

TEN YEARS OF DEMOCRACY AND THE RETURN OF BAD TIMES: STUDYING SECURITY, STRATEGIC AND MILITARY AFFAIRS IN SOUTH AFRICA¹

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1. INTRODUCTION

The first decade of democracy in South Africa was relatively peaceful. Like most new democracies, there was a vast array of problems that the first democratic government had to deal with. Very few, if any, of these problems were military in nature. South Africa did not face any significant traditional direct threat from either the international or domestic environment. Political, security and strategic thought and approaches tended to be idealistic in nature. There was a deliberate effort to steer away from a more competitive, realistic and nationalistic outlook on domestic and international security affairs. Such an approach was understandable given apartheid-South Africa's history of securitisation and militarisation of society and the destructive role of the apartheid government's security forces in the region. The military in the New South Africa had to be restored to its rightful place in society. This required the simultaneous implementation of two seemingly diverging notions. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) had to become less prominent in policy-making and societal processes, while, at the same time, its legitimacy within the South African society had to be restored. This was difficult as the former South African Defence Force (SADF) had featured prominently in the implementation of the policy of apartheid.

A vast number of policy documents were produced outlining the government's approach in dealing with security and military affairs. Most noticeable are the White Papers on Defence, Defence Related Industries in South Africa, and South African participation in international peace missions. Most of these documents were underpinned by the ideas of non-offensive defence or non-threatening de-

¹ This article is an edited version of a paper presented at the South African Sociological Association's Congress in Bloemfontein, 27-30 June 2004. The theme of the congress was "10 years into democracy: Challenges facing South Africa".

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fence.³ The controversy surrounding the government's decision to buy a variety of conventional weapon systems to upgrade the defence force's current inventory is understandable in view of the government's general (idealistic) approach towards security and the underlying (non-offensive and non-threatening) notions of the most important policy documents on security.

Two implicit assumptions however supported the decision by the South African Government on the new strategic weapons package.⁴ The first is a recognition by government that irrespective of South Africa's very idealistic policy outlook on peace and security, "bad times will always return".⁵ Even peace has to be secured. There are rare occasions when force, and only force, can satisfy the security needs of a nation. Force from this perspective is like an air bag in your car - generally unneeded but life-preserving on that one day in a thousand when the peril is truly acute.⁶ In Africa this is an especially important conception not always understood.⁷ The second assumption is recognition of the importance of understanding, articulating and debating the complexities of security, strategic, defence and military affairs in a democratic society. Underlying this notion is the importance of a public discourse on security guided by informed assumptions. In any democratic society - new ones in particular - both strategic and security scholars and practitioners have especially important roles to play in this regard.

Both these notions are imbedded in the availability of academic knowledge of security, strategic and military affairs, especially in the new democracies of the developing world. The availability of academic knowledge in these domains depends on research and the teaching that is done in this regard at tertiary institutions. The article therefore aims at outlining the importance of education in strategic and military affairs for new democratic countries and their armed forces in particular. The discussion is done with specific reference to South Africa and the SANDF. An effort is made to draw a clear distinction between strategic-military knowledge acquired through education and military technical skills acquired through military training. Arguments on why it is important to educate security practitioners - specifically the armed forces - in strategic and military affairs are provided. The

³ E Jordaan, "South African defence since 1994: Practising what we do not preach". Paper presented at the **4th War and Society in Africa Conference** presented at the South African Military Academy, Saldanha, 4-6 September 2003.

⁴ For an in-depth discussion on the nature of the strategic defence package see D Botha, "Offsetting the costs of SA's strategic defence package", **ISS Paper 75**, July 2003.

⁵ CS Gray, "Villains, victims, and sheriffs: Strategic studies and the security for an interwar period", **Comparative Strategy**, Vol. 13, p. 360.

⁶ **Ibid**, p. 354.

⁷ Bjorn Moller from the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) in an address to students at the South African Military Academy on 15 April 2003, for example, made an explicit remark about the unavailability of and failure to use professional military forces in Africa.

reasons why it is difficult to educate the armed forces in these matters are also touched upon. The article concludes with an overview of education in strategic and military affairs in the SANDF. In the context of this article strategic affairs refer to the use of force for security reasons in a democratic society. Military affairs concern the specific role of the military in the provision of security. The notion 'strategists' and 'officers' are thus used interchangeably to reflect this intertwined understanding of strategic and military affairs.

2. THE NEED FOR THE STUDY OF STRATEGIC AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

It is a known fact that precisely defining and responding to change can determine life and death for any organisation. In the case of the armed forces, this may affect the continued existence of a nation as a whole. Consequently, how defence forces in particular define, prepare for and respond to change is of fundamental importance. Over the last decade or more change in defence forces and the use of force have been elevated to the level of a so-called 'revolution in military affairs'.⁸ Education is only one of the fundamental tools available to armed forces for the definition of, preparation for and response to change. Education therefore underpins a defence force's attitude towards a changing internal and external environment in general and the revolution in military affairs in particular. The rapidity and global nature of today's change, coupled with new military technologies, therefore, necessitate a strong emphasis on education if a particular armed force like the SANDF wants to be an important national, regional and global actor.

RK Betts⁹ highlights four particular reasons why nations in general and armed forces in particular can never neglect the study of strategic and military affairs. Firstly, the possibility that conflict or the threat of conflict will appear on the horizon again is always very likely. According to Betts, this reason alone fully justifies 'keeping the flame burning'. CS Gray¹⁰ argues along this same line when he emphasises two particular points: "bad times will always return" and "there will always be thugs out there". It is according to Gray not fashionable to emphasise this particular matter, but its political incorrectness renders it unusually important. There is thus a need to have knowledge and expertise available in case conflict breaks out again. Obviously, this need for the availability of knowledge is strengthened by an understanding of the constantly evolving nature of military and

⁸ PF Hauser et al., "Lesson from the Kriegsakademie: A reflection of the present? A road map for the future?", *Airpower Journal*, Special Edition 1996, p. 59.

⁹ RK Betts, "Should strategic studies survive?", *World Politics*, Vol. 50, October 1997, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ CS Gray, "Villains, victims, and sheriffs...", p. 360.

strategic doctrine based on changes in technology, political doctrine, geopolitics, and anything else that might affect the employment of force.

Education encapsulates this ability to evolve with change. Consequently, Hauser, Orndorff and Rawls¹¹ argue that militaries need to study the use of force in the context of the social, political, economic, technological, and moral factors that influence military institutions and operations. In this particular argument, the need to cope with the ever-present threat of conflict and to minimise the likelihood and severity of international violence form the bedrock of strategic and military knowledge. With the acceptance of war and violence as constant features of the international system, this is a very realistic outlook on the need for knowledge on strategic and military affairs.¹²

Secondly, Betts highlights the need for knowledge about the role of military forces in non-traditional scenarios. It is not always clear what the role of the military should be in such scenarios. This is becoming increasingly more important in an era emphasising the use of military forces, not to create peace, but to keep the peace that has already been created. This also holds true for South Africa where we have noticed a debate concerning the so-called primary and secondary roles of the SANDF over the last decade.¹³ As Betts explains within the context of the USA, "confusion continues about what U.S. foreign policy should expect military power to do for less vital interests". With an increasing emphasis on the co-lateral utility of military forces¹⁴ there is also a growing need for knowledge about these activities and of the environments within which force will be utilised in this regard.

This argument accepts that military power will always have a crucial role to play in the security of states be that in the role of deterrence or the management of peace. The role of the military from this perspective is seen as being constructive - to contribute to peace and security and not as a replacement for peace and security. Strategic and military knowledge that flows from this places the emphasis on how military power should prevent conflict in the international system. This view of strategic and military affairs is based on the quest for knowledge on how military power can be used in a positive responsible manner. In the recent past it has been associated with ideas like non-offensive defence and non-threatening defence,

¹¹ Hauser et al., p. 61.

¹² J Baylis et al., **Strategy in the contemporary world: An introduction to strategic studies**, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002), pp. 6-7 provides an overview of the realistic philosophical assumptions of strategic studies.

¹³ See for example: R Williams, "How primary is the primary function?: Configuring the SANDF for African realities", **African Security Review**, Vol. 8, No. 6, 1999.

¹⁴ These missions are nowadays referred to under the umbrella term MOOTW (Military Operations Other Than War).

representing an inherently idealistic outlook on the need for knowledge on strategic and military affairs. From what was said earlier about the nature of South African security thinking, this argument alone should feature very prominently in South Africa's need for strategic and military knowledge.

Thirdly, Betts emphasises that the nature of a defence budget affects the fiscal, social and foreign affairs of a country. It is on the one hand important for the military to have expertise and an understanding of these matters at hand. It is on the other hand essential for politicians and the society that are involved or interested in these affairs not to be ignorant about military affairs. The recent and ongoing debate on the procurement of new weapon systems for the SANDF has again brought this point to the fore. The level of the interest and debate on the strategic weapon packages is an important indicator of the need for knowledge about strategic and military affairs in the broader South African society.

Fourthly, Betts argues that civil-military relations will always necessitate an in-depth understanding of the checks and balances that are needed for healthy relations between society and the military in general and between the military and the government in particular. PD Feaver¹⁵ outlines this as knowledge about the need to have protection *by* the military and the need to have protection *from* the military. The military can never discard its accountability in this regard and should at all times be aware of the boundaries of its responsibility in and towards society. It should however also be knowledgeable on when and how to actively engage the politicians on policy issues that concern the military and use thereof. Such interaction should be underpinned by a thorough understanding of the asymmetrical but mutually beneficial relationship between the military and the polity. Knowledge of civil-military relations is therefore important both within and outside the military for a proper understanding of the role of the military within and towards society. This is especially true of new democratic societies like South Africa, situated in a region that is plagued by bad civil-military relations.

Education thus needs to prepare security practitioners in general and officers in particular to deal with 'thorny problems'.¹⁶ Besides being well schooled in the skills and knowledge of the use of force, they should be able to assist in all matters of strategy, policy, resource allocation and operations. Officers in particular need to be military leaders and skilled military specialists, open-minded and adaptable, knowledgeable about military history and the armed forces of the world, and versed in the complexities of bureaucratic decision-making and the interests of the country. It

¹⁵ PD Feaver, "The civil-military problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the question of civilian control", *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Winter 1996, p. 154.

¹⁶ JR Galvin, "What's the matter with being a strategist?", *Parameters*, Summer 1995, p. 161.

is however not only the military that ought to be knowledgeable about strategic and military affairs. The other two role-players in the Clausewitzian trinity, the government and society, should also be well versed in strategic and military affairs. It is accepted though that the military should be the experts in the field.

M Howard¹⁷ suggested that the profession of arms is the most challenging, not only in physical terms, but also in the intellectual demands it places on military leaders. Since the Second World War, the emphasis within militaries was broadened to include not only the traditional war-fighting role, but also the notions of the management of defence and, since the end of the Cold War, the management of peace.¹⁸ This was accompanied by, on the one hand, a greater concern with international affairs and the premises and purposes of defence policy and, on the other hand, an expansion of the military support functions. Because of this expansion, the professional career of an officer began to parallel that of a bureaucratized civil servant in so-called post-modern militaries.¹⁹ Militaries are thus shoven away from education in strategic and military affairs towards education in management and organisational and economical sciences. This brings the question to the fore whether it is at all possible to prepare officers to be professional in war-fighting, the management of defence and the management of peace and, on top of that, to be good bureaucrats? Part of the difficulty in studying strategic and military affairs is the need to prepare officers and strategists to deal with these challenges simultaneously.

3. TRAINING AND EDUCATION: AN ENDURING TENSION WITHIN MILITARIES

In the developed world, the political, industrial and military revolutions of the 19th century blended the different elements of society into a unique security structure. It was no longer possible to draw a dividing line in these societies between the role of the military, the government and the broader society in strategy for security. Military strategists in particular needed as much knowledge and understanding of civil society and politics as they did of real war-fighting. Of the greatest significance was how militaries responded to these changes within society in general. The need for well-trained and highly educated military staffs for the preparation and conduct of military operations was obvious. By 1850 most major Western nations had well-established institutions of professional military education - military academies and

¹⁷ As quoted in LD Holder and W Murray, "Prospects for military education", **Joint Forces Quarterly**, Spring 1998, p. 81.

¹⁸ J Burk, "Expertise, jurisdiction, and legitimacy of the military profession" in LJ Matthews (ed.), **The future of the army profession** (McGraw-Hill, Boston, 2002), p. 20.

¹⁹ DM Snider, "Officership: The professional practice", **Military Review**, January-February 2003, p. 4.

staff colleges - to train and educate their officers on higher order military, strategic and security affairs.²⁰

Two eras of philosophical thought facilitated the entrance of scientific knowledge into the military and strategic spheres. The era of Enlightenment emphasising rational objective analysis and search for clarity was followed by an era in which German idealists and romantic thinkers focused on the psychological, emotional, subjective and intuitive dimensions. Within the military the Swiss, Antonie Henri Jomini (1779-1869), embodied the Enlightenment in his search for certain and fixed principles in the use of force. The Prussian, Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), on the other hand combined the best of the Enlightenment and the German romantic tradition in his writings.²¹ Walter Mills explains the outcome of these developments as follows: "War was now in the hands, not simply of professionals, but of highly trained, technical expert professionals who could in crisis levy upon every industrial and manpower resource of the now highly integrated state."²² For the first time in history of war, technical proficiency takes precedence over noble birth in the officer corps.²³ Also, the introduction of a general staff system as a means through which educated and capable staff officers could provide a free and steady flow of ideas throughout the armed force, 'institutionalised excellence' within the military.²⁴

Up to this day, however, militaries experience difficulty in drawing a distinction between military and strategic education and military training. The military in fact often approach the problem of differentiating between the two by ignoring the difference. The underlying philosophy and the fundamental aims and objectives of education clash with those of the military in general and military training in particular. Good training produces officers who will respond instinctively in anticipated, recognisable circumstances in a manner circumscribed by their training. Training does not teach the officer 'how to think' but rather 'what to think'. Education, on the other hand, instils the mental flexibility to look beyond the horizon, to anticipate and to shape the future. Mason²⁵ delineates this tension:

²⁰ DR Baucom, "Historical framework for the concept of strategy", *Military Review*, March 1987, pp. 5-6.

²¹ JM Malik, "The evolution of strategic thought" in CA Snyder (ed.), *Contemporary security and strategy* (Routledge, New York), pp. 17-18.

²² W Mills, *Arms and men: A study in American military history* (GP Putnam's Sons, New York, 1956), p. 206.

²³ PF Hauser et al, p. 60.

²⁴ TN Dupuy, *A genius for war: The German Army and general staff, 1807-1945* (Hero Books, Fairfax, 1984), pp. 300-7.

²⁵ RA Mason, "Innovation and the military mind", *Air University Review*, January-February 1986, p. 306.

"Inevitably, there are the seeds of tension when conformity and questioning are being taught side by side. It should come as no surprise that military education can occasionally give rise to uneasiness within the military as a whole. There are many apparent incompatible objectives: discipline and individuality, conformity and initiative, responding and innovating, determination and flexibility, imagination and objectivity, fire and dispassion."

For militaries, it is important to understand the difference and tension between training and education because they have to cope with it. The military cannot afford to neglect either the training or education of its forces since each has its own importance dictated by its own domain. It is after all possible to lose a war without losing a single battle - in the military world of tactics where the training of forces is decisive. Becoming involved in dangerous conflicts in a war-torn continent like Africa because of bad strategic choices can also be disastrous - in the world of strategy where education is essential. The military consequently cannot ignore either military training or education - both should receive an equal amount of attention. It is also important for militaries to understand that though military training is the exclusive domain of the military, strategic and military education is not. Since the Second World War, an increasing number of civilians have also busied themselves with the study of strategic and military affairs. Indeed, the most well-known strategic theorists in the world today are civilians. Their role is of critical importance in and for any democratic country.

4. THE DIFFICULTY OF STRATEGIC AND MILITARY EDUCATION

The interest in strategic and military affairs is at present as intense as it has ever been. Not much attention, however, is given to the education, creation or development of strategists. What kind of education is required to develop a strategist? Galvin outlines the problem by indicating that "the wealth of literature on strategy makes the discussion on how we beget strategists all the more puzzling, for surely the development of military strategists is a vital important issue which should be subjected to the interchange of ideas and constructive critiques, just like strategy itself. Strange that it is not."²⁶

In an article titled "Why strategy is difficult", CS Gray²⁷ argues that it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop someone to become a strategist. According to Gray "no educational system puts in what nature leaves out". He continues to argue that the extraordinary competence shown by rising politicians or soldiers in their particular

²⁶ Galvin, p. 161.

²⁷ CS Gray, "Why strategy is difficult", *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Summer 1999, p. 10.

trades is not proof of any aptitude for strategy. One of the reasons why the education of strategists is a contentious, but not a debated issue, should therefore be sought in the nature of strategy itself. Strategy concerns neither strictly political nor strictly military issues. Rather, it bridges the gap between the political and military worlds.²⁸ The fundamental question about the education of strategists therefore concerns the crossing of the bridge between the political and military worlds and what is influencing this interactive process. This problem is furthermore accentuated through the uneasiness of the political world with military-minded or military-sensitive politicians and the uneasiness of the military world with politically-minded or politically-sensitive officers.²⁹

The study of strategy is further complicated by the pragmatic and practical nature of strategy - "strategic theory is a theory of action" argues B Brodie.³⁰ All strategists, whether they find themselves in politics, the military or the academic world, have to deal with one fundamental question: Will the idea work? The study of strategy is therefore a 'how to do it' study, a guide to accomplishing something and doing it efficiently.³¹ "Strategic studies", according to Gray³² "is a practical subject and not a fine art."

Because of the pragmatic and practical nature of strategy, its study is often criticised for not being a scholarly subject but rather a pseudo-science, using apparent scientific method to give it a spurious air of legitimacy. Also, because of the practical nature of strategy and because strategists often advise governments on a paid basis, they are criticised for operating in a manner incompatible with the integrity of scholarship. This particular point of criticism is taken one step further when strategists are criticised for being involved in policy advocacy. Strategists are seen as being an appendage of government by spending their time either providing advice on how to achieve policies or justifying dubious objectives.³³ The study of strategic and military affairs is therefore often impeded through questions about the legitimacy of the particular field of study.

The education of strategists is also made difficult by the fact that strategy is best studied from an interdisciplinary approach and perspective. Gray³⁴ for example highlights seventeen different 'dimensions' of strategy: (1) people; (2) society;

²⁸ Baylis et al., p. 3.

²⁹ Betts, p. 25.

³⁰ B Brodie, **War and politics** (Cassell, London, 1973), p. 452.

³¹ **Ibid**, p. 452.

³² Gray, "Villains, victims, and sheriffs...", p. 355.

³³ Baylis et al., p. 9.

³⁴ CS Gray, **Modern strategy** (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), Chapter 1: "The dimensions of strategy".

(3) culture; (4) politics; (5) ethics; (6) economics and logistics; (7) organisation; (8) military administration; (9) information and intelligence; (10) strategic theory and doctrine; (11) technology; (12) military operations; (13) command; (14) geography; (15) friction, chance and uncertainty; (16) adversary; and (17) time. M Howard, on the other hand, identifies only four so-called 'forgotten dimensions of strategy': the operational, the logistical, the social, and the technological.³⁵ The dimensions of strategy as outlined by different authors bring to the fore the complex nature of strategy. In order to acquire an in-depth understanding of strategy, it is necessary to know something about all the different dimensions of strategy - politics, economics, psychology and geography, as well as technology, force structure and tactics. In thinking about strategic and military education and the making of strategists, it is thus important to keep this diverse nature of strategy in mind. It is, however, understandable why academics are uncomfortable with a field of study that does not neatly fit into their world of compartmentalised academic disciplines.

Educating strategists, and in particular military strategists, is also tremendously complicated by the nature of the military itself. To be specific, the bureaucratic nature of armed forces does not make it very susceptible to academic studies. Firstly, the compartmentalisation that is a necessary outcome of military secrecy often makes it difficult to engage in a free exchange of ideas. This cloud of secrecy usually associated with all military activities inhibits free debate about contentious strategic and military affairs within and outside the military. Secondly, military organisations by definition are designed to operate in a medium of very great uncertainty, namely armed conflict. This has always caused them to put a premium on subordination, discipline, hierarchy and rigid social structures, all of which represent the direct opposite of flexibility. This is not really an organisational culture and climate that is conducive to academic studies. Thirdly, the need to operate in a highly uncertain, confused, and stressful environment has caused armed forces through the ages to invent their own forms of communication. It is a form of communication that is, as far as possible, cleansed of ambiguity and redundancy. Militaries in general, therefore, try to create a form of language that is the opposite of what the academic world considers as indispensable for free, undirected thought.³⁶ Finally, the responsibility to be operationally capable often promotes negative attitudes towards education within the military. Being short of money, men and equipment, the military often view education as a luxury. The education of

³⁵ M Howard, "The forgotten dimensions of strategy", *The causes of war and other essays* (Unwin Paperbacks, London, 1984), pp. 101-15.

³⁶ M Van Creveldt, *Technology and war: From 2000 B.C. to the present* (The Free Press, New York, 1991), p. 220.

militaries then often falls victim of 'short-termism' and 'a flavour of the week mentality'.³⁷

B Brodie³⁸ in his book, **War and politics**, recount the story of how Marshall Maurice de Saxe, the foreigner who for a time became the first-ranking officer of France under Louis XV, remarked that most commanding generals displayed the utmost confusion on the battlefield. He asked himself: "How does this happen?", and then gave the answer himself: "It is because very few men occupy themselves with the higher conduct of war. They pass their lives drilling troops and believe that this is the only branch of military art. When they arrive at the command of armies they are totally ignorant, and in default of knowing what should be done, they do what they know". It is understandable that military forces world-wide are more interested in the training of their forces than their education. The reason is obvious. Training tends to focus on tactical level issues - the execution of drills.³⁹ Failure in the realm of tactics by losing a battle is immediately visible and the result disastrous in terms of the destruction and losses to a nation and its armed forces. Losing a war on the other hand allows the armed forces the scope to put the blame on someone else. That we have seen in Germany after World War I and to a certain extent also in the United States of America after the war in Vietnam. Losing battles and engagements, however, cannot be blamed on anyone but the military. They thus take greater care of their preparations to fight.

5. THE EDUCATION OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES IN STRATEGIC AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

How do armed forces then educate their members to become strategists? Although all elements of armed forces are trained, the education of members of the armed forces in strategic and military affairs is usually restricted to the officer corps. Caforio⁴⁰ provides a number of reasons for this particular focus:

- Expertise: Officers possess and impart the professional expertise of the armed forces.
- Leadership: Officers constitute the leadership of the armed forces.
- Attitudes: Officers determine the mindset of a particular military.

³⁷ GC Kennedy and K Nielson (eds), **Military education: Past, present, and future** (Praeger, Westport, 2002), p. x.

³⁸ Brodie, pp. 433-4.

³⁹ AJ Esterhuise, "Strategy, operational art and tactics: Who is responsible for what in the SANDF?", **African Armed Forces Journal**, July 2000, pp. 32-3.

⁴⁰ G Caforio, "Military officer education" in G Caforio (ed.), **Handbook of the sociology of the military** (Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York), 2003, p. 255.

- Ethics: Officers are responsible to uphold and revise the military ethic.
- Social: Officers interact with all the other social actors present on the national stage and, in part, also on the international one.

None of the above-mentioned reasons are as important as the fact that officers possess and impart the professional expertise of an armed force. Given that military expertise is the result of the interplay between military experience, training and education,⁴¹ no armed force can neglect either the training or the education of its officers. This is certainly also true of South Africa. The education of officers usually takes place throughout their careers. However, some theorists are of the opinion that the primary focus should be on the education of young officers before they begin with their military careers and the education of senior officers before they move on to become part of the senior command and management of the armed forces. Crackel describes it as "the making of lieutenants and the making of colonels".⁴²

Why an emphasis in military education on "the making of lieutenants and the making of colonels"? Crackel considers the education of colonels as a prerequisite for success in the higher conduct of a war effort and the management of a country's security during times of peace. In the broadest sense, he argues, lieutenants are responsible for the implementation of the military dimension of a security policy on the lowest military levels. Of importance is the fact that they do need an understanding of the nature of the higher order security policies and issues. Colonels on the other hand should be prepared to deal with such issues and to participate in the making of security policy to address it. The 'making of lieutenants' should be guided by a solid foundation of knowledge and skill that will prepare young officers to build a career in the national security environment. It also involves synthesising their accumulated experience with sound theoretical knowledge for understanding and participation in the higher order policy-making processes.

Galvin⁴³ echoes these ideas of Crackel when he emphasises that a country needs senior officers that can provide sound military advice to the political leadership. But, it also needs educated junior officers who can provide the generals and admirals with solid military advice such as options, details and the results of analysis. He concludes that it takes a junior strategist to implement what the senior strategist wants done and it usually takes the input of juniors to help senior strategists arrive

⁴¹ SP Huntington, **The soldier and the state: The theory and politics of civil military relations** (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1957), p. 13.

⁴² TJ Crackel, "On the making of lieutenants and colonels", **The Public Interest**, No. 76, Summer 1984, p. 18.

⁴³ Galvin, p. 161.

at their conclusions. Mastering the art of strategy should therefore begin as early as possible in the career of an officer. In particular, education should form the bedrock of the beginning of the career of a young officer. Education provides the young officer with a conceptual framework within which to analyse his tactical and other experiences. Exposing young officers to a variety of military experiences early in their careers is important, though without a conceptual framework that will allow the officer to fully comprehend such experience, it is meaningless. One is always reminded of Frederick the Great's opinion in this regard that if experience was that all-important, he had several pack mules who had seen enough of war to be field marshals.⁴⁴

The tension between the experience, training and education of officers is acute in situations of limited resources where a defence force has to make some trade-offs. The problem is further highlighted by the opinion of one of the most well-known strategic theorists and military scholars in the world that officers do not need a military education at all.⁴⁵ In South Africa, in particular, the education of officers - the making of strategists - is a contentious issue. The South African military is confronted with a very small defence budget and a growing operational schedule especially in the sphere of peace missions. Thus, allowing young officers to study for three years at the South African Military Academy (SAMA) in Saldanha, in the view of some, is probably deemed to impinge upon the budget and operational requirements of the SANDF. The closure of the SAMA has recently been discussed on senior command and management level in the SANDF. SANDF officers are indeed often very sceptical about the need for a military academy in South Africa.⁴⁶ The opinion that is generally held is that there is sufficient time later in the career of an officer to busy himself with studies. Such an attitude, however, ignores the general truth, pointed out by Downes,⁴⁷ that it is more difficult for the trained man to gain a liberal education than it is for the educated man to undergo military training.

⁴⁴ DM Drew and DM Snow, **Making strategy: An introduction to national security processes and problems** (Air University Press, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1988), p. 164.

⁴⁵ It is the central argument in Martine van Creveldt's book, **The training of officers: From military professionalism to irrelevance** (Free Press, New York, 1990).

⁴⁶ An opinion of the author based on personal conversations with a number of mid-level and senior officers of the SANDF. It is a common held view that if it were not for pressure from the policy environment, the SANDF already would have closed the SAMA.

⁴⁷ C Downes, **Special trust and confidence: The making of an officer** (Frank Cass, London, 1991), p. 200.

6. THE SANDF AND THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION ON STRATEGIC AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

In the SANDF and its predecessor, the SADF, education has always been perceived as 'a nice to have'. It has never been an integral part of the career of an officer to the extent that it was institutionalised and thus a requirement for promotion to a higher rank. The old SADF was in essence a war-fighting force with emphasis on operational and tactical matters,⁴⁸ or as Seegers explains, "military experience counted more than intellectual or staff ability" and "the action was in the line".⁴⁹ During the 1970s and 1980s soldiers were needed 'on the border' or 'in the bush'. The SADF favoured tactical training and experience. It had no real culture of military education. The Military Academy, for example, did not even offer a course in military strategy until 1991. Officers that were seen as being too academically inclined were considered to be unsuitable for command positions.⁵⁰

Helmut-Römer Heitman in 1980 wrote an article in the *Militaria* with the question "Is the army literate?" as its title.⁵¹ Heitman concluded that the SADF neither reads nor writes and is suffering from mental stagnation. He identified three possible reasons why officers in the SADF did not read or write: the problem of security considerations, the absence of suitable local military journals and the lack of incentive. The emphasis on training and experience in the SADF in the end resulted in a very tactically-minded force and because officers did not read or write, professional knowledge was not widely shared within and outside the SADF and in fact had very little depth. Not much has changed in this regard over the last ten years, though there is a noticeable number of officers who busy themselves with academic studies. Unfortunately the majority of these studies falls outside the realm of the study of strategic and military affairs. And, like its predecessor, the SANDF has not yet institutionalised education as an integral part of the careers of its officers. The SANDF has also not developed a real education culture as yet.

The Interim Constitution provides that all members of the SANDF "shall be properly trained in order to comply with international standards of competency" [Section 226(5)]. It is understood that reference to training in the Interim Constitution should be viewed within context of the interchangeable use of the notion of training and education. The South African Constitution adopted by Parliament on 8 May

⁴⁸ AJ Esterhuyse, Paper delivered at the **4th War and Society in Africa Conference** on "Strategy, generalship and command in Southern Africa: Past, present, and future" at the Military Academy, 4–6 September 2003.

⁴⁹ A Seegers, **The military and the making of South Africa** (Tauris Academic Studies, London, 1996). p. 141.

⁵⁰ **Ibid.**

⁵¹ H Heitman, "Is the army literate?", *Militaria* 10(1), 1980, p. 48.

1996 states: "The security services must act, and *must teach* and require their members to act in accordance with the Constitution and the Law, including customary international law and international agreements binding on the Republic" (emphasis added) [Section 199(5)]. It is obvious that the constitution requires from SANDF-members to have a higher understanding of their operating environment than that which is normally provided through training.

The South African White Paper on Defence,⁵² under a heading titled "Education and training" indicates that education and training are a cardinal means of building and maintaining a high level of professionalism in the armed forces. The White Paper then emphasises training by indicating that the SANDF's primary function of defence against aggression should be at the heart of its training. Reference to education is only made within the context of the need for standardised procedures following the integration of the different statutory and non-statutory forces as well as the design and implementation of a civic education programme. Two remarks are necessary in this regard. Firstly, the standardisation and inculcation of standard procedures is a tactical matter and falls within the realm of training. Secondly, though a civic education programme may in itself be a matter of strategic importance, it does not correspond with the notion of education in strategic and military affairs. Civic education is not education in strategic and military affairs. The White Paper on Defence is thus not very explicit about the need for the SANDF to be educated in general and in strategic and military affairs in particular.

The demands placed on the leaders of the SANDF since its inception have grown in scope and intensity. These demands extend well beyond the traditional responsibility of preparing forces for and to execute combat and other types of operations. Since 1994, the SANDF had to deal with a unique integration process, a transformation process, an organisational restructuring and a variety of operational responsibilities. This was done against the background of affirmative action on the one hand and the need to retain expertise on the other. The brief history of the post-apartheid period in South and Southern Africa therefore reinforced the need for military officers who are not only technically and tactically proficient, but well-versed in strategy, history, geopolitics and in particular the complex cultures and politics of the African continent. How should the SANDF educate its young officers for the very complex geostrategic landscape they have to shape in future?

⁵² South African Government, "Defence in democracy", **South African White Paper on Defence**, as approved by Parliament on 14 May 1996, p. 15.

The first definite step is to recognise that it is an illusion and naive to think that there are no threats to South African interests in the world and that there is thus no need for a defence force - as some elements in the wider South African society want to believe. To quote Gray once again: "bad times return" and "there are thugs out there". Like the nature of security in the post-Cold War world, threats have become diffuse, harder to define, and much more difficult to protect the citizenry against than during the Cold War. As a continental and regional hegemony, South Africa has an interest in an African continent free from any conflict. The time has arrived for armed forces in Africa to change their destructive role in society into a constructive one. Without the constructive participation of Africa's armed forces in general and the SANDF in particular, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU) are doomed to failure. Military forces for example have a pivotal role to play in the safeguarding of peace and the protection of human rights on the African continent. To think that SA will not face any threats in future, that there will be no need to use force in future and that there is no need for a defence force, is naive.

It is imperative for young officers in the SANDF to understand South Africa's role in Africa; to have an understanding of its interests and those of its partners in NEPAD and the AU; to understand the nature of the threats to those interests; and, most important, the constraints on our ability to deal with those threats. Traditionally, the expertise of officers was defined as specialised knowledge and skill in the direction, operation, and control of an organisation whose primary function is the application of violence.⁵³ The expertise of military officers in the modern day is, however, much broader and more comprehensive than war-fighting itself, keeping in mind how the use of military power has evolved to include not only war-fighting, but also deterrence and peace-keeping. Kaufman argues that just as law at its borders merges into history, politics, economics, sociology and psychology, so does military expertise.⁵⁴ It in fact also overlaps with technological related natural sciences like mathematics, chemistry and physics. How do you structure an educational program to provide young officers with the strategic and military intellectual foundation needed to carry out their responsibilities in the decades ahead, especially in Africa?

⁵³ Huntington, p. 11.

⁵⁴ DJ Kaufman, "Military undergraduate security education for the new millenium" in J Smith, et al., "Educating international security practitioners: Preparing to face the demands of the 21st century international security environment", **Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) Monograph** (U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, July 2001), p. 9.

7. THE ROLE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY ACADEMY IN STRATEGIC AND MILITARY EDUCATION

A military academy is traditionally seen as an institution that prepares cadets or candidate officers for their commissioned appointment in the armed forces of a country through a combination of military training and education. The starting point for a discussion of the role of the SAMA in the study of strategic and military affairs is therefore a recognition that it should provide young officers with an education that prepares them firstly and foremostly for the unique demands of their chosen profession. Kaufman⁵⁵ argues that the academic curriculum of military academies should answer two questions: Firstly, what do military officers need to be able to do in future? Secondly, how does the curriculum of the military academy contribute to the development of those officers who reflect the attributes deemed important for the future? These two questions place the role of military academies in the cognitive and affective domains of learning that underpin the notion of education.

World-wide there are today two discernible orientations in the education of young officers at military academies. The one privileges a typical military education with less space for general university culture. This can be seen as a divergent approach since the education of young officers are clearly more in line with the requirements of the military than that of the national education system. Such an approach deals with the inherent conflict between military training and education by increasing the influence of the military on the education curriculum - trying to 'militarise' the curriculum. From an educational point of view this approach represents a unique challenge. Kenney and Nielson⁵⁶ outline the challenge that confronts military education if the military has such a dominant role to play in developing an academic curriculum. Throughout history, they argue, military education has been corrupted when a demand is placed on educational institutions to fit the 'needs' of the military - "it has traditionally been the overt and overbearing influence of the military, who demands a better 'product', that has distorted the fabric of the educational process itself".

The convergent approach on the other hand tends to bring officer education closer to the national system of tertiary education.⁵⁷ This orientation usually includes the awarding of a true university degree with value on the civilian market. The focus is thus not on a professional military education, but on a broad liberal education. The

⁵⁵**Ibid.**⁵⁶ Kennedy and Nielson, (eds), p. xi.⁵⁷ For a discussion of the convergent/divergent model, see G Caforio and M Nuciari, "The officer profession: Ideal type", *Current Sociology* 42(3), 1994, pp. 33-56.

reasons why countries opt for a convergent approach - a broad liberal education - are diverse but usually include arguments on:

- giving the officer a type of basic education that integrates him/her more efficiently into the context of the surrounding society and facilitates his/her collaboration with officials and agents of other institutional sectors;
- providing him/her with cultural knowledge that makes him/her better prepared for operating in non-traditional military missions;
- giving the military officer better opportunities for a second career in the event that he/she leaves the military;
- enhancing the prestige and attractiveness of the profession by giving the officer a more widely recognised degree in the national environment.⁵⁸

Both the convergent and divergent models of officer education are an effort to deal with the challenge presented by two requirements of officer education: the substantial freedom of academic studies and the necessity for a particular professional socialisation of officers.⁵⁹ Military academies world-wide, also in South Africa, at all times have to deal with this inherent tension between the institutional interests of the military and the need of the academic world for academic freedom of expression. For the academic faculty of these institutions it is an especially thorny issue. They are often confronted with a military that does not understand the notion that sound academic research - and the publication thereof - is required for the quality education of their officers.

The convergent model places the emphasis on the freedom to pursue academic studies, while the divergent model emphasises the need for military socialisation. The education programs of military academies are therefore a mixture of strictly military subjects like military strategy and military history, and others more specific to university studies. However, there does not seem to be general agreement what these university subjects should be and what the focus within each subject ought to be.

The SAMA at present reflects a convergent approach in the education of young officers. Though it educates some students in traditional military subjects like military history, military strategy and military technology, most of the subjects that are presented are normal university subjects that are 'contextualised' to meet the need of the military. In addition, not all the students attending the SAMA follow

⁵⁸ Caforio, p. 260.

⁵⁹ For a more detailed discussion of this particular issue, see RF Priest, "Value changes in four cohorts at the U.S. Military Academy", *Armed Forces & Society* 25(1), 1998, pp. 81-102.

the same programme. At present, the SAMA is presenting six different academic programmes from which students have to choose:

- Human and organisational development.
- War, environment and technology.
- Organisation and resource development.
- Technology.
- Technology and management; and
- Security and Africa studies.⁶⁰

Military strategy and military history, the two subjects that underpin the study of strategic and military affairs at the SAMA, are only presented as part of the programmes in war, environment and technology, and security and Africa studies. The biggest part of the student body at the SAMA is therefore never exposed to the study of strategic and military affairs. This brings at least two very important questions to the fore: Firstly, can the SANDF, in view of the limited defence budget and operational obligations, afford a convergent approach at the SAMA? It provides students with a broad liberal education that also has value on the open market, but limited immediate value for the SANDF. It thus opens the door for students to leave the military at the earliest possible moment. Secondly, if the SANDF can afford a convergent approach, should the study of strategic and military affairs not at least be included as a central theme in all programmes presented at the SAMA? These two questions should however be considered against the background of the corruptive influence of the military on the curriculum of academic institutions.

9. CONCLUSION

No nation can neglect the education of its officer-strategists, and with it the importance of a study of strategic and military affairs. A first step in giving recognition to this truth is the understanding that there is a vast difference between common military training and the education of officer strategists in strategic and military affairs. Appreciating this difference is important in understanding the tension that is often experienced within armed forces in general and at military academies in particular. It is a tension that is based on the necessity to provide the individual with a broad education before teaching him skills that are required to be a good soldier and officer.

⁶⁰ Stellenbosch University, Calendar 2004, Part 13: Faculty of Military Science, pp. 7-16.

It is not only the tension between military training and military and strategic education that needs to be dealt with in the education of future strategists. The tension between a professional military education and a broad liberal education and the identification of the academic subject fields that are most suitable for the education of future strategists, also need to be addressed. Also, who should provide the impetus for the educational and structural changes that are needed? The future of the SAMA depends on an urgent answer to these questions. The success of South Africa's future strategic choices and that of the SANDF in particular, may depend on the manner in which these tensions are resolved. If it is not resolved in favour of a well-balanced education in strategic and military affairs the future of the nation as a whole may be in jeopardy.