

## From the editors

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Numerous challenges confront armed forces at present, and in a complex world, they need to understand the nature of these challenges. The challenges are in many cases related either to threats emanating from the foreign policy environment or to vulnerabilities from the domestic political environment. The understanding of the nature of these threats is a key factor in helping armed forces to organise, equip and train themselves in order to deal with these issues. Most of the debates about armed force and the use thereof, thus, focus on understanding what ought to be done and how it should be done. Linking these two questions to the availability of resources and the defence budget in particular, is the concentrated essence of military science and strategy. The articles in this edition of *Scientia Militaria* – South African Journal of Military Studies reflect the need for armed forces to understand what ought to be done and how it should be done. In addition, it touches on the effect of these two factors on the institutional nature of armed forces.

The first article by Martijn Kitzen on the ambiguous reality that confronts Western-cultured armed forces in the execution of counterinsurgency operations highlights both the difficulty armed forces face in understanding the nature of a particular threat and the challenge of dealing with it. In reading the article, one is reminded of one the most important ideas of the German military philosopher, Carl von Clausewitz. Clausewitz noted, "... the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish ... the kind of war on which they are embarking."<sup>1</sup> The problem for Western-oriented armed forces, Kitzen argues, is that even though they may be able to correctly identify and even understand the unconventional nature of insurgency, they are culturally predispositioned to act in a conventional manner. Thus, culturally, Western armed forces are set to fight small wars badly.

This cultural predisposition of conventionally minded forces was also demonstrated in the conflicts in Rhodesia between 1893 and 1897. Most of these conflicts were of an asymmetrical and unconventional nature – typically small wars. In his article, Gustav Hendrich focuses on the uneasy relationships and devastating wars between the British colonial government and Matabele and Mashona tribal groups and, more specifically, the role of Afrikaner settlers in these wars. Though subjugated to British colonial authority, the Afrikaner minority were regarded by the native blacks as collaborators in maintaining white military and political power in

Rhodesia. The Afrikaner Volunteer Corps was established as a conventional military unit to provide the Rhodesian colonial government with additional fighting power and to provide substantial support in, at least, two decisive conventionally oriented battles. On reflection, Hendrich's article demonstrates that the linkage between culture and asymmetric wars is not new, and that in ever-changing social conditions, challenges crop up continuously for those caught up in war.

The article by Evert Jordaan on the development of a special operations capability for the South African military is typical of the debate within armed forces concerning the capabilities that ought to be developed to deal with small wars. More specifically, most armed forces developed so-called Special Operations Forces to help them, firstly, to react quickly in case of an emergency and, secondly, to deal with exceptional challenging scenarios that are mostly related to small wars; thus, the need for "... highly trained and rapid deployable forces to deal with asymmetric threats". Jordaan's argument is rooted, on the one hand, in the need for a balanced airborne special operations capability and, on the other hand, the requirement for changes in training and doctrine in the establishment of such a capability for the SA military. At a time when South Africa is conducting a second defence review process, such issues are worth considering.

Using the military in domestic crime prevention operations is closely linked to the notion of military success in unconventional operations and the use of special operations capabilities. Crime is a typical internal vulnerability with which states have to deal. Since democratisation in 1994, South Africa has been experiencing exceptional high levels of crime, the causes of which are multi-layered and complex. How to deal with these high levels of crime have over time developed into a very emotive and politically laden question. The debate on whether the South African military should be used in the fight against crime and how it should be used is important for both the military and society at large. In their article, Moses Montesh and Vinesh Basdeo reflect on the often-overlooked role of the South African military in precipitating and sustaining law enforcement in society.

Of course, deploying the military in these unusual environments necessitates a unique kind of leadership from within the military. More specifically, for the military to deploy within their own country and its own people necessitates a strong emphasis on character-driven leadership. This is the kind of leadership model that is proposed by Willem Erasmus and Frederick Uys in their article on an alternative leadership model for the SANDF.

The character of the soldier – be it in deployment for war or in the complex environment of peacemaking – underpins the demands that are placed on military leaders in the sustainment of high levels of deployment. Yet, it is not always a guarantee against stress. The high rate of suicides among soldiers that are deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq testifies to this. In their article, Rene Koopman and Gielie van Dyk provide an exposition of the challenge of suicide behaviour that confronts many militaries around the world. The authors emphasise the need for knowledge and skills to better understand suicidal behaviour in the South African military. The emphasis in the article is on the nature of the operational environment, high-risk factors, and the prevention and proper management of suicide.

The editors

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Clausewitz, C, *On War*, ed and trans by Howard, M and Paret, P. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976, 89.