in this case combat – was relatively common among the men. When the men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Africa Division reached North Africa, they went through a similar experience of acclimatising, both in terms of disease and battle experience. During both campaigns, rank and file men began to cope with fear, firstly trying to make sense of the unknown by listening to tales of battle from more experienced soldiers. Later, upon gaining some battle experience, men began to ascribe survival during combat to chance. Dick Dickinson, for instance, and to a lesser extent Derrick Norton both considered luck an important aspect in their

survival. In Sydney Stuart's case, thoughts of death were replaced, at least in his writing, with descriptions of landscapes. In other examples, diligent activity on the battlefield temporarily replaced thoughts of fear. For Brown and Bernard Schwikkard, it was while on leave and away from the battlefield that they found opportunity for contemplation, allowing them to express their fears more readily. As the campaigns stretched out, some found the sharing of emotions to be a relief and a coping mechanism.

Finding ways to cope with fear had the potential to improve morale, as men became more willing to participate in battle once they had crossed the boundary between the unknown and the known. Once they were able to admit to fear, the men began to employ tactics, which took priority over perceptions of cowardice. Survival became more important than appearance, but to officers, however, these survival strategies may have been expressions of low morale, as pretending to be dead and submitting to defeat were behaviours that did not inspire tales of heroism. For the rank and file, those leaders who displayed empathy towards them raised their morale and willingness to participate in battle. Towards the end of 1942, when it became clear that a significant victory was needed, "adventure" and "bloody-minded[ness]" replaced emotions of fear as the Battle of El Alamein loomed; yet, awareness of mortality remained a constant.<sup>135</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Karen Horn is postdoctoral research fellow at the International Studies Group at the University of the Free State. Using diaries, memoirs and personal correspondence and recollections, as well as archival material, she seeks to give a voice to those who participated in the Second World War. Karen is the author of *In Enemy Hands South Africa's POWs in WWII*, published by Jonathan Ball in 2015. Her body of work includes a number of scholarly articles in national and international journals, as well as papers presented at numerous conferences. She holds a C2 rating from the National Research Foundation. (Orcid link: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9047-3260>)
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 217–218.
- <sup>3</sup> I van der Waag. *A military history of modern South Africa*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015, 200.
- <sup>4</sup> M Harrison. "Britain's medical war: A brief comparison of health and medicine on several fronts". *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 30/4. 2014. 296.
- <sup>5</sup> J Bourke. "Fear and anxiety: Writing about emotion in modern history". *History Workshop Journal* 55. 2003. 121.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 315.
- <sup>7</sup> See for instance C Birkby. *It's a long way to Addis*. London: Frederick Muller, 1942; WE Crosskill. *The two thousand mile war*. London: Robert Hale, 1980; JF MacDonald. *Abyssinian adventure*. London: Cassell, 1957.
- <sup>8</sup> When the East African campaign came to an end in 1941, the British still preferred the route around the Cape, as the Suez was not considered secure at that time. S Morewood. "Protecting the jugular vein of empire: The Suez Canal in British defence strategy, 1919–1941". *War & Society* 10/1. 1992. 101–102.
- <sup>9</sup> See for instance G Bentz. "From El Wak to Sidi Rezegh: The Union Defence Force's first experience of battle in East and North Africa, 1940–1941". *Scientia Militaria* 40/3. 2012. 177–199; G Bentz. "In for a hell of a time: The wartime experiences of two ordinary South African soldiers in the North African desert during the Second World War". *Journal of Contemporary History* 37/2. 2012. 105–122; G Bentz. "Fighting Springboks C Company, Royal Natal Carbineers: From Premier Mine to Po Valley, 1939–1945". MA thesis. Stellenbosch University, 2013.
- <sup>10</sup> See for instance E Kleynhans. "The South African offensive in Southern Abyssinia, 1940–1941". *International Journal of Military History and Historiography* 38/1. 2018. 34–66; D Katz. *South Africans versus Rommel: The untold story of the desert war in World War II*. Johannesburg: Delta Books, 2018; A Stewart. *The first victory the Second World War and the East African Campaign*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016.
- <sup>11</sup> See for instance J Fennell. "Courage and cowardice in the North African Campaign: The Eight Army and defeat in the summer of 1942". *War in History* 20/1. 2013; J Fennell. *Combat and morale in the North African Campaign: The Eight Army and the path to El Alamein*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- <sup>12</sup> Fennell, "Courage and cowardice ..." *op. cit.*, p. 99. See also J Bourke. 2001. "The emotions in war: Fear and the British and American Military 1914–45". *Historical Research* 74/185. 2001; Bourke, "Fear and anxiety ..." *op. cit.* The work of these two authors are part of a larger body of work on the history of emotions by a range of scholars.
- <sup>13</sup> Harrison *op. cit.*, p. 296.
- <sup>14</sup> See for instance M Harrison. "Medicine and the culture of command: The case of malaria control in the British Army during the two World Wars". *Medical History* 40. 1996. Harrison, "Britain's medical war ..." *op. cit.* and M Harrison. "Medicine and the management of modern warfare". *History of Science* 34/4. 1996.

- <sup>15</sup> JL Black & TM Keane. “Implosive therapy in the treatment of combat related fears in a World War II veteran”. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry* 12/2. 1982. 163.
- <sup>16</sup> E Jones. “The psychology of killing: The combat experience of British soldiers during the First World War”. *Journal of Contemporary History* 41/2. 2006. 230. Bourke, “Fear and anxiety ...” *op. cit.*, p. 121.
- <sup>17</sup> Bourke, “Fear and anxiety ...” *op. cit.*, p. 118.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- <sup>19</sup> Bourke, “The emotions in war ...” *op. cit.*, p. 315.
- <sup>20</sup> Bentz (2012), “From El Wak to Sidi Rezegh ...” *op. cit.*, p. 181.
- <sup>21</sup> The lack of military equipment encumbered appropriate training; likewise, military dogma was outdated. Van der Waag *op. cit.*, pp. 171, 185.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- <sup>23</sup> DO Stratford & HM Collins. *Military nursing in South Africa, 1914–1994*. Pretoria: National Defence Force, 1994, 76, 77, 83, 84.
- <sup>24</sup> Bentz (2012), “From El Wak to Sidi Rezegh ...” *op. cit.*, p. 182.
- <sup>25</sup> Department of Defence Archives (hereafter DOD), CF Scheepers, Box 9. Warfare in mountainous country.
- <sup>26</sup> BE Schwikkard. *My life briefly told*. Unpublished memoirs, 1999, 21.
- <sup>27</sup> Bentz (2012), “From El Wak to Sidi Rezegh ...” *op. cit.*, p. 182.
- <sup>28</sup> DOD, CF Scheepers, Box 4. Report to the Director General, Army Medical Services, London by Brigadier AJ Orenstein for the period 11 June 1940 to 15 May 1941.
- <sup>29</sup> In his report, Orenstein distinguished between ‘European’ and ‘non-European’ deaths. The numbers above include both groups. DOD, CF Scheepers, Box 4 *op. cit.*
- <sup>30</sup> Harrison, “Medicine and the culture of command ...” *op. cit.*, p. 444.
- <sup>31</sup> Bentz (2012), “From El Wak to Sidi Rezegh ...” *op. cit.*, pp. 184–185.
- <sup>32</sup> DOD, CF Scheepers, Box 17. Notes on UDF medical services by JL Hartzenberg to CF Scheepers, 15 April 1995. Cape Town: National Library; ME Hawkins, Matron of No. 4 South Africa General Hospital. MSB 244.1(8). *Notes on No. 4 SA General Hospital*.
- <sup>33</sup> E Kleynhans. 2018. “Apostles of terror: South Africa, the East African campaign and the Battle of El Wak”. *Historia* 63/2. 2018. 120–121. The 1<sup>st</sup> South Africa Infantry Brigade was supported by the 24<sup>th</sup> Gold Coast Brigade, the Duke of Edinburgh Own Rifles and Kenyan pioneer troops, all of whom had the support of the South African Air Force: see Stewart *op. cit.*, p. 117; Bentz (2012), “From El Wak to Sidi Rezegh...” *op. cit.*, p. 185.
- <sup>34</sup> JA Brown. *The war of a hundred days: Springboks in Somalia and Abyssinia 1940–41*. Johannesburg: Ashanti, 1990, 89.
- <sup>35</sup> AW Hodson. “An account of the part played by the Gold Coast Brigade in the East African Campaign, August, 1940 to May, 1941: Part I. The defence of Kenya”. *Journal of the Royal African Society* 40/161. 1941. 308.
- <sup>36</sup> Bentz (2012), “From El Wak to Sidi Rezegh ...” *op. cit.*, p. 185.
- <sup>37</sup> Stewart *op. cit.*, pp. 118–119.
- <sup>38</sup> S Hynes. *The soldiers’ tale: Bearing witness to modern war*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1997, 19.
- <sup>39</sup> CN Nell. *Oorlogherinneringe van ’n krygsgevangene gedurende WWII*. <https://sites.google.com/view/cn-nell/tuisblad> Accessed on 18 March 2020.
- <sup>40</sup> N Orpen. “East African and Abyssinian campaigns”. *South African Force World War II I*. 1969. 107–108. <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/SouthAfrica/EAfrica/index.html>> Accessed on 3 April 2020.
- <sup>41</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 4. ADMS/C4/791. Health Report: 1 SA Div.: January 1941.
- <sup>42</sup> Nell *op. cit.*

- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> A Erwee & LJ Eksteen, eds. *The Second World War experiences of Sydney Stuart: A South African soldier of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War (1939–1945) who served in the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance of the SA Medical Corps*. Newcastle: Fort Amiel Museum, 2017, 41.
- <sup>46</sup> Brown, *Retreat to victory ... op. cit.*, p. 102.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103.
- <sup>48</sup> DOD Geneesheer Generaal (Surgeon General) (hereafter GG) Diary, Box 13. Operations 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1941. Colonel RE Barnsley.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>52</sup> Personal correspondence, Derrick Norton to Joan Guttridge. 23 February 1941.
- <sup>53</sup> Personal correspondence, Derrick Norton to Joan Guttridge. 9 March 1941.
- <sup>54</sup> Lord Carver, Field Marshal, “Morale in battle – the medical and the military”. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 82. February 1989. 68.
- <sup>55</sup> Personal correspondence, Derrick Norton to Joan Guttridge. 9 March 1941.
- <sup>56</sup> Bentz (2012), “From El Wak to Sidi Rezegh ...” *op. cit.*, p. 178.
- <sup>57</sup> DOD GG Diary, Box 13 *op. cit.*
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>60</sup> Stewart *op. cit.*, p. 123.
- <sup>61</sup> DOD GG Diary, Box 13 *op. cit.*
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>64</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 22. Extracts from the diary of Dr John Hickley, South African Medical Corps 1940, 1941, onwards.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>67</sup> Brown, *The war of a hundred days ... op. cit.*, p. 221.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- <sup>70</sup> Van der Waag *op. cit.*, p. 198.
- <sup>71</sup> T Shearing & D Shearing. *From Jo'burg to Dresden: A World War II diary by EB “Dick” Dickinson*. Mossel Bay: Privately published, 2010, 7–8
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- <sup>73</sup> Schwikkard *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- <sup>75</sup> Shearing & Shearing *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.
- <sup>77</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 6. Medical services during the war.
- <sup>78</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 17 *op. cit.*
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>80</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 3. SA medical services in the Middle East.
- <sup>81</sup> Harrison, “Medicine and the management of modern warfare” *op. cit.*, p. 393.
- <sup>82</sup> Erwee & Eksteen *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- <sup>84</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 6 *op. cit.*
- <sup>85</sup> Erwee & Eksteen *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- <sup>86</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 9. “The formation of field ambulances in desert warfare”. Report by a committee formed under ME/MED/3122. 19 January 1942.

- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>89</sup> Erwee & Eksteen *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 47.
- <sup>90</sup> Shearing & Shearing *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- <sup>94</sup> EB (Dick) Dickinson. Personal interview. 4 December 2010, Mossel Bay.
- <sup>95</sup> The battle saw 224 killed, 379 wounded and 3 000 captured from the total force active at Sidi Rezegh. C Somerville, *Our war: How the British Commonwealth fought the Second World War*. London: Phoenix, 1998, 94.
- <sup>96</sup> Nell *op. cit.*
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>98</sup> M de Lisle. *Over the hills and far away*. Unpublished memoirs, n.d., 18.
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>100</sup> P Ogilvy & N Robinson. *In the bag*. Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1975, 13.
- <sup>101</sup> DOD Narrative reports (hereafter Narep) ME/3. *Account of the adventures of the fellows taken at Sidi Rezegh. Statement by repatriated POW, 'Mr W'.*
- <sup>102</sup> DOD UWH Narep/Me/1. *Baden's letter to Joe after the Battle at Sidi Rezegh, 13.12.1941.*
- <sup>103</sup> Erwee & Eksteen *op. cit.*, p. 46.
- <sup>104</sup> Shearing & Shearing *op. cit.*, pp. 33–34.
- <sup>105</sup> Bourke, “Fear and anxiety ...” *op. cit.*, p. 114.
- <sup>106</sup> J Mortlock. *The endless years: Reminiscences of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War*. Unpublished memoirs, p. 35.
- <sup>107</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 7. AJ Orenstein to ADMS 1 / ADMS 2; 13 April 1942. Subject: Anxiety, neurosis and hysteria.
- <sup>108</sup> In contrast, World War I veterans were less willing to admit to the status of victim, and in general sought to minimise occurrences of medical treatment in their narratives. Hynes *op. cit.*, p. 128.
- <sup>109</sup> Schwikkard *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- <sup>110</sup> PTSD is a form of combat stress that continues over a prolonged period. For symptoms related to combat stress, see TPS Oei, B Lim & B Hennessy. “Psychological dysfunction in battle: Combat stress reactions and posttraumatic stress disorder”. *Clinical Psychology Review* 10. 1990. 357.
- <sup>111</sup> Schwikkard *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- <sup>113</sup> Erwee & Eksteen *op. cit.*, p. 48.
- <sup>114</sup> Shearing & Shearing *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- <sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41
- <sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- <sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- <sup>120</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 7 *op. cit.*
- <sup>121</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 18. Salum Operation – medical arrangements: 11/12 Jan 42.
- <sup>122</sup> N Orpen. *War in the desert: South African Forces World War II Volume III*. Cape Town: Purnell, 1971, 324.
- <sup>123</sup> Fennell, “Courage and cowardice ...” *op. cit.*, p. 100.
- <sup>124</sup> Brown, *Retreat to victory ... op. cit.*, p. 165.
- <sup>125</sup> K Horn. “Narratives from North Africa: South African prisoner-of-war experience following the fall of Tobruk, June 1942”. *Historia* 56/2. 2011. 97.
- <sup>126</sup> DOD CF Scheepers, Box 17 *op. cit.*

<sup>127</sup> HS Gear. "Hygiene aspects of the El Alamein Victory, 1942". *British Medical Journal* March 1944.

<sup>128</sup> Brown, *Retreat to victory ... op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

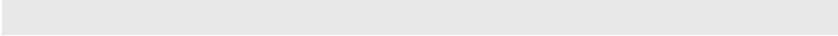
<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*





# **The role of change management in improving policy effectiveness in the SANDF**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Armed forces the world over have three primary functions – force development, force deployment and force employment. Defence policy plays a guiding role in all of these, but it is especially important in establishing the rationale for the creation of credible military deterrence. Usually, a defence policy presupposes the development of armed forces that are effective at executing their mandate, a condition that is measurable in terms of the discipline, skill and quality of the organisation. The study on which this article reports, used this concept to describe how change management – especially by focusing on incorporating effective prioritisation – could enhance the current defence policy. A general analysis of South African defence policy publications indicates that, indeed, the policymakers had thoroughly considered the effectiveness of the armed forces when they wrote the White Paper on Defence of 1996 and the Defence Review of 1998. By 2006, the South African Army had interpreted national defence policy and formulated a future strategy of its own very much in alignment with the ‘modern system’ approach of the original policy publications.

The present study suggests that the principal reason for the large variance between defence policy, military capabilities, and real operational demands stems from the lack of effective prioritisation of defence. This article, therefore, concludes that the South African National Defence Force (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. Furthermore, it is concluded that military effectiveness in meeting current operational demands is also doubtful. Finally, the schizophrenic organisational culture of the defence force may be the primary cause of its moving ever closer to renegeing on its constitutional mandate.

## **ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND**

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is composed of the officially recognised military armed forces of the Republic of South Africa (RSA). It is governed by the government of the day and commanded by the democratically elected president of the country as the commander-in-chief.

Within two years of democratisation, defence policy was formalised by the publication of the White Paper on National Defence (1996) and the Defence Review (1998).<sup>4</sup> Three policy prescriptions were significant for the development of the capabilities of the armed forces that was to follow: firstly, the injunction that the SANDF force levels, armaments and military expenditure shall be determined by defence policy as it is derived from an analysis of the external and internal security environment. Secondly, it was envisaged that the “SANDF shall be a balanced, modern, affordable and technologically advanced military force, capable of executing its tasks *effectively and efficiently*”, and, thirdly, that the primary role of the SANDF “shall be to *defend* South Africa against *external military aggression*”.<sup>5</sup>

For the first decade after 1994, the SANDF – as an organisation – therefore, had an internal, structural focus. The services dedicated themselves to the deliberate transformation of the organisation, aimed primarily at legitimising the national defence function rather than ensuring the capability of the military to execute its constitutional mandate.<sup>6</sup> This focus was especially true for the SA Army, since it was not only the largest and least technology-dependent service – and, therefore, destined to absorb the majority of integrating personnel from their former forces – but also because it had not benefited from any new equipment that the SANDF was to acquire through government’s Strategic Arms Package (SAP) deal.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, the Army was not obliged to implement changes to its doctrine or to absorb new technology in the short term; it was instead forced to concentrate on transforming its structure and organisational culture by introducing a new leadership, command and management paradigm, relinquishing the former staff compartment system in favour of a novel, joint support system, and surrendering its primary mission of the conduct of military operations to a Joint Operations Division.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

It has become clear there is a need for effective prioritisation by the strategic management of the SANDF, since focus had been lost with regard to what is necessary for the SANDF to portray a professional image of being a credible deterrence.

The topic of this article arose from a pragmatic interest in the measure of alignment between South African defence policy (at national level, but including the SA Army’s ‘future strategy’ at service level) and the actual military capabilities, which that policy had spawned. The fact that approved defence policy is well documented and that a consultative Defence Review is published annually implied that sufficient and appropriate data were available for analysis. It is, therefore, also possible to compare the Defence Review of 1998 and its later versions over time, making deductions and conclusions with regard to the evolution of defence policy in general.

## **STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The research problem that was investigated within the ambit of this research study was:



*The current lack of effective prioritisation in the Defence Policy prevents the SANDF from fulfilling its mandate properly and consequently restricts it to portray a professional image.*

## **THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The primary research question, forming the crux of this research study, was:

*Can current SANDF effectiveness be improved through applying change management in defence policy, especially by focusing on incorporating effective prioritisation?*

The secondary research questions, which were researched in support of the primary research question, are listed below:

- » Which capabilities does the SANDF need to fulfil its mandate successfully?
- » Which organisational policies are required to enable those capabilities to achieve the SANDF mandate?
- » Which criteria should be prioritised when appointing personnel to enable organisational effectiveness?
- » What should be prioritised when allocating budgets to enable organisational effectiveness?

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The primary research objective of this research study was:

*To determine what the most important priorities of the defence policy should be in order to enable the SANDF to execute its mandate effectively and consequently portray a professional image by being a credible deterrent.*

The secondary research objectives of this research study are listed below:

- » to determine which capabilities the SANDF needs to fulfil its mandate successfully;
- » to determine which organisational policies are required to enable those capabilities to achieve the mandate;
- » to determine which criteria should be prioritised when appointing personnel to enable organisational effectiveness; and
- » to determine what should be prioritised when allocating budgets to enable organisational effectiveness.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY STRATEGY**

As this research focused on a specific outcome, applied research served as research type. This had been designed to apply this article findings to solving a specific and existing problem.<sup>8</sup>

The research took place in the social world, as the research involved the systems in which people operate, which, in turn, explain why people do what they do, which in turn implies that an ‘interpretive paradigm’ applied.

While the research was theoretical in nature, both the positivistic and phenomenological paradigms served as basis for the research. As a result, both quantitative and qualitative data were used to support the research findings.<sup>9</sup>

### *The research method*

Case study research, which originated in the qualitative paradigm, was selected as a research method for this study and this is elaborated below owing to its importance.

Cooper and Schindler state that a full contextual analysis of fewer events or conditions and their interrelations can be achieved by case study research.<sup>10</sup> The use of qualitative data, with an emphasis on detail, provides extremely useful insight for problem solving, evaluation and strategy. Missing data are avoided and evidence is verified due to the use of multiple information sources.

Yin elaborates on the case study method to collect, present and analyse data fairly.<sup>11</sup> Yin further states that the choice of research method depends largely on one’s research questions. ‘How’ and ‘why’ questions seek to explain present circumstances, which is the core purpose of the case study method. Yin adds, “[i]n brief, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organisational and managerial processes, and the maturation of industries”.<sup>12</sup>

Categorising the present study as either ‘descriptive’ or ‘explanatory’ is, however, less obvious, since it employed both kinds of knowledge. On the one hand, there are data, facts and empirical generalisations that affirm the actual state of affairs and, on the other, there are theories and interpretations that suggest causes – or plausible explanations – for why objects of scrutiny appear the way they do.<sup>13</sup> This study focused on examining the prescripts of defence policy and the competency attributes of the South African military. Ultimately, though, the study considered the meaning of the relationship between the two data sets, as described above.

One may therefore typify the study as a qualitative, descriptive analysis, with risk accruing to its theoretical and inferential validity in particular.

### *Data collection methodology*

The approach used within the ambit of this research was self-administered questionnaires. The data collection methodology can be categorised as follows:

- » **qualitative data:** interviews, observation and questionnaires; and
- » **quantitative data:** questionnaires.

## DATA VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

According to Collis and Hussey, **validity** is concerned with the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is happening.<sup>14</sup> More specifically, it is concerned with whether the data is a true picture of what is being studied. According to Cooper and Schindler, three major forms of validity can be identified, namely content validity, ‘criterion related validity and construct validity.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore Cooper and Schindler conclude that, when a measurement method supplies consistent results, it is viewed as contributing to the validity and reliability of the data obtained.<sup>16</sup>

The following aspects pertaining to data validity and reliability were applied during this research study:

- » **Validity:** Content validity was used due to the various hierarchy levels identified within the target organisation. The target organisation was large enough to be representative of the sample frame<sup>17</sup>
- » **Reliability:** The internal consistency method was used to ensure that every item was correlated with every other item across the entire sample and that the average inter-item correlation was taken as the index of reliability.<sup>18</sup>

## ETHICS

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill “ethics refers to the appropriateness of your behavior in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it”.<sup>19</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In an attempt to shape the mind of the reader and to sketch the background of this research – the current SANDF policy – it is important to note that this article starts with an orientation with regard to *concepts* and a discussion about *values, policy, politics, ideology, strategy* and *doctrine*, all of which are related to governance, and, in this context, to defence policy.

The role of change management will also be discussed in order to increase an understanding of the current policy effectiveness of the SANDF, after which a conclusion follows, showing how change management, together with effective prioritisation, could be applied in order to improve the policy effectiveness of the SANDF.

## POLICY

The following sections will discuss the constructs of policy as defined, its value proposition and related concepts.

### *Policy defined*

Some political scientists and specialists in public administration and strategic studies define policy as:

- policy consists of general directives on the main lines of action to be followed;<sup>20</sup>
- policy is a particular objective or set of objectives;<sup>21</sup> and
- in general, decisions about what to do are policy decisions, i.e. decisions with a high political input; policy is a guiding principle designed to influence for instance decisions and actions.<sup>22</sup>

The researcher concluded that ‘policy’ gives guidance on how a government department and its sub-departments should act to achieve particular objectives. In addition, those objectives should preferably be in the best interest of developing the specific department or organisation.

### *Concepts of policy*

For a variety of reasons, there is a tendency in the Department of Defence (DoD) to use the term ‘policy’ to describe almost any regulatory document. Concepts such as policy and regulations, are confused with one another. Many military command council officers appear to think that regulations are policy, and they speak of all regulations, directives, instructions and orders, and sometimes even processes and procedures, as policy, whilst forgetting that regulations are the result of policy. According to Grobler, the above are not the same concepts.<sup>23</sup> Even the statement of a policy in a document does not make the entire document a policy instrument. Policy ranges far more widely than do regulations. Policy is introduced by strategy. It consists of broad guidelines, which are then applied in the detail that is set out in regulations, directives, orders and instructions.<sup>24</sup> In other words, policy is an explanation or a principle to guide decisions with regard to courses of action, or which provides appropriate guidance to direct governance. Policy does not set out detailed ways to act.<sup>25</sup> For example, if policy is to wage war, it provides us with a broad indication of what the principle responsibilities of the armed forces, the entire government and even the public at large should be for the specified time of war. At a particular point in time, many other important features of governance may need to be subordinated to the policy to wage war. Although policy should be clearly stated, even at ministerial level, it is often so broadly stated that it is vague and not easy to understand what it should be.<sup>26</sup> For convenience of analysis and for practical purposes, policy may be divided into levels, but not everything that is ordered is policy.

### *Interpreting concepts*

Understanding the meaning of concepts or ideas requires much more than consulting dictionaries, let alone the understanding of operational concepts.<sup>27</sup> It is essential to analyse values, policy, politics, ideology, strategy and doctrine as concepts in the light of literature related to political science, public administration, international politics and strategic studies.<sup>28</sup> One often sees definitions offered in official documents and presentations, which play no further part in the discussions that follow. It is as though these definitions had never been mentioned. That in itself speaks volumes about the absence of a thorough understanding and use of concepts. This article reflects an attempt

to share opinions on these defects. One cannot ignore decades of scientific research and professional literature on these subjects or try to interpret them in a vacuum ignoring historically proved experience. It must be remembered that the armed forces are engaged in the field of public administration and not in business administration (or governance).

### *Values and culture*

**Values in policy** – In any country, the values held (whether they are perceived as right or wrong) by the supporters of a political party determine the policies of that party. This implies that the politics of the ruling party are aimed at imposing the values of its supporters or, at least, the interpretation by the leader of the party of the value of its supporters. Policies in the most general sense result from the values held by interest groups, pressure groups and political parties. If a political party adopts certain values, it does so with the intention of taking power and turning those values into government policy. Policies are the guidelines for the governing party to run the economy of the country, its finances, education, health, welfare and, of course, its armed forces.

**Culture in policies** – this means that political parties contend for power to become the government in order to impose their values. Governments are political institutions that may also wish to impose their values upon other states. That is why war is recognised as a political act; it is a struggle to impose one's will on an opponent by means of force.<sup>29</sup> This consideration of force also requires that, in a democracy, war should be fought within the framework of the values and policies of the government and not simply for the sake of defeating the opponent by any means, including illegal means.

**Role of values** – a variety of values may link people together in different interest groups, pressure groups and even political parties. Merely “holding values dear”, however, is not sufficient; they have to be linked to ensure their application in society.<sup>30</sup> Without being bound together as policies, they are no more than shared or private values. The Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher had very strong values, and these were made binding for British society by being adopted as party policy. They were then imposed on Britain as a whole through law. These values appear to have been held so strongly generally that when the Conservatives were succeeded by the Labour Party, the latter barely changed what had come to be accepted by the British public as a whole.<sup>31</sup>

**Policies flow from values held in a society**-When a majority of voters hold the same values, the policies are not merely the policies of a party, but they may become the policies of the government.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Vickers defines policy as “norms to guide action”.<sup>33</sup> He adds that policy is made up of decisions giving direction, coherence and continuity to the courses of action for which the decision-making body is responsible. Seen in this light, policy can be seen to be broad directives that include the course or direction chosen and within which subordinate decisions are to be made while the policy prevails.

**Giving direction** – Vickers did not say that policy comprises the decisions, but rather that policy is the result of those decisions that play a particular role, such as

giving direction, coherence and continuity to the courses of action wanted, or the course chosen by a party – either one wanting to become the government or already in government.<sup>34</sup> For Vickers, to arrive at policies and to implement them, a political party has to make a variety of decisions.<sup>35</sup> A political policy itself is a rather wide-ranging guideline on how to act, a course along which to move. All political parties have policies or norms by which they wish to enforce values.

### *Hierarchy of policy*

Gladden divides policy into four levels for the convenience of analysis and for practical purposes.<sup>36</sup> The hierarchical levels of policy and policymaking identified by Gladden are:

- **Political policy.** The policy enunciated by political parties is what is called political policy. Although it can often be sensed all the way down in government, it is usually embodied in vague, broad-brushed, generalised statements, and lacks clarity as to what it will mean in practice.<sup>37</sup>
- **Executive policy.** This is the policy more clearly enunciated by the minister of a department, e.g. the DoD, and the top level of its officials in order to enable the policy to be enforced. Once a party has gained power, it has to convert the vague statements of political policy into more concretely defined statements of intent that will be used to bring the political policies into effect. The onus rests on the relevant cabinet and with the applicable ministers and their officials to formulate clear statements that will make it possible for the officials to turn political policies into concrete actions that will result in the desired effects. This group's main tasks are to decide on executive policies and overall planning, directing and co-ordinating the policies, and activities of the specific department.<sup>38</sup>
- **Administrative policy.** This is formulated by the middle levels of officials of a department, also in order to enable them to achieve the goals set by the party in government and then converted into executive policies by the minister and his top senior officials. That is what administration is about here: getting things done.<sup>39</sup>
- **Technical or operational policy.** This is formulated by the supervisors at the lowest level of authority. This group includes occupations where the main tasks are those that require technical knowledge and experience. The main tasks consist of carrying out technical work connected with the application of concepts and operational methods, and teaching at certain levels.<sup>40</sup>
- **Substantive policies** Substantive policies are those that are concerned with the essential elements of governance as in running the country. To mention a few, there are foreign policy, but also health, housing, education, justice, police, law enforcement and defence policies. Substantive policies depend on the values held by the members of political parties.<sup>41</sup>

### *National security policy*

The concept of national security is generally thought of as guaranteeing the survival of the nation and the state by using economic, military and political power and exercising diplomacy.<sup>42</sup> This broadly means:

- externally defending the state against foreign enemies; and
- internally defending the state against revolution, in other words, maintaining the state unchanged.

### *Defence policy*

**Devising defence policies** – a governing principle of the Constitution requires the primary role of the SANDF to be defensive, and this is the basis of any South African defence policy.<sup>43</sup>

### *Determining policy*

Although the concept of ‘formulating policy’ has much appeal as a simple formula for presenting policy, formulation as a simple framework of headings does not solve the problem of determining policy.<sup>44</sup> It suggests a presentation movement rather than an intellectual challenge.

### *Strategy*

The concept ‘strategy’ is derived from the Greek term *stratagema*, which means ‘to lead or command an army’. The concept of strategy, therefore, is seen as “the art of the General”, the art of creating ideal circumstances to overcome an enemy by using force or threat of force<sup>45</sup>

### *Doctrine*

The term ‘doctrine’ is derived from the Latin term *doctrina*, which means the code of beliefs or taught principles.<sup>46</sup> It is not only a military concept. It can be found and used in a variety of actions or professions. It is important to realise also that in the sense in which it is used today, doctrine is more flexible than principles. The term ‘doctrine’ has been applied to axioms regarded as fundamental to the conduct of a government’s foreign policy.<sup>47</sup> This was intended to indicate a consistent guide for conduct or action in given circumstances. Frequently, doctrines have the name of a political office holder attached to them as though the particular doctrine was the creation of the politician, for example the Monroe Doctrine, the Truman Doctrine, the Eisenhower Doctrine, the Nixon Doctrine, the Brezhnev Doctrine and the Bush Doctrine. Popper further asserts that indoctrination rests on accepting a given body of knowledge or belief without question.<sup>48</sup> The researcher believes, however, that education, in contrast, requires one to stand aside from the given body of knowledge and, without commitment, to analyse this body of knowledge critically and objectively.

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

How can the concept of change management be utilised to assist in improving the current effectiveness of SANDF policy? For the purpose of this study, the definition of change management that was applied, was one related to the change control process as per the project management context.<sup>49</sup> It is then necessary to understand that all the changes that are experienced by the SANDF and its staff, could be equated to organisational restructuring which needs to be managed as a project and which contains the requirements for retention of quality.<sup>50</sup>

Kerzner defines the concept of project management as “the planning and controlling of company resources for a relatively short term objective that has been formulated to attain a set of specific goals and objectives through planning, organising and directing”.<sup>51</sup> Meredith and Mantel elaborate on the importance of a project and state that it must be such that senior management could justify establishing a special organisational unit outside the routine structure.<sup>52</sup> Burke refers to the definition of ‘project management’ as the most efficient way of introducing change achieved by, amongst others, employing persons skilled in project management – normally including a project manager – who are given responsibility for introducing the change and who are accountable for its successful accomplishment.<sup>53</sup>

All dimensions of project management should be combined into one seamless integrated domain. This integration entails the application of a specific set of skills, tools, knowledge and techniques into a collection of projects, programmes and portfolios to execute the goals and objectives of the organisation.<sup>54</sup>

## EFFECTIVE PRIORITISATION

The following section deals with the various aspects pertaining to prioritisation.

### *Effective prioritisation defined*

According to Drucker, ‘effective’ “means successful in producing a desired or intended result”, whereas ‘prioritisation’ means “to designate or treat something as being very or most important”.<sup>55</sup> For example, “the department failed to prioritise safety and thus suffered employee injuries” and “to determine the order for dealing with a series of tasks according to their importance”.<sup>56</sup>

### *Importance of prioritisation*

Prioritisation is the cornerstone of success. When one prioritises, it becomes clear what the most important tasks for the success of the organisation are. This involves identifying goals and objectives that are important in reaching the intended purpose of the organisation and also focusing personnel and activities on those necessary tasks.<sup>57</sup>

Prioritising starts with having clearly stated goals and objectives (derived from the strategy and ultimately the policy of an organisation) in order to fulfil the vision and mission of the organisation, in other words, to communicate clearly *what* the



organisation intends to do, *where* it wants to be in future, and *why* it is important to achieve the mission. This helps to keep the organisation focused on what is important at any given point in time.<sup>58</sup>

Finding which goals and objectives will be the most important is difficult, but of vital importance. For example, all the employees of a company can be very productive and diligent all day long, but all those efforts will be to no avail if the work being done is not the correct work necessary for the organisation to achieve its purpose.

Steyn et al. assert that effective and efficient leaders need to be wary of the fact that the learning and growth perspective of organisational strategy becomes vital to the success of any organisation in modern times.<sup>59</sup> The collective creativity of human resources is the single most important intangible asset of any organisation.

Efficiency is doing something very well, although that ‘something’ might be unnecessary in achieving the required goals and objectives of an organisation. It does not help one to do the wrong thing 100% correctly, as it still remains the wrong thing, and ultimately the effort wasted.<sup>60</sup> Effectiveness is doing the right thing correctly, which implies that the strategic management of the organisation has clearly identified and communicated the goals and objectives necessary to fulfil its mandate, and then equipped the employees with all the necessary resources.<sup>61</sup>

Efficiency and effectiveness are not the same thing; effective organisations focus on important tasks and not necessarily on the urgent ones.<sup>62</sup> *Efficiency* is part of the internal processes, being the best fit between the internal social components of structure, processes, people, culture and leadership, whereas *effectiveness* is part of the external processes, being the best fit between the internal structure and the external environment.<sup>63</sup>

*Efficiency* is thus concerned with time and effort while *effectiveness* is based on results. *Effectiveness* indicates whether the task completed was the right task to complete and, furthermore, serves as a very good indicator of the synergy inside the organisation. To be effective, long-term goals should be reached, targets hit and real progress made. It is therefore essential for any organisation to prioritise its tasks correctly.<sup>64</sup>

Before any organisation can set goals or objectives, it needs to arrive at a clear understanding of where the organisation currently is and where it wants to be, in other words what it wants to achieve or which mandate it wishes to fulfil. This means being crystal clear about what is expected and what needs to be achieved. The organisation needs to learn how best to plan strategies in relation to setting goals and prioritising so that it can meet the varied demands of its mandate best fulfil the mandate and strategies.<sup>65</sup>

Prioritising will keep the organisation on course in achieving its goals and objectives. Abraham Lincoln reportedly once said, “[i]f I had 60 minutes to cut down a tree, I would spend 40 minutes sharpening the axe and 20 minutes cutting it down.” Thus, Steven Covey calls planning “sharpening the axe”.<sup>66</sup> One has to take time to make time. Prioritising is the difference between being **reactive** or **proactive**. When one does not plan, one ends up responding to events of the day as they occur.<sup>67</sup>

## How to prioritise

Vilfredo Pareto (1896) explains the 80/20 principle, which states that roughly 80% of one's success will come from 20% of one's inputs.<sup>68</sup>

This suggests that, in general, time spent working out which goals and objectives are most important will be well rewarded, enabling the organisation to achieve several times as much as it otherwise would have achieved – even with less. The natural tendency, however, seems to be to continue doing what is being done, even if it is no longer the most effective or even applicable anymore.<sup>69</sup> Remember, it is not the quantity done, but rather the value and quality that are of importance. Typically, this distinction creates two dimensions by which all goal-oriented tasks can be categorised for effective prioritisation, namely importance and urgency.<sup>70</sup>

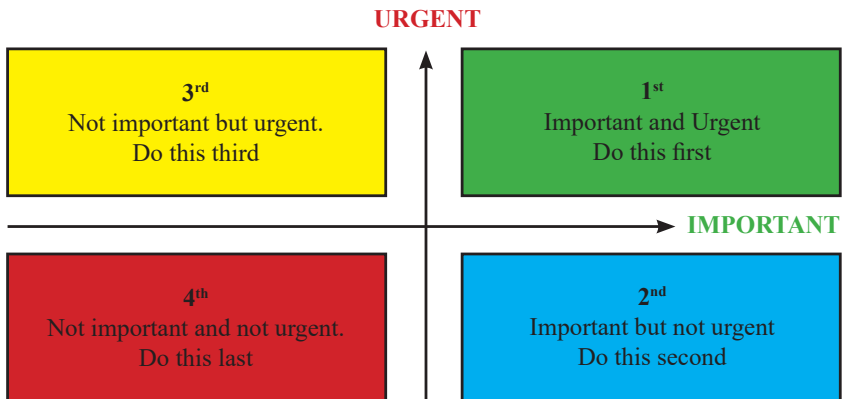


Figure 1: Sequencing priorities.<sup>71</sup>

Barrett elaborates on this concept by saying that the first quadrant – in which the goals are important and urgent – should be avoided at all cost. The urgency, combined with the importance of these goals, creates a sense of panic in the organisation. According to Barrett, the “sweet spot” to be in is the second quadrant where the goals to be achieved are important but not urgent. The culture of the organisation should be of such a nature that proper planning allows for sufficient preparation and resources in order to achieve the goals and objectives effectively. Strategic management, on the other hand, should be of such a nature that the important goals never reach the ‘urgent’ status.

## IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENT LEADERSHIP

Effectiveness of the decision-making processes lies in the importance of competent leadership. This is confirmed by the words of the well-known former Chief of the American Armed Forces, General Colin Powell, in which he defines leadership as the art of accomplishing more with one's organisation than what the science of management proclaims to be possible.<sup>72</sup>

It is common sense that, to be an effective and efficient leader, one should have leadership skills. Owen explains the leadership skills of most importance to be the following:<sup>73</sup>

- » responsibility;
- » ambition;
- » moral courage;
- » adaptability;
- » perseverance under stress; and
- » honesty.

Van Dyk confirms the importance of competent leadership in organisational learning, which, in turn, breeds an organisational culture of “collaboration and cooperation over competition; innovation and pro-action over reactivity”.<sup>74</sup>

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY INTRODUCTION

In order to satisfy the objectives of the study, qualitative research was used.<sup>75</sup> While this type of research is especially appropriate for small samples, it is also risky for the results of qualitative research to be perceived as reflecting the opinions of a wider population.<sup>76</sup> For the purposes of this research, the inductive approach was followed. The main weakness of the inductive approach, however, is that it produces generalised theories and conclusions based only on a small number of observations, and so the reliability of research results may be questioned.<sup>77</sup> For the purposes of this research, informal interviews incorporating semi-structured questionnaires were used. Informal interviews are unstructured interviews, but they are still personal, and their aim is to identify a participant’s emotions, feelings and opinions regarding a particular research subject.<sup>78</sup>

According to the Defence Annual Report for the 2015/2016 financial year the SANDF has approximately 78 000 employees.<sup>79</sup> By applying the theories of Collis and Hussey and focusing on the strategic-level leaders and management officer corps, a representative sample per group was selected and further divided into systematic random sampling owing to the size of the target groups, resulting in the following selection:<sup>80</sup>

- **executive management:** approximately 260, from which a representative sample of 50% was determined; **rank group:** all generals;
- **senior management:** approximately 10 000, from which a representative sample of 400 was determined; **rank group:** staffed qualified officers (colonel and lieutenant colonel); and
- **highly skilled supervision:** approximately 24 000 from which a representative sample of 400 was determined; **rank group:** senior officers.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The following section will address the empirical findings.

### ANALYSIS METHOD

Content analysis was used to analyse the data, which were gathered from completed questionnaires incorporating personal interviews. According to Moore and McCabe, this is the type of research where data gathered are categorised into themes and sub-themes, to enable comparison.<sup>81</sup> A main advantage of content analysis is that it helps in the data collected being reduced and simplified, while at the same time producing results that may then be measured using quantitative techniques. Moreover, content analysis enables researchers to structure the qualitative data collected in a way that satisfies the accomplishment of research objectives. Human error is, however, highly possible in content analysis, since there is a risk of researchers misinterpreting the data gathered, thereby generating false and unreliable conclusions.<sup>82</sup>

### PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics was applied to all variables, displaying means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages, cumulative frequencies and cumulative percentages.

### INFERENCE STATISTICS

The following inferential statistics were performed on the data:

- » **chi-square tests** for determining association between biographical variables; cross-tabulation and chi-square-based measures of association, a technique for comparing two or more classification variables. It had to be calculated with actual counts rather than percentages;<sup>83</sup> and
- » **Cronbach's alpha coefficient**, which is an index of reliability associated with the variation accounted for by the true score of the "underlying construct". 'Construct' refers to the hypothetical variables that are being measured.<sup>84</sup>

### TECHNICAL REPORT WITH GRAPHICAL DISPLAYS

A written report with explanations of all variables and their outcome was subsequently compiled. A cross-analysis of variables was performed where necessary, attaching statistical probabilities to indicate the magnitude of differences or associations. All inferential statistics are discussed separately.

### ANALYSIS

In total, 46 questionnaires were completed. The target was 30 only, but eventually 46 were reached. The sample realisation was thus  $46/30 = 153\%$ , 53% more than envisaged; thus, proving the survey to be accurate and representative above standard.

## RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The reliability test (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) was executed on items (statements) representing the measuring instrument of this survey with respect to the responses given in these questionnaires. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was determined for the ordinal variables in the questionnaire.

All the raw and standardised variables were above 0.70 (near 0.90), which is the acceptable level according to Nunnally, and, thus, the scale proved to be reliable and consistent.<sup>85</sup>

## DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

It is important to note that descriptive statistics are based on the total sample. In all the questionnaire, all the questions were answered and none was left out; all questionnaires thus had a 100% validity.

Statistically it was evident that the majority of respondents (76.09%) were from the Army service, which is in line with the SANDF force structure, which ensures that the army Service is the leading arms of service, and the other services (Air Force, Navy and Medics) are in support of the army service. In the research 'unit level' refers to the higher strategic level (such as the Chief of the SANDF, or the office of the Minister of Defence with the Secretary of Defence) being Level 1, the different arms of service being Level 2, and the lower tactical levels being 3 and 4.

The significance of the respondents' unit level indicates the applicability of the target group for this survey, where in general policy is formulated at the highest level 1. The implementation of policy is mainly the responsibility of level 2, with the execution and adherence to policy then primarily having an effect on levels 3 and 4. Thus, as can be seen, the majority of respondents (67.39%) came from level 2, which was relevant to this study because these are the people who have to make policy 'work', whether the policy is effective or not. They are the people who are in the middle who bear the brunt if policy is ineffective and, subsequently, those who have to execute the policy at the lower level keep them responsible if current policy is not relevant any more.

No respondents from unit level 4 (lowest level) were included in this survey. This did not have any influence on the research study since this level has no input into or control over policy. They are merely the executors of policy at the lowest tactical level, and they cannot effect any change to policy.

As previously explained, the focus of this survey was on the Officer Corps of the SANDF in general, and, more specifically, on executive and senior management, because they are the people who effect policy change. The target group for the research was achieved since the majority of respondents were in the rank group of generals (executive management) and staff qualified officers (colonels - senior management), namely 71,74%. They are also the majority of people who can effect policy change, for the same reason as was explained above with regard to unit level.

For this research, it was crucial to ensure that a fair, realistic balance amongst different ethnic groups was achieved while also being a fair and realistic representation of ethnic numbers in the SANDF. Thus 41,3% of respondents were White, with an aggregated percentage of 58,7% and the rest, being African, Coloured and Indian. This is realistically representative of the current SANDF in total; thus, showing that the survey was applicable and accurate.

## INFERENCE STATISTICS

The following section will discuss the inferential statistics from an empirical perspective.

### *Comparison of demographic variables*

The chi-square test was used to test for association between the demographic variables, and it should be noted that only the statistically significant differences are discussed in this article. Furthermore, although the sample was very small, and chi-square tests were not valid as more than 20% of the outcomes had an expected count of less than 5 in most cases when testing association between the demographic variables, it was done notwithstanding as an indication of association. One way to overcome the small expected count in the cells was to aggregate groups that made sense by combining the lowest two response options on each question in order to increase the frequencies in cells, as chosen by a minority of respondents. This solved the problem of low expected frequencies to a great extent, although it was still an issue in the minority of chi-squares. For this research, it was deemed necessary to do a comparison on rank with the measuring instrument.

### *Rank vs. measuring instrument*

There is a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and the ways they perceived question 2 (Q2), "To which extent do you believe various current national policies, prescripts, government imperatives, etc. enables the SANDF to successfully achieve its vision, namely: Effective Defence for a democratic SA?" (chi-square value=10.391; DF=4; P-value=0.034). It was evident that more respondents from executive management rated it negatively than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 3(a) (Q3a), "To which extent do personnel have an influence on the current SANDF effectiveness?" (chi-square value=15.058; DF=4; P-value=0.005). It was evident that more respondents from the highly skilled supervision group (senior officers) considered it to have a considerable influence than respondents from other groupings.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 3(b) (Q3b), "To which extent does the organisation have an influence on the current SANDF effectiveness?" (chi-square value=10.811; DF=4; P-value=0.029). It was evident that more respondents from executive management rated it as having a considerable influence than respondents from other groupings.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 3(d) (Q3d), “To which extent does training have an influence on the current SANDF effectiveness?” (chi-square value=15.683; DF=4; P-value=0.003). It was evident that more respondents from the highly skilled supervision group (senior officers) rated it as having a considerable influence than respondents from other groupings.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 5(a) (Q5a), “To which extent should senior/executive leadership positions in the SANDF demonstrate competence as a core values?” (chi-square value=18.192; DF=4; P-value=0.001). It was evident that more respondents from the highly skilled supervision group (senior officers) rated it as of higher necessity than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 6 (b) (Q6b), “Indicate your satisfaction with discipline as an individual value of the current SANDF senior/executive management” (chi-square value=10.788; DF=4; P-value=0.029). It was evident that more respondents from executive management rated it negatively than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 6 (g) (Q6g), “Indicate your satisfaction with competence as an individual value of the current SANDF senior/executive management” (chi-square value=13.966; DF=4; P-value=0.007). It was evident that more respondents from executive management rated it negatively than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 6 (h) (Q6h), “Indicate your satisfaction with education as an individual value of the current SANDF senior/executive management” (chi-square value=10.784; DF=4; P-value=0.029). It was evident that more respondents from executive management rated it negatively than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 6 (i) (Q6i), “Indicate your satisfaction with skills as an individual value of the current SANDF senior/executive management” (chi-square value=11.785; DF=4; P-value=0.019). It was evident that more respondents from executive management rated it negatively than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 7 (d) (Q7d), “Indicate your satisfaction with openness and transparency as an organisational value of the current SANDF” (chi-square value=11.191; DF=4; P-value=0.025). It was evident that more respondents from executive management rated it negatively than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 7(f) (Q7f), “Indicate your satisfaction with people as an organisational value of the current SANDF” (chi-square value=14.580; DF=4; P-value=0.006). It was evident that more respondents from executive management rated it negatively than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 10(a) (Q10a), “To which extent do you believe the SANDF should get involved in Secondary Role Tasks, such as anti-poaching, in order to gain the support from the tax payers of South Africa?” (chi-square value=11.123; DF=4; P-value=0.025). It was evident that more respondents from the highly skilled supervision group (senior officers) rated it as being more important than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 10(d) (Q10d), “To which extent do you believe the SANDF should get involved in Secondary Role Tasks, such as border protection, in order to gain the support from the tax payers of South Africa?” (chi-square value=7.466; DF=2; P-value=0.024). It was evident that more respondents from the highly skilled supervision group (senior officers) rated it as being more important than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 17 (Q17), “Indicate to which extent you personally believe that cultural diversity influences effectiveness in the Defence Force” (chi-square value=11.162; DF=4; P-value=0.025). It was evident that more respondents from executive management and the highly skilled supervision group (senior officers) rated it as having a considerable influence than the rest.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 25(c) (Q25c), “Keeping in mind the SANDF’s primary role and function, to what extent may demonstrations receive priority over training?” (chi-square value=17.898; DF=4; P-value=0.001). It was evident that more respondents from executive management believed that it should receive less priority than respondents from other groups.

There was a statistically significant association between the ranks of the respondents and how they perceived question 25(d) (Q25d), “Keeping in mind the SANDF’s primary role and function, to what extent may public image receive priority over combat readiness?” (chi-square value=11.026; DF=4; P-value=0.026). It was evident that more respondents from executive management believed it should receive less priority than respondents from other groups.

#### *Ethnic group vs. measuring instrument*

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 2, (Q2), “To which extent do you believe various current national policies, prescripts, government imperatives, etc. enable the SANDF to achieve its vision successfully, namely: Effective Defence for a democratic SA?” (chi-square value=11.088; DF=4; P-value=0.026). It was evident that Africans rated it more positively than other groups.



There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 3(f) (Q3f), “To which extent does doctrine have an influence on the current SANDF effectiveness?” (chi-square value=13.267; DF=4; P-value=0.010). It was evident that Africans rated it as having a greater influence than other groupings.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 4 (Q4), “Does the SANDF currently apply correct internal budget allocations to achieve organisational effectiveness?” (chi-square value=10.800; DF=4; P-value=0.029). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it as being more negative overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 6(a) (Q6a), “Indicate your satisfaction with leadership as an individual value of the current SANDF senior/executive management” (chi-square value=13.744; DF=4; P-value=0.008). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it more negatively overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 6(b) (Q6b), “Indicate your satisfaction with discipline as an individual value of the current SANDF senior/executive management” (chi-square value=11.541; DF=4; P-value=0.021). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it as being more negative overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 6(d) (Q6d), “Indicate your satisfaction with professionalism as an individual value of the current SANDF senior/executive management” (chi-square value=11.211; DF=4; P-value=0.024). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it more negatively overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 6(e) (Q6e), “Indicate your satisfaction with integrity and honesty as an individual value of the current SANDF senior/executive management” (chi-square value=15.295; DF=4; P-value=0.004). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it more negatively overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 6(i) (Q6i), “Indicate your satisfaction with skills as an individual value of the current SANDF senior/executive management” (chi-square value=12.579; DF=4; P-value=0.014). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it more negatively overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 7(i) (Q7i), “Indicate your satisfaction with discipline as an organisational value of the current SANDF” (chi-square value=10.993; DF=4; P-value=0.027). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it more negatively overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 11 (Q11), “Do you believe the current performance of the SANDF in International Peace Support Operations enhances the image of South Africa?” (chi-square value=16.158; DF=4; P-value=0.003). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it more negatively overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 13 (Q13), “Do you believe the SANDF’s current combat readiness will succeed in executing high intensity and high mobility operations within a 72 hours reaction time?” (chi-square value=21.058; DF=4; P-value=0.000). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it more negatively overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 18 (Q18), “To which extent do you believe the SANDF is currently portraying a professional image in order to obtain the support of the people of South Africa?” (chi-square value=13.649; DF=4; P-value=0.009). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it more negatively overall than Africans.

There was a statistically significant association between the different ethnic groups of respondents and how they perceived question 24 (Q24), “To which extent do you believe the SANDF currently prioritises its goals and objectives correctly in order to execute its mandate effectively?” (chi-square value=9.610; DF=4; P-value=0.048). It was evident that whites, coloureds and Asians rated it more negatively overall than Africans.

## **SUMMARY**

As regards the results obtained through this survey with respect to the demographic variables in the questionnaire, it was evident the majority of respondents were from the army service, which is in line with the SANDF force structure to reflect the army service as being the leading arms of service, and the other services (Air Force, Navy and Medics) being in support of the army service. It is also significant that the majority of responses were from the unit level, which indicates the applicability of the target group for this survey. This is where general policy is formulated on the highest level 1, implementation of policy is mainly the responsibility of level 2, with the execution of and adherence to policy mainly having an effect on the lower levels 3 and 4. It can, thus, be seen that the fact that the majority of respondents came from level 2 was relevant to this study for these are the people who have to make policy ‘work’, whether the policy is effective or not. They are the people in the middle who bear the brunt if policy is ineffective, and those on a lower level – who have to execute it – keep them responsible if current policy is not relevant any more.

With respect to the results of the measuring instrument, the majority of respondents believed that current policy does not effectively enable the SANDF to achieve its vision, namely ‘Effective defence for a democratic SA’ successfully, including ‘train as you fight, fight as you train.’ They were also of the opinion that the state of organisation in

the SANDF at the time of this study had a significant influence on the effectiveness of the SANDF. Furthermore, at the time of the study, the SANDF did not apply the correct budget allocation to achieve organisational effectiveness. Some respondents were of the opinion that a leader should display core values, such as competence and knowledge to a great extent. The majority of respondents were, however, not adequately satisfied with the display of these values by executive management of the SANDF at the time of this research. It was also found that many respondents were not adequately satisfied with the display of leadership, team work, transparency, integrity, education, ethical approach and skills by the SANDF's executive management at the time of the study. Some respondents were of the opinion that the SANDF should become involved in secondary role tasks, such as anti-poaching, disaster relief, disease control, border protection and rural security to a great extent. Many respondents felt that, at the time, the SANDF did not apply the principle of appointing the most competent person for the job correctly, nor was career management based on competence, performance, skills and seniority (experience). Many respondents were not adequately satisfied with the current display of professionalism in the SANDF and deemed it ineffective and inefficient.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As per the primary research question, "Can current SANDF effectiveness be improved through applying change management in defence policy, especially by focusing on incorporating effective prioritisation?" the recommendations made are dependent on the methodologies of project and programme management, especially applying the principles of change management. This is supported by the conclusions drawn from the results as analysed from the data obtained from the respondents' questionnaire's and elaborated upon extensively in the preceding sections on statistics. The following recommendations in addressing the primary research question are made:

- » It is seriously necessary for the state of organisation in the SANDF to apply change management principles in order to increase the effectiveness of the SANDF significantly.
- » The cultural differences are evident in the SANDF's lack of effectiveness, and it is important for executive management firstly to admit this and secondly, to rectify it according to guidelines as was discussed in statistics and summary sections (values and cultural. In any military service, there ought to be only one culture and that should be the military culture. Executive management must guard against allowing different ethnic cultures to be used as an excuse for not adhering to international, commonly accepted military ethos and standards. When we operate as culture carriers and are conscious of our cultural membership, we are emotionally attached to our culturally learned categories of thought, and we value them and protect them as an aspect of group identity to the detriment of organisational effectiveness.
- » This supports the finding that, at the time of this study, there did not exist a common feeling of organisational goals and standards after integration. In this regard, executive management should also guard against the use of

transformation and integration to the detriment of military effectiveness, especially after 25 years of democracy in which transformation ought to have been finished.

The following recommendations are made in addressing of the secondary research questions:

- » The SANDF should seriously focus on appointing the most competent person for the job in order for career management to reflect the principles of competence, performance, skills and seniority, rather than allowing political ideologies to dictate staffing. The time for affirmative action is over. In order for any organisation to be effective, moral courage should prevail in appointing the best person for the job necessary.
- » Defence policymakers should determine the realistic 'need' of the SANDF, such as which function should the SANDF fulfil in the modern era, and then focus on formulating new policy, which would enable the SANDF to fulfil its new mandate towards the tax payers of South Africa.
- » Policy dictates future training. Once new policy is determined according to national strategy, applicable training should be the main focus of the SANDF in order to enable the combat readiness, thus fulfilling the need of the specific mandate.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS IN ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Heitman argues that the Defence Secretariat has not been effective since its establishment in 1995, and the reason is that political imperatives resulted in the appointment of senior civil servants in key posts without their having any defence or civil service experience worth mentioning.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore:

The SANDF continues to suffer from self-destructive personnel management focused on gender and racial quotas to the near exclusion of practical requirements. It is unable or unwilling to dispense with dishonest and incompetent officers, who have driven out experienced, highly competent officers (irrespective of race, black and white alike) and demoralised those who chose to stay by their being frustrated and compromised by the incompetents.

It is recommended that the policymakers refrain from being idealistic when formulating policy that reflects a utopia, resulting in un-executable mandate. A political decision is urgently needed instead to face hard reality and develop policies that are geared towards creating the best possible defence force for the current circumstances by applying tried and tested scientific approaches. This includes the problem of tolerating under-achievers in the organisation. The training institutions in the SANDF at the time of this research were good, but the problem lay with the instructors being overruled by higher authorities when failing an incompetent student in order for the pass rate to reflect the principle of representivity.

A balance between the following objectives will always be necessary:

- » conventional capability (territorial integrity, foreign relations and peace support operations);
- » border protection and rural safety (the possibility of an inclusive rural safety system similar to the old commandos that existed previously); and
- » support to the people (disaster relief and humanitarian assistance).

A recommendation from the research is to establish a robust, large-scale conscription type service from which the SANDF can select and retain only the best of the best for a permanent career. The rest, who have already gained valuable skills development training, can be put through a programme of establishing responsible and disciplined youth citizens for employment in the RSA economy. This should, however, be funded by other national-funded skills development programmes and not necessarily by the DoD. Misdirected existing funds, which are being used by government through a variety of other less effective youth programmes, should provide the necessary funding. Furthermore, the salary bill of the current SANDF can be reduced by having servicemen at lower rank levels not permanently employed, as there are too many junior soldiers who cannot all develop into senior ranks and subsequently stagnate and become old, operationally ineffective and medically expensive.

Since the publication of the 1998 Defence Review, the South African government has produced neither a coherent national security strategy nor an updated and relevant defence policy that could serve to guide the development of the SANDF. After achieving its initial objectives (integration, transformation and withdrawal from domestic security), the defence force was left with a policy vision of its future that was not only discordant with the global revolution in strategic affairs, but also with the national revolution in security affairs, effectively a policy vacuum in which the SANDF has had to find its own way. The security risks accompanying government's dereliction were manageable since no military threats seemed to be forthcoming, and the state has entered into collective defence agreements with other countries anyway. It is, however, by no means certain that an SANDF left to its own strategic devices, will be effective when called upon to execute its constitutional mandate. In fact, the study has rendered a description of a delta between the demands of South African defence policy, the military capabilities of the SANDF, and the challenges of South Africa's security context that appears not only to be uncomfortably large but is also growing with the passage of time. At the deepest level, the condition seems to originate from the fact that the SANDF comprises exponents of two incompatible, but equally valid, philosophies: those advocating a modern military system, and those schooled in revolutionary war, that have, through the existence of a permissive military-strategic environment, been allowed to coexist and remain unresolved. The SANDF, therefore has been unable to develop.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Lt Col Jaco Pietersen born in Vryburg in the Northern Cape and matriculated from the Harrismith High School in the Free State in 1994 joined the SANDF in 1995 and was selected for Junior Leadership training and then officer's formative training. He continued his career at the Armour Corps in Bloemfontein as a junior officer instructor, presenting from basic training for new recruits to permanent force career development courses for senior members. Transferred to the Army Battle School in Lohatla. He was subsequently appointed as an operational Squadron Commander in 1 Special Service Battalion in 2006, where he served in various capacities. On completion of his Junior Command & Staff Duties course (and promotion to the rank of Lt Col in 2012) he was transferred to Pretoria where he was staffed at Defence Foreign Relations, a sub-directorate of Defence Intelligence. Here he fulfilled various key positions from being the liaison officer at the Africa & Middle East desk, including the SO1 Protocol and ultimately the SO1 Training responsible for all foreign learning opportunities of the SANDF. This includes being the course leader for the training of prospective Defence Attaché candidates the past 7 years. He attended the Joint Senior Command & Staff Course in Cuba during 2017/18, and was awarded the best student on course and subsequently received the Cuban Military Merit Medal; the order of "Ignacio Agramonte". Other medals and commendations received are: The General Service medal, the Tsumelo Ikateleho medal with Operational Bar, 10 & 20 years Good Service medals, UN MONUSCO medal (DRC), UN UNAMID medal (Sudan) and the Mandela medal. In 2018 Lt Col Pietersen successfully completed his academic studies in the field of Programme and Project Management at the internationally accredited Cranefield College, where he obtained his Master's Degree with Cum Laude. He also successfully completed his Senior Management Programme at the University of Pretoria in 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Prof Dr Pieter Gerbrandt Steyn, BSc(Eng) (Pretoria), MBA (Pretoria), DCom (Unisa) is a registered Professional Engineer (PrEng). He founded the consulting engineering and management firm, Steyn & Van Rensburg (SVR), specializing in electrical, mechanical and structural engineering projects, as well as project management (1970-1992), he was appointed Senior Lecturer in Business Economics at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Permission was granted by the university authorities to continue as a partner in the consulting firm (1971). He was appointed Professor of Business Economics at UNISA (1976) and during 20 years as a partner in the consulting firm, over 2000 projects were completed by Steyn & Van Rensburg. Major projects are, inter alia, Game City and The Wheel in Durban, Mandela Square, Standard Bank Head Office, First National Bank's Bank City Complex in Johannesburg, and the new campus development, Teacher's Training College, in Pretoria (now the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria). He is also a founding member of the Production Management Institute (PMI) of South Africa, and became Founder Chairman of the Institute (1977). He is the founder and Principal of Cranefield College of Project and Programme Management, a South African Council on Higher Education / Dept of Education accredited and registered Private Higher Education Institution offering an Advanced Certificate, Advanced Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma, Master of Commerce Degree, and a PhD Degree. He is also a proponent of the Industry 4.0 Economic Dispensation Project, Programme and Portfolio Management, Project and Programme Management; Project Managing Organisational Performance and Innovative Improvement; Organisational Quality and Performance Management; Transformational Corporate Strategy; Creating High-Performance Project and Process Teams; Strategic Supply Chain Management; Leading and Managing the Learning Organisation.

- <sup>3</sup> Jan Meyer is a Professor and the Deputy Director of the NWU Business School. He completed his South African Air Force career (21 years) as the Logistics Coordinator, AFB Swartkop in 1995 with the rank of Colonel. He then joined Xcel IT as a Project Manager on logistics projects for a period of 7 years moving on to the academia as a Senior Lecturer at Monash (SA) School of IT. After moving to Milpark Business School and the IIE, finally taking up a position at North West University GSB&GL in 2012. He was appointed the Acting Director in April 2015 and Deputy Director of the integrated NWU Business School in 2018. A position he still holds. He holds a PhD from the University of Pretoria (2002), Masters in Business Leadership from UNISA (1995), Certificate in Logistics Management from the University of Pretoria (1991) and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science (UNISA, 1990). He also completed the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education at Monash (Melbourne, 2006). His research interests include the Project Management, Supply Chain Management and Data Security. Other fields of interest centre on ICT4D, Information Knowledge Management, e-Governance and e-Government as well as issues in the public sector. Prof Meyer has published in peer reviewed journals in the above fields. Prof Meyer is also on the editorial committee of accredited journals and conferences.
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## Book Review

# Die brug: Na die hel en terug in Angola

Deon Lamprecht

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Cape Town: Delta Books

2020, 221 pages

ISBN 978-1-92824-808-8

Between 1966 and 1989, the South African Defence Force (SADF) was embroiled in hostilities in the ‘bush’, mainly on the ‘border’ between northern Namibia and southern Angola. Together with its União Nacional para a Independência de Angola (UNITA) allies, the SADF clashed with the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola (FAPLA) and its Cuban–Russian partners. Despite its prominence in white South African memory, this colloquially termed ‘Border War’ or ‘Bush War’ formed part of a wider Southern African conflict that stretched over three decades from 1959 until 1989. It was one of numerous proxy conflicts in the greater global, ideological struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States.<sup>2</sup> Since the cessation of the war in 1989, a plethora of titles on this regional conflict have appeared.<sup>3</sup> Some of these titles provide a broader regional narrative within the Cold War context,<sup>4</sup> while others narrowly focus on notable (or contested) battles.<sup>5</sup> Some are of the more popular variety,<sup>6</sup> while others are of the more academic type.<sup>7</sup> Some are general,<sup>8</sup> and others are more personal.<sup>9</sup> This historiographic trend has gained momentum in the last decade as “numerous authors and veterans are now (re-)treading the battlefields of Namibia and Angola”.<sup>10</sup> Deon Lamprecht’s *Die brug: Na die hel en terug in Angola* is one of these most recent additions. Lamprecht’s work falls somewhere between the popular and the personal variety. However, it is still of interest to academics, particularly, those of the ‘New Military’ vintage.

*Die brug* may remind some readers of Samuel Hynes’s work, *The soldiers’ tale*,<sup>11</sup> since Lamprecht strives to provide the ‘conscripts’ tale’, albeit in an ‘non-academic’ form. *Die brug* seeks to restore to the historical record the experiences of the thousands of white South African boys who were:

[S]tripped of their personal identity, cast in identical brown uniforms and forged with the hammer blows of instructors into a war machine ... above all it was a growing up ritual of that era – something ... [they] had to get behind before ... [they] could go on with the rest of ... [their] life.<sup>12</sup>

Lamprecht's narrative begins with their experiences at training camps, then moves on to the battlefield and finally to their return and reintegration into civilian life. To this end, Lamprecht focuses on a group of young conscripts in the 61 Mechanised Infantry Battalion (61 Mech) who served at the front between late 1987 and mid-1989. Lamprecht uses their collective reminiscences as a lens to explore the conscripts' war and post-war experiences. He illustrates these two distinct periods in the men's lives by neatly dividing his book into two parts.

The narrative begins in January 1987 as the young conscripts stand in their 'civvies' on hometown train platforms waiting in anticipation for their first great journey into the unknown. Here we meet the "Jannies and the Killiks, the Daniëls and the Mullers" who came from those places so familiar to us,<sup>13</sup> the Cederberg, Clanwilliam, Pretoria and other well-known rural towns and urban cities. They are the oldest brother of so-and-so; they were the head boy at this-or-that school. Someone you might have known. As the boys embark for Angola in November of that year, these identities stayed behind. This was a turning point in these boys' lives as they endured one battle after another over the following year. Two months after their arrival, the last remnants of their boyish pre-war individualities were finally washed away with their baptism by fire on 13 January 1988. This was the first offensive of Operation Hooper. However, they only achieved limited success in this offensive. Thus, the troops had to launch another attack on 14 February 1988 against FAPLA brigades east of the Cuito River. Despite these early offensives, they only truly met the stark realities of war later that month. The battles fought on 25 and 29 February, informally referred to as "Tumpo 1"<sup>14</sup> and "Tumpo 2"<sup>15</sup> aimed at driving FAPLA units over the Cuito River and destroying the bridge after that. The final war experience came with Operation Excite at Calueque on 27 June 1989. Fierce fighting quickly ensued. This closing chapter of the first part of the book virtually groans with death, chaos and agony. However, almost just as abruptly as events unfolded, the war ended the following day without either side seemingly able to deliver a decisive blow.

Years after the war, these ex-soldiers of 61 Mech all acquiesced that the "worst day of the war"<sup>16</sup> was at Tumpo 1. The indigestible, hellish events that transpired there remained with them through their civilian lives. The trauma of their war experience was what motivated them decades later to embark on a "journey of healing".<sup>17</sup> In 2018, these men found themselves once again at the ominous bridge in Angola.<sup>18</sup> It was this narrative, rooted in the bridge at Cuito Cuanavale, which inspired the title of Lamprecht's book.

In the second part of *Die brug*, Lamprecht attempts to dissect the inner conflict with which these ex-servicemen were still battling nearly three decades after the war. The outcome of the fighting there remains contested even today in academic, military and public memory. This controversial issue combined with the men's gutted reaction at the sight of the former battleground, marks a poignant moment in the book. Lamprecht opens to the reader a unique window into the inner struggles of these men, which have been kept in gestation intentionally for many years. The vivacity of the veterans' emotions as they came to the surface are accentuated by the graphic description of the

redesigned battlefield into a “war theme park”.<sup>19</sup> The expressive crescendo of words peaked as the realisation dawned on these ex-servicemen that the war was not over for either side. The perniciously refabricated battleground, through the repositioning of wartime artefacts, serves as a symbolic reflection of the Angolan ruling elite’s vaulting determination to inflict an apparent SADF defeat in the historical record.<sup>20</sup> Through these recollections, Lamprecht shows the importance that these men attached to their status as veterans and their self-consciousness as former national servicemen, as the dormant identities re-emerged and boiled to the surface. Despite being infused with a spirit of healing, their voracious inner conflict grew in complexity as they journeyed on, leaving them with still more unanswered questions and provocative inner tribulations.

In short, Lamprecht’s book touches on a turbulent decade in South African history and captures the temper of the times on a distant war front with varied success. Lamprecht’s battle sequence narrative deftly drops the reader in the operational area with the men of 61 Mech as they experience, all too often, the ‘fog of war’. However, either intentionally or unintentionally, Lamprecht’s garrulous mention of names during the action – also all too often – submerges the reader in a ‘fog of names’. Most of the names hold little meaning since little is known about who they were, their relationships with their compatriots or what their experiences should add to the reader’s understanding of unfolding events. The absence of character development in the first half of this book hampers any sentimental reaction that the loss of a comrade – or even a humorous anecdote – might have evoked in the reader. The absence of a list of abbreviations might also confuse and perplex a novice reader on the topic. To this can be added comparative references made to Joseph Conrad’s 1899 novella, *The heart of darkness*,<sup>21</sup> which explores issues surrounding imperialism. Lamprecht’s intention with such referrals remains unclear. Lamprecht explicitly sets out to write about a group of young conscripts in 61 Mech. However, large sections are dedicated to the ‘Burgemeester’ (regimental sergeant major [RSM]), and ‘tiffies’ (support personnel) as well as the actions of 82 Mechanised Brigade under Operation Packer. These sections are valuable since they provide context and chronology to the narrative. However, the contribution is diffuse in the absence of explicitly introducing the RSM and support personnel and placing them in the broader chronicle of events. The viscerality of these men’s lives only really becomes life-like in the second part of the book. It is only then that these men become three-dimensional and assume complex and individualised personas. Of course, a volume such as this cannot do justice to every aspect and angle of the experience of this war. While it may falter in certain areas, it makes up for such weaknesses in other areas.

Lamprecht succeeds where the book achieves a balance between both the ordinary and the extraordinary moments of war, the enduring boredom as well as the fleeting excitement. This balance allows Lamprecht to paint a textured picture of life during war. The spare and terse prose describing experiences at the front is vividly evocative of what it must have been like for these men beyond pitched battle. Lamprecht manages to juxtapose the changing terrain subtly through 61 Mech’s military advance and the passing seasons. During the initial action, the seasons changed in much the same way as the men as a result of their experiences. The soldiers complain of the sweltering heat

in the Ratels' interior in summer and the depressing cold as winter dawns. Similarly, the terrain changes from thick sand and dense vegetation to sparse shrubbery with limited cover against predatory MIGs. The narrative is further studded with memorable vignettes. One is of a young conscript stripping naked to shower in brief summer rain. Another tells of conscripts' attempts to add a pinch of homeliness by domesticating snakes and monkeys as pets, or the difficulties of 'fish-boning' in convoy to make them less likely air targets. The inclusion of informal nomenclature of military equipment, vehicles and personnel widens the window into the quotidian realities of life at the front. These range from the deliciously named 'kwêvoël' (Samil 100-truck), to 'rooi oë' (Soviet BM-21 Rocket Launchers), 'rowe' (fresh recruits), 'oumanne' (experienced soldiers), 'makkers' (comrades), 'koptiffie tent' (psychologist's tent) and 'gousblom' (echelon base). Reference is also often made to the officious "generals in Pretoria"<sup>22</sup>, emblematic of the fixed military hierarchy that too often sedated reason voiced from the lower ranks on the ground. To this is added the tedious paperwork for the obdurate military bureaucracy as well as long periods of inactivity and uncertainty since everything depended on "need to know".<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Lamprecht provides the reader with a glimpse into the dynamics of the social and cultural expressions of society at the time and the failures of the military system. When troops passed from the war front to the home front, they had to visit "The Tent",<sup>24</sup> where they saw the "head doctor".<sup>25</sup> The futility of state therapy is highlighted as the soldiers lamented, "who knows what the army will do if you talk? ... you sign a form that the army has offered you counselling and you [get out]".<sup>26</sup> After all, "they have been raised" with the dictum that "cowboys don't cry".<sup>27</sup> Unlike similar literature, the medical aspects of war are also included, ranging from outbreaks of malaria and hepatitis to medivacs.

*Die brug* is similar to similar works as it resonates with other literary compilations of personal accounts. Lamprecht's work is thus devoid of the 'top-down' experiences of prominent political or military figures and analytical discussions on a grand strategic level. As he states, "of all these things the [men of 61 Mech] ... knew little".<sup>28</sup> Unlike most histories on this war, Lamprecht's work follows a colourful, sensory 'bottom-up' approach, which adds to our understanding of what the conscripts did, what happened to them, and what changed them. More significantly, Lamprecht follows these narratives both until and after 1989. As Hynes argues, to "understand what war is like, and how it *feels*, we must turn away from history and its numbers, and seek the reality in the personal witness of the men who were there".<sup>29</sup> It is here that Lamprecht succeeds to recover these men from statistics and make a valuable contribution to the growing corpus of literature on the war. One individual that increasingly gains attention as the story unfolds is the quintessential mother of one of the fallen national servicemen. Her inclusion in the conscript's tale adds a valuable layer to the realities of war. It is especially here that Lamprecht does not try to conceal those elements that made these men ordinary. As one veteran sardonically noted, "[d]ead is dead. Fear is fear. You do not become more or less dead ..."<sup>30</sup> *Die brug* is essentially about those individuals who fought in the war, whether at the front or at home. As Lamprecht states in the arresting opening paragraph of the dedication, "[t]o all whose inner journeys continue and their loved ones who experience it. And to all who did not come home and their relatives."<sup>31</sup>

*Die brug* is not just another book on South Africa's Vietnam. Instead, it is a literary experience through the textured reality of war that leads the reader towards a succinct, crisp and sobering cathartic precipice of the conscripts' tale.

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Anri Delpont is a lecturer in the Department of Military History in the Faculty of Military Science at Stellenbosch University. This book review is dedicated to Oom Org, who would have enjoyed reading and discussing this book almost as much as he would have enjoyed reviewing it.
- <sup>2</sup> IJ van der Waag. *A military history of modern South Africa*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2015, 245–246.
- <sup>3</sup> For a historiographical overview of available literature, see A Wessels. “Half a century of South African “Border War” literature: A historiographical exploration”. *Journal of Contemporary History* 42/2. 2017. 24–47.
- <sup>4</sup> See JW Turner. *Continent ablaze: The insurgency wars in Africa 1960 to Present*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1998; VG Shubin. *The Hot “Cold War”: The USSR in southern Africa*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008; S Onslow (ed). *Cold War in southern Africa: White power; black liberation*. Oxon: Routledge, 2009.
- <sup>5</sup> See F Bridgland. *Cuito Cuanavale: 12 months of war that transformed a continent*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2007; L Scholtz. *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale*. Jonathan Ball: Johannesburg, 2020.
- <sup>6</sup> See L Scholtz. *The SADF in the Border War, 1966–1989*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2013.
- <sup>7</sup> See IJ van der Waag & AM Grundlingh (eds). *In different times: The war for southern Africa, 1969–1989*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2019; G Baines. *South Africa’s ‘Border War’: Contested narratives and conflicting memories*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015; I Liebenberg, J Risquet & V Shubin (eds). *A far-away war: Angola, 1975–1989*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2015.
- <sup>8</sup> See W Steenkamp. *South Africa’s Border War 1966–1989*. Gibraltar: Ashanti, 1989.
- <sup>9</sup> See K Stadler. *Recce: Small team missions behind enemy lines*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2015; J Geldenhuys. *A general’s story from an era of war and peace*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1995; J Geldenhuys. *Ons was daar: Weners van die oorlog om Suider-Afrika*. Pretoria: Kraal, 2011; A Soderlund & D Steyn. *Ystervuis uit die see: Uiters geheime seewaartse Recce-operasies (1978–1988)*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2018.
- <sup>10</sup> I Liebenberg, T du Plessis & G van der Westhuizen. “Review article: Through the mirage: Retracing moments of a war ‘up there’”. *Scientia Militaria* 38/2. 2010. 132.
- <sup>11</sup> SL Hynes. *The soldiers’ tale: Bearing witness to modern war*. New York, NY: Allen Lane, 2001.
- <sup>12</sup> D Lamprecht. *Die brug: Na die hel en terug in Angola*. Johannesburg: Delta Books, 2020, ix.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> J Conrad. *Heart of Darkness*. London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1899.
- <sup>22</sup> Lamprecht *op. cit.*, p. 77.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

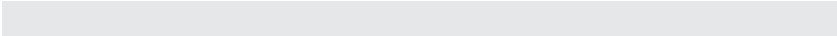


<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>29</sup> Hynes *op. cit.*, p. xii.

<sup>30</sup> Lamprecht *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. v.





## *Book Review*

# **The First Campaign Victory of the Great War: South Africa, Manoeuvre Warfare, the Afrikaner Rebellion and the German South West African Campaign, 1914-1915**

*Antonio Garcia*

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*Jean-Pierre Scherman<sup>1</sup>*  
*Stellenbosch University*

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Warwick, Warwickshire: Helion and Company

2019, 208 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1911628941

*The First Campaign Victory of the Great War: South Africa, Manoeuvre Warfare, the Afrikaner Rebellion and the German South West African Campaign, 1914-1915* covers the first foray of the Union of South Africa into battle during the First World War. While this campaign forms the backdrop to the story, it is by no means the only story being told. The author, an ex-senior officer who served in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) weaves his historical narrative through both the Union of South Africa and the German colony of South West Africa (Namibia) over a period of two years (1914–1915).

While numerous narratives have been penned describing this campaign, Garcia approached this subject from a unique perspective, namely examining the events of the campaign through the lens of manoeuvre warfare. The modern concept of manoeuvre warfare is not usually associated with the First World War and its popular impression of static warfare epitomised by kilometres of trenches. Garcia, however, successfully argues that, while manoeuvre theory as a theoretical subject only entered into mainstream military education after the conclusion of the First World War, the tenets of the theory have been around since the early days of the Chinese military theorist Sun Tzu in roughly the fifth century BC. Garcia expertly deconstructs the various elements of this complex military theory in such a manner that it becomes accessible to the general reader. Once the reader is sufficiently educated in the intricacies involved in the manoeuvre theory of warfare, he then superimposes the theory over the events of 1914–1915.

The outbreak of war in 1914 caught the fledgling Union of South Africa Defence Force (UDF) unprepared for the rigours of modern warfare. Barely two years since

its establishment in 1912, the UDF displayed both the strengths and weaknesses of the Union. The UDF, being the brainchild of Jan Smuts, was an attempt (much as the Union was) of merging two conflicting military organisations into a single military organisation. On the one hand was the British regimental system as practised in the ex-British colonies of the Cape and Natal, while on the other hand, the commando system as employed by the two Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and the South African (Transvaal) Republic.

This underlying British versus Boer antagonism provides a second layer to this narrative, with Garcia delving into the latent hostility that remained between Brit and Boer, twelve years after the conclusion of the Second Anglo Boer War (1899–1902). This underlying hostility would burst into open rebellion in 1914, with Afrikaner elements openly siding with the Germans, with whom they felt they shared a historical and cultural association. Garcia continues to elucidate the utilisation by both rebel and soldier of the tenets of manoeuvre warfare throughout the dark days of the Afrikaner Rebellion.

This system is then teased out in the subsequent chapters, where the entire South West Africa campaign is examined via this lens. From the initial disaster at Sandfontein, which saw the German *Schutztruppen* inflict a smarting defeat on the over-confident UDF, to the successful seaborne landings by the UDF at the German ports of Lüderitzbucht (Lüderitz Bay) and Walfischbucht (Walvis Bay), Garcia continues to highlight how commanders on both sides of the conflict – consciously or sub-consciously – utilised the manoeuvre approach to warfare. The final ground offensive by the UDF in the north of South West Africa is also detailed in terms of this approach.

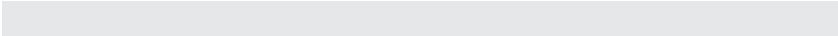
It is not only the use of manoeuvre theory on the ground that is examined. The author concludes the book with an examination of the utilisation of aerial assets, then in its infancy, and how both sides made use of their embryotic air forces in order to achieve freedom of action – a prerequisite for applying the manoeuvre theory of warfare.

While this book is based on Garcia's studies at the South African Military Academy in Saldanha – and by its very nature is academically inclined – it is by no means one of those dry facts upon facts tomes of yesteryear. This book will be found to be informative by both the modern military officer student at the Academy as well as the civilian layperson just interested in an excellent account of the German South West Africa Campaign of 1914–1915.

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Jean-Pierre Scherman joined the South African Defence Force in January 1993 and completed the Junior Leaders Program at the School of Armour. In 1995 he was commissioned as an officer in the South African Armoured Corps (SAAC). He was mentioned in dispatches for his actions during Operation Boleas in 1998, completed a deployment to Burundi in 2002, and has been a senior officer instructor at the School of Armour for 18 years (2003-2020). He holds a Master's Degree in Contemporary History (UFS), and is currently busy with his PhD in Military History at the Faculty of Military Science at Stellenbosch University.
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## *Book Review*

# **The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale: A tactical and strategic analysis**

*Leopold Scholtz*

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*Will Gordon<sup>1</sup>*

*Independent researcher*

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Johannesburg: Delta Books

2020, 280 pages

ISBN 978-1-92824-803-3

Few authors dare to take on topics relating to the so-called ‘Border War’. There are several reasons for this; indeed, the name of the conflict is, in itself, problematic and not universally accepted.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, most South African military historians agree that research into pre-1970s topics is significantly easier than later topics. This is simply because of a blanket declassification policy on all documents dated earlier than 1970. Gaining access to documents with a later date, while not impossible, is decidedly more challenging.<sup>3</sup> The Border War started, theoretically, in 1966 and in earnest in 1975, meaning that almost all documents relating to it fall in the latter category.

Leopold Scholtz, however, seems unfazed by the complications associated with Border War research. He churns out literature on the topic at quite an impressive rate.<sup>4</sup> For this alone, he deserves credit. In a global library largely devoid of academic Border War literature, scholars should welcome any new additions, even before starting their reading. Any criticism levelled at such literature should therefore be juxtaposed with the value that it adds simply by being available. If authors like Scholtz also chose the easier route and focused on earlier South African military history, serious Border War literature simply would not exist. Memoires, of course, abound, but these fill a different niche from academic studies and analyses.<sup>5</sup>

In the author’s note to his latest offering, Scholtz explains that he had originally envisaged *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale* as two books: “the role played by the town of Cuito Cuanavale in the strategic, operational and tactical planning of the SADF” followed by “a professional tactical study of six selected battles of the campaign”.<sup>6</sup> At the suggestion of his publisher, he decided to consolidate the two books into a much “chopped and changed” single volume.<sup>7</sup> This goes some way towards explaining the somewhat misleading title of the book.

The title, *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale: A tactical and strategic analysis*, seems to place the book in the realms of military strategy rather than military history. While these disciplines are, of course, interrelated, *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale* reads more like history than like strategy. Scholtz's historiography tends to be operationally focused, somewhere between the strategic and tactical focus promised by the subtitle of the book, with interspersed references to the latter two spheres. This does not detract from the value or the readability of the book, but the operational focus runs the risk of disappointing strategic or tactical purists.

As the title suggests, *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale* focuses on the series of battles that took place late in the Border War known in the SADF as Operations Modular, Hooper and Packer. Scholtz discusses the operations in a logical, chronological way. The microstructure of the book echoes the macrostructure. For the most part, each chapter starts with a summary of the SADF's planning for a particular phase of the war, then describes the events of the phase, and finally analyses those events from the perspective of both the SADF and their opponents. The book itself follows a similar pattern: it examines the reasons for the SADF entering Angola in 1987 in the first place, discusses their deployments, and analyses the battle (or rather series of battles) as a whole. All of this is interspersed with simplified discussions of military strategy, which are easily digestible, even for readers who are not necessarily students of military science. It is similarly easy to follow the development of the campaign and to put events into context. On the whole, *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale* is well written and makes for a good read.

The greatest strength of *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale* is possibly Scholtz's transparent methodology throughout the book. In addition to comprehensive referencing, he makes his approach clear in the introduction and sustains it. He acknowledges his background as a soldier in the SADF and, while critical of opposing viewpoints, consistently engages with them. Scholtz tries to adhere to his father's maxim of not becoming "victim of his own subjective feelings when he takes up the pen",<sup>8</sup> and invites readers to decide whether he succeeds. Arguments may be put forward both in favour of and against his success in this regard, but his honesty cannot be denied. This is, perhaps, best illustrated on p. 109, where he openly acknowledges that one of his suggestions in an earlier publication "now seems incorrect".<sup>9</sup>

A second invaluable contribution of *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale* can be found in Scholtz's excellent source analysis in the final chapter of the book. Although the chapter is titled "The political and academic debate", Scholtz essentially examines in this chapter the foundations on which arguments around Operations Modular, Hooper and Packer are based. Scholtz excels in his 21-page analysis of all the major contributions to the debate about the latter phase of the Border War. The chapter sets a benchmark for engaging with and challenging existing literature, while remaining cognisant of one's own limitations.

While *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale* is well worth acquiring, a review of the book would not be complete without pointing out some, admittedly rather minor, points



of criticism. Scholtz claims that his research, in contrast to almost all other existing Border War research, was focused on primary sources, mostly documents in the SANDF Documentation Centre. Early in his book, he makes the entirely believable claim that he has seen “many” documents relating to Cuito Cuanavale at the Centre.<sup>10</sup> This claim becomes quite extravagant towards the latter part of the book, where he claims, referring to archival documents relating to Operations Handbag and Prone, “I have seen them all.”<sup>11</sup> This statement will be met with disbelief by any researcher familiar with the workings of the SANDF Documentation Centre. A glance at the bibliography of the book does nothing to alleviate this disbelief – despite his claimed reliance on archival sources, Scholtz only refers to two archival groups (the JF Huyser Collection and the Chief of the SADF group, no. 4), containing 18 boxes and some 30 different files.<sup>12</sup> While this comprises considerably more information than referred to by most other Border War historiographers, it falls a long way short of “them all”. Nonetheless, Scholtz’s transparency does him credit: his referencing is complete and professional. Readers are free to analyse the basis of his arguments throughout the book and given the information to do so. This stands in stark contrast to the overwhelming majority of Border War literature.

At some points, Scholtz’s interpretation of military abbreviations may be called into question. An example of this can be found on p. 134, where he quotes an archival document, “All en[emy] def[ined] localities will be protected by mines ...” and later “... the ability to switch def[inition] direction”.<sup>13</sup> In both cases, an alternative, and more commonly used, interpretation of “def” could be “defensive”. It should be noted that Scholtz is, once again, completely transparent where he adds his own interpretation. While these interpretations do not detract from Scholtz’s argument, his proclaimed reliance on primary sources suffers somewhat when potential doubts arise over the interpretation of those sources.

The most jarring aspect of Scholtz’s writing is his rating of different battles during the campaign. From p. 180–185, Scholtz assigns marks to both the SADF and their opponents, FAPLA, based on “conventional principles of war”, for the six major battles of the campaign. While the desire to quantify the performance of the two opposing forces in order to determine a “victor” is understandable, Scholtz could have made his point – that the SADF had the upper hand during the early part of the campaign, but relinquished the initiative to FAPLA later on – through continued use of his prosaic skills. This would have seemed much less arbitrary.

*The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale* is a welcome addition to the corpus of Border War literature. Scholtz’s scientific, transparent approach to a controversial topic does him credit. The library of any serious scholar of the Border War, and even military science in general, will be enriched by Scholtz’s latest book.

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Will Gordon holds a PhD in history from Stellenbosch University. He has an interest in the Cold War in Africa, the wars for Southern Africa, and the South African involvement in the world wars. He currently teaches high school history.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. G Baines. *South Africa's 'Border War': Contested narratives and conflicting memories*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014, 1–4 for a discussion of the various names by which South Africa's involvement in Namibia and Angola has come to be known. For the purpose of this review, Scholtz's preferred term 'Border War' will be used.
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. E Kleynhans & W Gordon. "Legislative disconnect or institutional gatekeeping? Challenges of researching South Africa's military past". *Scientia Militaria* 48/1. 2020 for a discussion of the challenges of research into post-1970s topics.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf., inter alia, L Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War, 1966–1989*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2013; L Scholtz, *Ratels on the Lomba: The story of Charlie squadron*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2017.
- <sup>5</sup> For better examples of wider Border War memoirs, cf., inter alia, P Nortje. *The terrible ones: A complete history of 32 Battalion*. Cape Town: Zebra, 2012; J Geldenhuys. *We were there: Winning the war for southern Africa*. Pretoria: Kraal, 2011; A Feinstein. *Battle scarred: Hidden costs of the Border War*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2011; C Nqakula. *The people's war: Reflections of an ANC cadre*. Johannesburg: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2017.
- <sup>6</sup> L Scholtz. *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale: A tactical and strategic analysis*. Johannesburg: Delta Books, 2020, xx.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. vii–viii.
- <sup>8</sup> GD Scholtz, as cited in *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vii.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 265–266.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134. Parenthesis original.

## *Book Review*

# **South Africa and United Nations Peacekeeping Offensive Operations: Conceptual models**

*Antonio Garcia*

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Zimbabwe: Mwanaka Media and Publishing Pvt Ltd.

2018, 117 pages

ISBN: 978-0-7974-9441-1

This book review serves as reflection on Antonio Garcia's book, *South Africa and United Nations Peacekeeping Offensive Operations: Conceptual models*. The review was done from a view-point of fellow academic, senior officer and peacekeeper of the South African National Defence Force.

In his book, Garcia aims to address current and future conceptual questions about conflict and force employment of the SANDF and the United Nations (UN) Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) where peacekeeping takes an offensive role. Garcia further aims to provide a conceptual model for the SANDF's future deployments, force generation and employment in UN peacekeeping missions from an offensive perspective through the lens of the SANDF. This book explores the link between the SANDF and the UN military conceptual models for future operations with the intention of achieving greater efficiency in the conduct of operations. The topic itself is regarded as paramount in contemporary security studies as it provides a valuable foundation of understanding to scholars who endeavour to study contemporary security studies. Therefore, Garcia adds critical knowledge to the academic world as well as the officer corps of the SANDF involved in planning and preparation of forces destined for external deployment. In the introduction, Garcia makes the reader aware of to the division between civilian and military counterparts and the importance of understanding the different roles of each in order to promote greater efficiency during operations. He sets the stage by familiarising the reader with the concept of the use of force as conflict prevention within a complex modern security environment. He further makes mention of the African Renaissance as vision for African countries to pursue the responsibility to protect civilians and then leads the reader to the concept of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB). The SANDF's face change is made known, and an abridged version of the SANDF's participation in peacekeeping is provided.

At the onset of the book Garcia, answers the “How do we fight?” question by providing a conceptual model for the South African (SA) Army future deployment by focusing on the SA Army Future Deployment Strategy Concept System (SAAFDSCS). He uses the first chapter to explain two experimental model concepts of the SA Army, namely the SA Army Capstone Concept (SAACC) and the SA Army Future Operating Concept (SAAFOC). By doing so, he provides a concise description of the “ways” and “means” of “[h]ow do we fight?”. In this, he makes it clear that the MONUSCO (where the FIB is involved in offensive operations) should inform future force development and employment strategies of the SANDF. This part of the book provides a strong academic foundation to the work. He then shifts the focus to offensive operations and the importance of theory and doctrine. He states that the UN has not yet defined offensive operations and a need to describe it is paramount (p. 25). The fact that Garcia is bold enough to propose the latter serves as indication of his well-researched knowledge and expertise in the field of the contemporary African security nexus.

In the second chapter, Garcia makes several further proposals to the UN strategic and operational framework firstly, in terms of amending doctrine regarding offensive operations on all levels of peacekeeping, and secondly, to include the manoeuvre theory. He highlights that offensive operations are difficult on a tactical level and that a potential precedent may be set on a political level. Therefore, the complexity of the use of force is exacerbated. Thus, there is a need for a well-defined doctrine that should be binding to all troop contributing countries (TCCs) which is aligned to a particular theory of war and clearly defined limits and definitions of the use of force. Again, Garcia acknowledges the importance of re-aligning current doctrine to an ever-changing security environment. In doing so, he provides critical knowledge to the audience not only to “know what you have learned”, but instead also to take action in keeping abreast with changing times.

The third chapter focuses on the manoeuvre theory of war as a proposed theory. The premise of Garcia’s argument is that certain elements of war fighting and peacekeeping are synonymous more specifically, robust peacekeeping, peace enforcement and offensive operations, and that the manoeuvre theory is best suitable to the latter (p. 40). Garcia emphasises the absence of doctrine addressing the theory of war in UN offensive operations, and he makes it clear that the tactics and techniques applied in offensive operations are determined by the TCCs themselves. He identifies three methods of achieving victory through manoeuvre warfare, namely pre-emption, disruption and dislocation (p. 42). He links the latter with the different levels of war and draws the reader’s attention to the need to align doctrine on all levels in order to focus all offensive operations towards the centre of gravity of the opposing force, followed by the required operations applying doctrine and military theory. He identifies a gap in the command and control link between the UN and the TCCs and proposes a logic concept of operation (CONOPS) towards more efficient operations. In military terms, from a SANDF point of view, this logic is critical to officers in the operational area, and the value of understanding the CONOPS is unmatched in terms of the optimal allocation of resources while simultaneously addressing objectives and keeping risk in mind.

In the fourth chapter, Garcia bring to the readers' attention the importance to amend the cornerstone of UN future offensive operations and the operational concept in order to stay abreast with the asymmetric type of warfare that prevails in a complex African battle space. He emphasises the importance of addressing both the paradigm shift towards an understanding of future threats and challenges and the philosophical approach of the organisation in dealing with current and future operations. His pre-emptive mind-set is admirable and is in line with the pre-emptive principle of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). He concludes the chapter by proposing a strategic command centre to serve as link between the success of mission and the balance of resources, context, leadership and operational realities (p. 58). He also shows a well-developed sense of tactical thinking by proposing the development of an operational command centre linked to the G3 component of the UN, comprising of staff belonging to the TCCs. By doing so, he predicts a more efficient approach to future operations, again displaying a pre-active instead of a reactive mind-set.

In the fifth chapter, Garcia deliberately challenges the traditional thinking of war by focusing on the manoeuvre theory and concepts captured in the Staff Officers Operational Manual (SOOM). His audience is captured by rethinking concepts such as levels of war, theories of war, maxims, centre of gravity, and surprise. He draws parallels and asks academic questions and makes valid proposals for future studies. This chapter resembles an inspiration to academics and officers to rethink historical warfare and reflecting on its applicability on contemporary and future offensive operations during peacekeeping. Actual further studies along these proposed lines would certainly be worth-while pursuing.

The sixth chapter gives an abridged, but concise impression of realities during offensive operations during peacekeeping. Throughout his career, Garcia deployed as combat engineer commander in several internal deployments on the South African, Botswana and Zimbabwean borders. Furthermore, he served as MONUSCO brigade military staff officer and as combat engineer troop commander during the United Nations African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), Sudan. It is clear that this exposure to external deployments shaped his thinking in peacekeeping operations from both a sharp-end perspective as well as a blunt-end perspective. Garcia's perspective on specifically explosive ordnance and clearance of mines in war-torn countries, such as the DRC, is in line with the SANDF policy on Joint Warfare Procedures. However, he acknowledges and even challenges the potential importance of acting more decisively in this particular aspect of PSOs and makes valid policy suggestions in this regard. This part of his writing is important for military decision-makers and, if implemented, might add value to academia in future studies and mission outcomes for PSOs in Africa and elsewhere in the world. He elaborates on the importance of including aspects neglected in current doctrine, such as unexploded ordnance (UXOs), explosive remnants of war (ERWs) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Further aspects referred to are the realities faced by deployed peacekeepers, a proposed FIB air cavalry and the concept of "the strategic Corporal" (p. 87). It is clear that his experience in the mission area inspired these ideas. As former peacekeeper and FIB company commander, I can safely attest that his proposals are well founded and should be pursued.

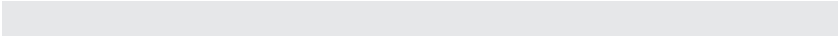
In his book, Garcia does not provide graphic content other than one figure that illustrate the levels of peacekeeping, and one table illustrating the SAACC. Keeping the topic in perspective, it would have been informative, especially to the military audience, if other content, such as maps and pictures, had been included especially to illustrate factors, such as terrain, time and space and specific localities to which he refers in many cases. Furthermore, considering his background as combat engineer, the SANDF's engineer capabilities, and the North Kivu province in Eastern DRC being the Great Lakes region, it was expected that Garcia would have dedicated some part of the book to the potential strategic importance of hydrography during future offensive operations.

Overall, Garcia produced an academic contribution that challenges historical thinking about warfare and inspires a new perspective around the thinking of contemporary and future offensive operations during peacekeeping on the African battle space. His work supports several proposals where regional and international organisations should also pay attention in order to stay abreast of the ever-changing security environment of the twenty-first century.

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## ENDNOTES

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## *Book Review*

# **Cuba and Revolutionary Latin America: An Oral History**

*Dirk Kruijt*

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London: Zed Books

2017, 252 pages

ISBN: 978-1-78360-802-7 Paperback

During the so-called Cold War days, many believed, and some still do, that Cuba and its people were simply a mindless lapdog of the Soviet Union. In an era of intense myopia, deep critical and historical analysis frequently goes awry. A pervasive context of groupthink leaves little space for other interpretations. The issue around Cuba is far more complex, and the work discussed here, provides some new perspective on times gone by and current developments.

This publication by Dirk Kruijt<sup>2</sup>, renowned Latin American specialist, deals with Cuba and its political activities in Latin America since 1959 and up to 2017. The work stands squarely in the qualitative research tradition. The data collected in the field is substantially backed up by archival research. This research project was executed over a number of years.

Kruijt attempts to bring the experience of the Cuban people and their leadership's thinking and action at home and abroad, up close and personal. In this sense, the work tries to provide the proverbial 'slice of life' as it is known in qualitative research. In qualitative research, the researcher him- or herself becomes but another tool of the research process, and Kruijt does not claim to have a 'God's-eye view' or to be 'objective'. He is far too experienced to do so. He tells the story of archives and oral history of a people. This book traces the work and influence of Cuba's revolutionary generations in Latin America and the Caribbean between 1959 and into the twenty-first century. It is the first systematic qualitative research project published on the internationalisation of the Cuban Revolution in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The book is based on a set of 90 interviews with Cuban veterans and state officials, including those involved in foreign affairs and external deployments. Interviews, diaries, testimonial publications and solicited as well as unsolicited materials, documents and notebooks add to the extensive collage. Thorough consultation of Cuban archives adds strength to the text.

Two primary sets of interviews were used. The first set consisted of 30 interviews with Cuban international combatants of all ranks covering the years 1952 to 1962. Most of these interviews focused on the home front in Cuba and the Cuban revolution itself. These life stories and testimonials formed an important first step on which to expand during the second round of interviews. The first set of interviews was conducted between March and October 2011. The second cycle of interviews followed between November 2011 and March 2013 (with some further interviews a few years later). The second cycle of interviews focused on the role of Cuba in Latin America in terms of support for revolutionary movements and facilitation of workable relations between divided – even antagonistic – revolutionary movements. The 24 interviews during the second cycle were mostly held with persons who worked in the Cuban Departamento América dedicated to work in Latin America (p. 5). These interviews were complemented with earlier interviews, which Kruijt conducted elsewhere in the course of his other research projects in Latin America since 1985. The supplementary materials in the form of field notes, notes and transcriptions of earlier interviews add value to the final product. Interviews in this category were conducted in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Kruijt describes his qualitative methodology, the research setting and treatment of interviews in detail (pp. 3–6).

In typical ‘rich description’, a variety of issues are addressed, in this case, previous Cuban and Latin American colonial experiences, foreign interventions in Latin American politics, Cuban (revolutionary) politics, economic transformation, cultural values, political challenges and choices as well as consistent attempts by Cuba to maintain its national identity and its chosen socialist economic pathway. Issues of external threats, counter-measures to deal with such threats and Cuba’s involvement outside the island in Latin America enrich a remarkable historical, socio-economic and communal publication.

In this regard, some comparative elements enter the picture and provide for rich settings, as qualitative researchers refer to the areas and people within a selected living space and time.

Seven chapters tell the story.

Chapter 1, in dealing with the background to the study, its rationale and methodology, shares useful information. Chapter 2 introduces the legacy and consequences of colonialism in Latin American and, more specifically, Cuba. As part of the broader collage, references are made to Western colonialism in Africa and the global South. Links between Cuba and the rest of Latin America and the Latin American struggles for

independence from the Spanish and North American aggressors long before the so-called Cold War are discussed. This is most helpful in providing a fuller historical picture than the myopic Cold War interpretation with which many Western academics and military staff grew up and then shared their views with willing listeners. The work enlightens one about Spanish and United States (US) colonialism and hegemonic aspirations from early on (for this part, a thorough archival and literature study was used in tandem). The Latin American and Cuban wars for independence led by the poet, politician, journalist and soldier, José Martí, which started in 1895, are justifiably referred to.

Cuba's liberation struggle cascaded into US intervention during the Spanish–American War. Between 1898 and 1902, Cuba was subjected to US occupation (the peace agreement between Spain and the United States excluded the Cubans). It is less well known that the use of concentration camps by the Spanish and the United States led to thousands of Cuban deaths. Interestingly, at the same time, German colonisers under their Kaiser did the same in terms of Herero and Nama people in what is now Namibia, with the German actions coinciding with the genocide of the Herero people (1903–1904). At the same time, during the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), the British Imperial forces in South Africa extensively used concentration camps holding white and black civilians to break the resilience of the guerrillas in the field. Historically, such mentalities of superiority led to large-scale and brutal transgressions of human rights (one may be forgiven for reflecting upon the notion of a triangle of evil at the time, namely Washington, London and Berlin). The experience of social dislocation and enforced concentration camps was – just as in Namibia and South Africa – to remain in the collective memory of the Cuban people: a remembrance not forgotten and part of the social psyche of the Cuban people and others that experienced the same.

In 1933, Fulgencio Batista, with US backing, came to power following a coup in Cuba. An era of extreme corruption and exploitation followed until Batista was forced to flee before the forces of Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos and others (1959). The chapter briefly touches on the debilitating sanctions imposed on Cuba by the United States as regional and global hegemon, ill at ease with the strong-willed, non-pliant small nation in its proverbial backyard. Through the interviews, more light is shed on US political interventions to influence or sanction (or topple at whim) governments in Latin America that were not pliant enough for the liking of the political masters in Washington. Fast forward, and we see Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. On a contemporary side-note: if Trump had remained president of the United States, quite a few other countries were to see aggressive military enforced regime changes imposed from afar, such as Iran and North Korea. But then, Biden might be a Barack Obama and agree to topple others, such as Obama did in Libya during 2011. Given the deeply divided American society and an imploding economy, turbo-charged by a massive arms industry, quite a few things can still happen.

Argentina declared its independence in 1816, Brazil in 1889 and Chile in 1818. In the latter case, the United States later engineered, among others, a coup against Salvador Allende, which brought the pro-US President Augusto Pinochet to power, a dictator who oversaw mass human rights abuses and led a dirty war (*guerra sucia*) against his

own people. During his rule, more than 30 000 ‘enemies’ of the state disappeared, never to be seen again.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter 3 provides a portrait of the rise of what Kruijt refers to as the “revolutionary generation” (pp. 43 ff.). This era marked a move away from insurgency towards socialist thinking (pp. 43 ff.). Chapter 4 relates to Cuban involvement with other liberation and revolutionary movements on the continent of Latin America. Chapters 5 and 6 trace the complexities of Cuban involvement on a spectrum from revolutionary support to mediation between liberation movements and attempts to resolve conflict amidst internal civil strife in some Latin American countries, such as Colombia.

Not so well known are the attempts by Cuba to moderate violence and to achieve peaceful settlements and negotiated resolutions to Latin American conflicts at various stages, especially during the late 1980s and 1990s. In the frenzy of the US media attacks on Cuba since 1959, Cuban attempts to stabilise (or at least pointing out the benefits of peace after civil wars), was ignored by those suffering from the north-western bound gaze. Such Cuban diplomatic efforts, as regional peacemaker, did not fit at the time and for many, still do not fit today and hence were not reported upon in Anglo-American and Euro media. Little of this history is known outside Latin America. Chapter 6 discusses in detail Cuban soft power before and after 1990 up to today. In the concluding chapter, Chapter 7, the legacy of Cuba’s involvement on the Latin-American continent is related (pp. 200 ff.).

As part of informing the reader, Kruijt spends time sharing how the Cuban revolution influenced cultural expressions and lifestyle changes, emerging and evolving cultural role models and changes in education as well as changes in family and gender relations (p. 42). Kruijt – making use of the interviews – creatively links childhood socialisation and historical memory in Cuba to the changes in values towards a socialist society and the political concretisation of a new society.

Kruijt then turns to revolutionary movements, the convictions and world views of the leaders and participants and how they today, years later, reflect on their past. The regime change in 1959 and its internal and external outcomes are outlined. Through this series of interviews with people from high to low ranks in the political and economic life of Cuba, the work brings one close to human experiences of a society in an attempted fundamental social transformation. Some insights gained from Kruijt’s data contradict the stereotype in the United States and other Western media that all Cubans revolutionaries were socialist, Marxist or Leninist:

“I became a revolutionary doing it, without being communist, without being socialist, without such ideas, [only by] doing so, making a revolution, to transform our society, to make it better, more just, more human, more equal” (Angela Elvira Diaz Vallina, research participant, p. 63). Partly because of such attitudes, the Cuban socialist experiment was different in content and quality from others, i.e. Marxism–Leninism, Stalinism or Maoism – indeed, it was a socialism of a different kind. Cuban cultural values were simply different and the notion of revolution was moulded largely by national and cultural values.

By now and more so after the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) fiasco, relationships with the United States froze and Cuba and the Soviet Union developed closer ties (p. 63). Following a previous more or less successful attempt by the United States to topple the government of Abenz in Guatemala (1954), a similar exercise was planned for Cuba. The attempt to topple the Castro government failed resulting in an embarrassment for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the US political leadership. The incident became the laughing stock of the 'Third World' and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). One reason for failure was the myopic politico-military 'groupthink' by US leadership (groupthink: a term coined by Irving Janis [1972] where decision-makers decide uncritically within a close circle on action, unable to listen to others and ignoring evidence contrarily to their thinking. A short reflection by the reviewer here: Apartheid as a socio-political experiment (social engineering) and the militarisation of state and society after 1970, also demonstrated the pervasive phenomenon of groupthink).

Groupthink among US strategists was but one reason for this spectacular failure. Firstly, the CIA security measures, while they were training the rebel-invading force in Guatemala and Nicaragua, were poor, and information about the place of landing and numbers of American-backed forces was well known to Cuban intelligence services beforehand (p. 68). Secondly, Cubans were far from dissatisfied with the leadership of Castro while the US decision-makers convinced themselves that Castro was unpopular (again groupthink) while the opposite was true.

The freezing of relations between the United States and the comprehensive sanctions imposed on Cuba brought the Cuban government and the Soviet Union closer to each other, Kruijt argues. Views about the closer Cuban–Soviet relations differed. In Kruijt's study, some research participants observed (some somewhat wryly) that the Partido Socialista Popular (Popular Socialist Party of Cuba) "never broke its allegiance to Moscow, [but] Moscow never backed Cuba's support for revolutionary movements abroad, regarding such efforts as adventurism" (p. 64).

The Cuban missile crisis followed. The crisis worsened US–Cuban relations and brought about sanctions against Cuba aiming at crippling the Cuban economy and, per incidence, trying to prove that Cuban socialism was a failure.

By this time, the Cuban Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) had grown to between 470 000 and 510 000 men and women. At the time, it was the largest military force in Latin America and bigger than (comparable) countries anywhere in the world (p. 125). Today, the Cuban Veteran's Association (Asociación de *Combatientes* de la Revolución de Cuba) or ACRC established in 1993, has 330 000 members (p. 77).

From the interviews conducted, Kruijt argues, "the impact of the Cuban Revolution on the Latin American armed left was immense. In nearly all Latin American countries guerrilla movements emerged ... (most of them, if not all) drawing inspiration from the Cuban insurgency against dictator Batista". One exception was the Peruvian (Maoist) Shining Path guerrilla leadership (p. 79). Cuban instructors were supplied, but never exceeded more than 20 staff (pp. 79 ff.). The value of such deployments was not always

positive, and critical reflection about lessons learnt was frequently necessary. In some cases, the Cuban presence meant facilitating communication between groups at odds with each other; in other cases, it necessitated mediating conflict and the creation by Cuban-deployed platforms of interaction in close consultation with Havana (Chapter 4).

One of the themes that kept recurring in the interviews was that Cuba was not unwilling to play a pivotal role in solidarity with others in the Latin American struggle. The *Second declaration of Havana* (1962) suggests that revolution cannot be exported, but is made by people and that Cuba provided an example of revolutionary commitment and moral support (p. 82). Cuba also held the First Tri-continental Conference, a solidarity meeting between Asians, Africans and Latin America (1966). At the occasion, members from 82 countries, including Latin America, were present (p. 82). The meeting resolved, “in the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism people had the inalienable right to complete independence and to resort to all forms of struggles including armed struggles to achieve this” (p. 82). In this regard, the old debate on the Cold War creeps up: was the so-called ‘Cold War’ a rationale to expand interests or was it the result of actions by people or communities to rid themselves of colonial oppression and its later variants?

Based on his extensive interviews, Kruijt argues that cooperation with Africa was established with African liberation movements through the Directorate of Intelligence. For contact with Latin American movements, the Departamento America was established (p. 84). This was led by Manuel Losada. The Ministerio del Interior (MININT) or Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (MINREX) or Ministry of Foreign Affairs also worked closely together when so required. Kruijt harvesting data from the interviews, discusses this in detail in Chapters 3 to 5.

The interviews hint at the experiences of those who did duty in other Latin American countries. A quote illustrates, “all our missions were risks, we were always observed by American special services in the countries where we operated” (p. 88).

The Cuban security and intelligence services had to find their way between ideological disparities, splits and divergences in, for example, Salvador, Guatemala, Columbia, Nicaragua and Venezuela. As one Latin American revolutionary participant in an earlier interview shared with Kruijt, “[w]e were Marxist–Leninists versus Marxist–Leninists–Maoists or socialisms based on different assumptions” (p. 98). Some of these interpretations followed a Guevara angle. It is well known that Che Guevara was sceptical about socialist models from the North – or for that matter from the East – when it came to application in Latin America and Cuba Kruijt mentions various people who were involved in finding their way through such a fog of clashing opinions and yet willing to assist in the “struggle” (pp. 86 ff.).

Research participants shared with Kruijt that, when they came to government in 1959, they knew little about intelligence and counter-intelligence and had to start from scratch, educating each other and learning through trial and error. Interestingly Lattel, a CIA officer at the Latin American desk during 1964, remarked that by the 1990s, he

considered Cuban intelligence to be “one of the five or six best such organisations in the world and has so been for decades” (p.91). Cuban operators infiltrated deeply into the anti-Castro Miami organisations and even the CIA (pp. 98–99). By doing so, numerous assassination plots aimed at Fidel Castro were uncovered (some sources suggest that there were at least 300 such failed attempts, but this may be exaggerated). Numerous attempts to export sabotage to Cuba were discovered timely and prevented.

The role of the church in Latin America is less known to academics and laymen outside the Spanish-speaking world and is worth mentioning. In Latin America, the church played an important role in the struggle for justice and equality. This did not prevent the US-backed military juntas in Argentina and Chile murdering hundreds of priests and church workers (something about which the United States and Western media stayed mum). In Chile alone, the number of ‘disappeared’ was more than 30 000. The role of church leaders in these times of resistance during the 1970s should not be underestimated. Frequently, church leaders took on the struggle against capitalist exploitation and political oppression. Among others, Kruijt refers to the role of the Movimiento Estudiantil Cristiano (MEC) in Cuba and elsewhere initiated by Camilo Torres (p. 129). The journal *Christianismo y Revolucion* was widely read (at great personal risk) throughout Latin America (p. 141). “We are not anybody’s backyard and definitely not for sale”, one bishop remarked (p. 155).

The Theology of Liberation became influential in Latin America. Liberation theologians emphasised the “moral relationship between religious ethics and political activism for the benefit of the poor, the exploited and the victims of persecution and injustice” (p. 128). Camilo Torres and many other theologians and church workers were to die in Latin America following this radical calling (interestingly enough, liberation theology in Latin America deeply influenced the [black] theology of liberation in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s).

Kruijt rightly observes that in Latin America, there was a strong intellectual (and activist) nexus between liberation theology, dependency theory, Marxist sociology and philosophy (p. 129). In Cuba, the theological works of Camilo Torres, Jose Bonino and Gustavo Gutierrez were well known and read (pp. 129 ff.).<sup>4</sup> And; by many in South Africa together with South African liberation theologians.

Propaganda campaigns against Cuba stereotyped (and even today stereotype) Cuban socialism and its followers as Marxist–Leninist. Another picture emerged through the interviews. Many participants reported that they also read Western (European) Marxists, such as Herbert Marcuse, an influential neo-Marxist. Especially his work, *The one-dimensional man*, was popular (p. 131). Just as widely read was Marcuse’s work *Eros and civilization* (p. 131). Various research participants suggested that Castro was never a dogmatic subscriber to Soviet politics. They argued (perhaps in reflection?) that he applied pragmatically what was useful and disregarded what was not useful in the Cuban context (pp. 127–128).

Chapter 6 is perhaps the most interesting chapter in this book. Kruijt focuses on the years of soft power and Cuba's role in facilitating peace in the neighbourhood. The major role that Cuba played in enhancing negotiated settlements in Guatemala and Columbia is discussed (pp. 207 ff.). Cuba's role in providing medical training in Latin America from early on, but especially during the 1990s and 2000s and the phenomenon of 'health tourism' (people from Latin America, Europe and the East visiting Cuba for medical treatment), are referred to in brief. This comes as no surprise as it is well known that Cuba's medical training standards are high, and research in the field of medicine internationally, cutting edge. In 1998, Fidel Castro advanced the idea of a medical school for Latin Americans. In 1999, this facility, the *Escuela Latinoamericana de Ciencias Médicas* (ELAM) was opened (p. 190). Perhaps for this reason, many people still become angry about Cuban medical contributions. Could it be jealousy, one wonders. The same criticism is seldom levelled at Western medical personnel serving in other countries.

Kruijt's work also refers to the renewed attempts by the United States during the 1990s to put Cuba under pressure through increased sanctions. The Torricelli Bill of 1992, for example, imposed even harsher sanctions. Nothing new here since 1959.

According to the research participants, after relative economic prosperity during the 1970s and 1980s, the 'special period' during the 1990s was economically stressful. More countries were abandoning their policies of economic sanctions against Cuba since the 2000s, seeing it as unnecessary, short-sighted and harmful; yet, the 1990s saw serious economic challenges (this period is frequently referred to by Cubans as 'the special period').

For a short period under Barack Obama, it looked as if some détente between Cuba and the United States would open up. Obama, seriously hampered by hawks such as Hillary Clinton, however, could not move beyond symbolic politics (reviewers' opinion). If there was a gap for Obama later on to better relations, the possibility was destroyed when the volatile and unpredictable Donald Trump was elected as president. What will happen after Trump, recently defeated, but not less verbal, remains an open question.

Kruijt concludes that left and centre-left governments in Latin America are part of the heritage of the Cuban Revolution, but that does not mean any staying power or future political developments will guarantee this. In the view of the reviewer, the rise of a far-right political leader in Brazil is but one example that the 'Left' may not have the staying power, which on the other side does not mean that the so-called 'Left' in Latin-America will disappear as a phenomenon or historical agent. Recent US covert activity as late as November 2020 related to engineered regime change in Latin America is one example. Will Biden handle it better? Or will it be more of the same?

This work by Kruijt is an example of a thorough qualitative study. Rather than generalisability or external validity, qualitative researchers refer to internal reliability. The author succeeded to let the participants speak from their world of experience, rather



than himself. At heart, this is what qualitative research is about. The book is worth reading for social and historical reasons as well as for being a model of how to conduct an extensive qualitative research process (longitudinal qualitative study) in history. In reading this work, many may differ, because the world around us is, as we know, a constructed reality. For those interested in fresher views on Latin America, this is without doubt a work to read and share with peers and students.

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- <sup>3</sup> Various sources quoted in I Liebenberg. "Truth and reconciliation processes and civil-military relations: A qualitative exploration". PhD dissertation. Stellenbosch University, 2008; consult pp. 156, 184, 202 ff., 208 ff., 215, 352 ff.
- <sup>4</sup> JM Bonino's one work (1975) was titled *Doing theology in a revolutionary situation*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press and was widely available in Spanish. The work by C Torres was likewise widely published (although not always welcome and frequently banned). In Chile, having a copy almost certainly led to arrest and torture. Torres's work makes for interesting reading for those interested in grounded theology. The title of the German translation is C Torres. *Revolution als Aufgabe des Christen*. Munich: Kaiser Grunewald, 1981. English free translation: *Revolution as a Christian duty or imperative*.

# NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

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# **South African Journal of Military Studies**

Volume 48 | Number 2 | 2020

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