

Military History at the South African Military Academy

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Defence forces globally emphasize the significance of the study of military history in the professional development of their officers for various reasons. Domestic military history is an extremely useful tool to promote nationalism, cultivate *esprit the corps* and inspire soldiers for their role as defenders of their country's national sovereignty. Military history furthermore serves as a benchmark to determine the norms and standards of military professionalism and to buttress the military ethos. Most of all, the study of military history has traditionally been emphasized because the military attaches significant value to the "lessons" of past experience. The study of military history exposes the reasons for failure and success on the battlefield and provides the basis for military doctrine. Michael Evans states in this regard that traditionally, "after the study of tactics, history was often regarded as the single most important subject in the preparation of a future military leader in Western armies".¹ The famous American general, George Patton, said: "To be a successful soldier you must know history".² The well-known British military historian, Sir Basil Liddell Hart, states:

History is the record of man's steps and slips. It shows us that the steps have been slow and slight; the slips quick and abounding. It provides us with the opportunity to profit by the stumbles and tumbles of our forerunners. ... "Fools", said Bismarck, "say they learn by experience. I prefer to profit by other people's experience". The study of history offers that opportunity in the widest possible measure. It is universal experience - infinitely longer, wider, and more varied than any individual's experience.³

Jeffrey Grey observes that "armed forces need a collective and institutional memory"⁴ which is exactly what the study of military history supplies. Grey hastens, however, to add that "history is not a 'magic bullet', it provides no automatic understanding of complex situations in either the past or the present, much less the future ... it rarely provides 'school solutions' [to military challenges]". What it does, is to help armed forces "to deal with specific circumstances through relating them to a general framework previously acquired".⁵

Even a superficial scrutiny of the titles in the libraries of military institutions confirm these perceptions about the utilitarian value of military history. The South African Military Academy at Saldanha is no exception. The many works on the "lessons" of

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1 M Evans, "The Role of Military History in the Education of Future Officers" at <http://www.adfa.oz.au/DOD/dara/misc02.htm>, 1997, p 2

2 Quoted in B F Cooling III, "Military History for the Military Professional", in L J Matthews and D E Brown (eds), *The Parameters of War: Military History from the Journal of the U.S. Army War College* (Pergamon-Brassey's, Washington, 1987), p 27

3 B H Liddell Hart, *Why Don't We Learn From History* (Hawthorn Books, New York, 1971), pp 16, 15

4 J Grey, "Military Education and the Study of War", *Scientia Militaria*, 30, 1, 2000, p 73

5 J Grey, "Military Education and the Study of War", *Scientia Militaria*, 30, 1, 2000, p 74

past wars that grace its library shelves include titles on the Russo-Turkish War,⁶ the Anglo-Boer War,⁷ the Russo-Japanese War,⁸ the First World War,⁹ the Vietnam War,¹⁰ the Arab-Israeli Wars,¹¹ the Afghan and Falklands Wars¹² and the Iran-Iraq War,¹³ to name but a few. Titles like R.A. Hunt and R.H. Shultz's *Lessons from an Unconventional War: Reassessing U.S. Strategies for Future Conflicts*¹⁴ leave no doubt indeed as to what the intentions with the learning of such "lessons" are.

With its library titles seeming to subscribe to the central role assigned to the study of military history by armed forces internationally, the question is which position the South African Military Academy had (since its inception in 1950) afforded Military History as an academic discipline. This article traces the status and content of Military History as a subject at the South African Military Academy and explores the relevance of the Academy's military history curricula with a view to South Africa's historic threat perception and the changing role of its defence force. The article concludes with an evaluation of the requirements and challenges of Military History at the Military Academy in the twenty-first century. The profile of the Academy's Military History lecturers since 1950 and their published contribution to the discipline are not explored, as this will be the focus of a future publication.

Historical background of the South African Military Academy¹⁵

The legacy of the Second World War brought what the Union Defence Force (UDF) termed a complete "departure from ... pre-war methods ... an entirely new and different conception ... [and] a change of tremendous importance"¹⁶ to officer education in South Africa, namely the introduction of "academic training" to the officer development programme of the South African Military College (currently the South African Army College) in Pretoria from 1947. The post-war technological and socio-political milieu in which the military officer was called upon to perform his professional duties, was too complex for him to rely solely on military training for his professional preparation. Henceforth academic subjects such as Mathematics,

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- 6 H Langlois, *Lessons from Two Recent Wars: The Russo-Turkish and South African Wars* (His Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1909)
- 7 H Langlois, *Lessons from Two Recent Wars: The Russo-Turkish and South African Wars* (His Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1909); S Wilkinson, *Lessons of the War: Being Comments from Week to Week to the Relief of Ladysmith* (Archibald Constable and Co, Westminster and Philadelphia, 1900)
- 8 De Négrier (translated by E L Spiers), *Lesson of the Russo-Japanese War* (Hugh Rees, London, 1906)
- 9 A P Wavell (edited by C Callwell), *Campaigns and their Lessons: The Palestine Campaigns* (Constable and Co, London, 1941)
- 10 W S Thompson and D D Frizzell (eds), *The Lessons of Vietnam* (Crane, Russak and Coy, New York and London, 1977); R A Hunt and R H Shultz Junior (eds), *Lessons from an Unconventional War: Reassessing U.S. Strategies for Future Conflicts* (Pergamon Press, New York, 1982)
- 11 A H Cordesman and A R Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War, I: The Arab-Israeli Conflicts, 1973-1989* (Westview Press, Boulder and San Francisco, 1990)
- 12 A H Cordesman and A R Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War, III: The Afghan and Falklands Conflicts* (Westview Press, Boulder and San Francisco, 1990)
- 13 A H Cordesman and A R Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War, II: The Iran-Iraq War* (Westview Press, Boulder and San Francisco, 1990 / Mansell Publishing, London, 1990)
- 14 R A Hunt and R H Shultz Junior (eds), *Lessons from an Unconventional War: Reassessing U.S. Strategies for Future Conflicts* (Pergamon Press, New York, 1982)
- 15 Summarised from G E Visser, "Die Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Militêre Akademie, 1950-1990" [The History of the South African Military Academy, 1950-1990], doctoral dissertation published as *Supplementa ad Scientia Militaria*, I, 2000
- 16 South African Military College, *The South African Military College* (South African Military College, Pretoria, 1947), p 23

Physics, Military History, Political Science, Economics and Psychology were included in the officers' development programme at the College.

F.C. Erasmus, Minister of Defence (1948-1959) took this a step further in 1950 by establishing the South African Military Academy under the joint supervision of the University of Pretoria and the South African Military College. Its mission was to elevate the education of Permanent Force cadets to the level of a Baccalaureate {BA (Mil) or BSc (Mil)}, in order to meet the intellectual challenges of modern warfare. Parallel to their academic studies, the Academy's students also received formative and functional military training. These developments placed officer education in South Africa more or less on the same level as that in Europe and the United States of America.

In 1953 Erasmus, wanting to establish the Military Academy as a separate, independent, all-service institution decided to relocate the Academy to Saldanha. In Pretoria it had catered for army and air force students only. Its new academic guardian was the University of Stellenbosch, who now awarded a B Mil degree in the Natural or Human Sciences to successful candidates. The Military Academy was organisationally divorced from the South African Army College on 1 February 1956, whereupon its headquarters was temporarily shifted to Stellenbosch, awaiting the erection of suitable accommodation at Saldanha. The headquarters of the Military Academy moved to Saldanha in December 1957 and in February 1958 the first students, second and third-years, reported at Saldanha. The first-years were accommodated at Stellenbosch to comply with the regulations of the University of Stellenbosch. This separation continued up to January 1961, when the Military Academy became a fully-fledged faculty – the Faculty of Military Science of the University of Stellenbosch – and henceforth the first-years also received their education at Saldanha. A third study direction, Commercial Sciences (later redesignated Management Sciences), as well as postgraduate studies in Military Science, were introduced at the Academy at the same time. In 2001 the traditional degree courses in the Human, Management and Natural Sciences were replaced by outcomes-based degree (and postgraduate) programmes in Security and Africa Studies, Geospatial Studies and Information Systems, Human Resource Development, Defence Organisation and Resource Management, as well as Science and Technology.

Core subject

At the time of its establishment in 1950, the Military Academy conformed to the international trend in terms of the core position assigned to the study of military history. The subjects Military History, Military Law, Military Geography and Military Technology, were grouped together under the collective title "Military Science" and were compulsory in both the BA (Mil) and the BSc (Mil)-courses. These subjects were deemed directly relevant to the military profession and were consequently taught at the Academy itself, whilst the rest of the academic subjects were taught at the campus of the University of Pretoria. Military History initially was a first-year subject only, but was elevated to a major in the BA (Mil) curriculum in 1952.¹⁷

17 South African National Defence Force Archives (SANDEFA), CG C43 D81, KG/GPT/1/2/1 vol I, Summary of recommendations of Kriegler Committee, 27 January 1949, p 7; University of Pretoria (UP) Archives, "Notule van die Raad" 1952, I, S7955, "Wysiging van Leerplanne: B A (Mil) en B Sc (Mil)",

In terms of threat perception, South Africa's defence policy was still closely intertwined with that of Great Britain in the years immediately after the Second World War. As member of the Commonwealth, the Union accepted co-responsibility for defending the gateways of Africa, especially the Cape sea-route and the Middle East, which were considered to be Africa's line of defence. At the national security level, South Africa faced no real threat from Africa or indeed from anywhere else.¹⁸ The task of drafting the Academy's Military History curricula to meet this vague threat perception, fell on the shoulders of Second World War veteran and later well-known South African military historian, Major L.C.F. Turner, who was then on the Reserve of Officers. Turner obtained a master's degree in History from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1939 with a dissertation on "The Cape of Good Hope and the Trafalgar Campaign" and was a member of the Union War Histories Section at the time.¹⁹ The lecturing of Military History as such only commenced at the beginning of 1951, from which date a civilian academic, Melt van Niekerk, was appointed in the rank of Captain as full-time lecturer.²⁰ With a view to Van Niekerk's lack of military experience, Turner was appointed in a temporary, part-time capacity to supervise the introduction and lecturing of the Military History curriculum. Turner, who apparently terminated his involvement with the Military Academy towards the end of 1951, also assumed responsibility for some of the lecturing.²¹

Turner's curriculum reflected the absence of a direct military threat and strove to give the cadets a broad overview of the evolution of warfare through the ages. It comprised four main themes, namely the development of the art of warfare, the basis of modern warfare, warfare in the twentieth century and the campaign in the Western Desert (May to December 1942). The first theme covered the evolution of the art of warfare from antiquity to the eighteenth century, while the second, namely the basis of modern warfare, dealt with the fundamentals of the Napoleonic Wars, the rise of Prussian military power, the American Civil War and the Anglo-Boer War. The development of unconventional, mobile guerrilla warfare received special attention in the study of the latter two wars. The third theme focusing on warfare in the twentieth century, covered the military and technological developments of the First World War, the period between the two World Wars, the Second World War and the beginning of the nuclear age. The last theme, namely the campaign in the Western Desert (May to December 1942), dealt with the challenges of desert warfare and the course of the various battles of the specific campaign.²²

6 November 1951; UP Archives, "Notule van die Raad" 1951, R3368, "Notule van die Raad", 22 November 1952; *Universiteit van Pretoria Jaarboek 1952*, pp 98, 166

- 18 Republic of South Africa, *Review of Defence and Armaments Production: Period 1960 to 1970* (Defence Headquarters, Pretoria, 1971), pp 5, 9
- 19 SANDFA, South African Military College (Group 1) 122, MC/C/158G/5, Cmdt South African Military College – Ed-in-Chief Union War Histories (UWH) Section, 8 June 1950
- 20 SANDFA, Minister of Defence, Erasmus-Fouché (MV/EF) 135, MV 130 vol I, Chief of the General Staff (CGS) – Private Secretary Minister of Defence, 29 January 1953; SANDFA, South African Military College (Group 1) 87, MK/F/1/2, Cmdt South African Military College – Registrar UP, 27 January 1951; UP Archives, "Notule van die Raad 1951", S7614, 21 Februarie 1951
- 21 SANDFA, South African Military College (Group 1) 87, MK/F/4/3, L C F Turner – OC PF Coy, South African Military College, 17 July 1951; SANDFA, South African Military College (Group 1) 87, MK/F/4/2, L C F Turner – Ed-in-Chief UWH Section, 19 April 1951
- 22 SANDFA, South African Military College (Group 1) 88, MK/F/5/2, "Notule van 'n vergadering van die Studiekomitee", 29 Junie 1950

The inclusion of this last theme obviously took note of the fact that the Union Defence Force as co-protector of the Middle East, could have been called upon to fight in the same theatre under similar conditions again. The “lessons” of the campaign – in which both the First and Second South African Divisions participated – consequently were of great significance to the Union Defence Force. It was clear from the start that the Military History curriculum was overloaded and the campaign in the Western Desert was subsequently dropped²³ as a detailed, separate theme.

Turner’s curriculum-design reflected what Evans²⁴ terms the “pre-nuclear age” approach of military history, when campaign history was regarded as being of paramount importance for officer education, and relatively little attention was devoted to the political and industrial contexts within which wars were fought. In the era of total war, however, as the Second World War had clearly demonstrated, “war was as much about industrial resources, technology and political leadership as it was about battlefield skill.”²⁵ During the 1960s and 1970s, British military historians Michael Howard and John Keegan led the way (in Evans’s words) to “broaden military history away from campaign narrative into more of an analytical and problem-solving discipline ... the focus moved towards the study of war itself in a broad and more interdisciplinary context.”²⁶

At least some of the new thinking regarding military history found its way into the Academy’s curricula when Military History was expanded to the third-year level in 1952. The University of Pretoria forced the Academy to take a broader view of Military History by insisting on the inclusion of some South African as well as international political history in the curricula.²⁷ The aim of Military History was formulated to reflect this broader approach. It now read:

To consolidate all work covered by the [degree] course and to create an image of warfare as a whole This includes a study of the development of warfare and its governing principles International relations and global organisation is also studied, while candidates are imbued with the ideal to serve and honour their country through the study of national history, emphasising vital issues²⁸

This wider perspective was obviously aimed at placing the study of military history in its socio-political context, both nationally (South African) and internationally. The only South African history previously included in the Academy curricula was a morsel of military history, namely a brief survey of the Anglo-Boer War and South Africa’s participation in the two World Wars, especially the Second World War. The new first-year Military History curriculum commenced with an introduction to general South African history, followed by an introduction to world history and international relations. This served as a background for the study of the

23 UP Archives, “Notule van die Raad 1951”, S7613, 21 Februarie 1951

24 M Evans, “The Role of Military History in the Education of Future Officers” at <http://www.adfa.oz.au/DOD/dara/misc02.htm>, 1997, p 1

25 M Evans, “The Role of Military History in the Education of Future Officers” at <http://www.adfa.oz.au/DOD/dara/misc02.htm>, 1997, p 2

26 M Evans, “The Role of Military History in the Education of Future Officers” at <http://www.adfa.oz.au/DOD/dara/misc02.htm>, 1997, p 3

27 SANDFA, South African Military College (Group 1) 85, MK/F/6/2, Cmdt South African Military College – AG, 8 July 1953

28 SANDFA, South African Military College (Group 1), Cmdt South African Military College – A L Kotzee, 4 December 1953 [Author’s translation from the original Afrikaans]

development of warfare up to the Second World War. A South African campaign history concluded the first-year curriculum. The second and third-year curricula also included aspects of South African and international (mostly British and European) political history next to themes from both South African and international (albeit exclusively Western) military history. The third-year curriculum also made explicit provision for the study of theories of war.²⁹

The inclusion of South African history in the Military History curricula certainly had a wider purpose than merely providing a national historical context to the military profession. It may be accepted that the History Department at the University of Pretoria, one of the traditional Afrikaner universities, to some degree served the ideals of Afrikaner nationalism. Yet, more significantly, Erasmus openly strove to replace the predominant British character of the Union Defence Force with a uniquely South African, and more particularly, Afrikaner character. He saw and used the Academy as an instrument to achieve this aim³⁰ and thus had a vested interest in ensuring that the Military History curricula dovetailed with his larger plan.

Mixed fortunes under the University of Stellenbosch

With the relocation of the Academy to Stellenbosch, Military History lost its status as core subject in the Academy curricula. History I, which the military students attended with their civilian counterparts, and Military History II were compulsory only for the B Mil degree in the Human Sciences. Neither History nor Military History was even offered as an elective to students studying for the B Mil in Natural or Commercial Sciences.³¹

The South African Defence Force's breakaway from a "peacetime" towards a more "wartime" directed orientation in the late 1960s, as a result of the revolutionary onslaught against the apartheid regime, changed the fortune of Military History at the Military Academy. The escalating internal conflict in South Africa and the emerging counter-insurgency war on its borders, brought a new focus to junior officer development. The apartheid government placed these conflicts within the context of the Cold War and, interfacing with the political thinking in the United States of America, portrayed these issues as the local manifestation of the world-wide communist onslaught. It was now argued that combating terrorist actions and subversion represented one of the most important facets of contemporary warfare. It was thought that the training and education of young officers should consequently also enable them to withstand the subtle, subversive attack on the human mind.³² As a result a new, more task-orientated training and education system, based on a thorough study of the practice at foreign military institutions,³³ was introduced at the Military

29 SANDFA, South African Military College (Group 1) 87, MK/F/9/1, Cmdt South African Military College – A L Kotzee, 4 December 1953

30 G E Visser, "British Influence on Military Training and Education in South Africa: The Case of the South African Military Academy and its Predecessors", *South African Historical Journal*, 46, May 2002, pp 77 - 79

31 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1956 I*, pp 163-164, 217; Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1957 I*, pp 228-231; Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1962*, p 500

32 SANDFA, MVB 164, "Verslag oor die Militêre Akademie I" [Report on the Military Academy] (hereafter: Malan Report), 28 Februarie 1969, pp 39-46, 52-53

33 Military Academy Archives (Mil Acad Archives), Reports, HWA/599/2/12/3, "Verslag van Komitee van Onderzoek insake Werwing, Keuring, Aanstelling en Opleiding van Staandemagoffisiere" [Report of Committee of Inquiry on the Recruiting, Selection, Appointment and Training of Permanent Force

Academy in 1970. In this new programme the study of Political Science and Military History was regarded as fundamental and both subjects were consequently made compulsory for all students at first-year level. Military History thus regained its status as a core subject at the Military Academy.³⁴

The same “wartime” orientation that restored Military History to its former core position in 1970 ironically led to its demise less than a decade later. The escalation of the South African Defence Force’s involvement in the so-called “Bush War” on the northern borders of South-West Africa (now Namibia) from the mid-1970s produced an increasing demand for junior officers, with the result that Defence Headquarters decided that junior officers should be “task qualified” within their respective services before becoming eligible for admission to the Military Academy.³⁵ As a consequence, the degree course at the Military Academy was excluded from the development cycle of junior officers from 1976. Admittance to the Academy now became an optional extra for those who wished to obtain a university degree. Instead of preparing candidate officers for commissioned appointment, the Academy henceforth offered university education to commissioned officers.³⁶ Military History was no longer a compulsory subject in any B Mil curriculum; it merely was an elective in the B Mil in Human Sciences (major) and the B Mil in Natural Sciences (first-year level only).³⁷

In 1990 the Defence Command Council (DCC), at the insistence of the then Chief of the South African Defence Force (SADF), General J.J. Geldenhuys, made an effort to make Military History compulsory for all students once again. General Geldenhuys was a former student of the Military Academy and attached great value to the study of military history. The new guidelines from the DCC was that:

The Military History course must be expanded to include aspects such as counterrevolutionary warfare and strategy, as well as the study of past wars with the aim of analysing the principles of war and the lessons learned. This course must be developed into a study of the art of war.³⁸

Although these topics as such were not foreign to Military History, clarification of the expectations of the DCC seemed to indicate that the practical outcomes required of Military History was of such a nature that it would tamper with the scientific integrity

Officers] (hereafter: Hartzenberg Report), 13 Februarie 1968, pp 7-10, 116-118; Malan Report, 28 Februarie 1969, pp 14-15, 28

34 D [G E] Visser, “Marrying Sparta and Athens: The South African Military Academy and Task-orientated Junior Officer Development in Peace and War”, *Journal for Contemporary History*, 27, 3, December 2002, p 192; Malan Report, 28 Februarie 1969, pp 8-11, 29

35 Mil Acad Archives, “Verslag deur Komitee van ondersoek met betrekking tot Jongoffisiersopleiding te Militêre Akademie Saldanha” [Report by the Committee of Inquiry on Young Officer Development at the Military Academy, Saldanha] (hereafter: Van der Westhuizen Report), 31 Januarie 1975, pp 9-10, 31, 55

36 D [G E] Visser, “Marrying Sparta and Athens: The South African Military Academy and Task-orientated Junior Officer Development in Peace and War”, *Journal for Contemporary History*, 27, 3, December 2002, p 195

37 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1977 XIII: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, pp M2-M7; Also see: Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1977-1985 XIII: Fakulteit Krygskunde*

38 Mil Acad (Current Archives), MA/R/103/1/8/2 vol II, ‘Projek WIMPOLE’: Verslag oor herondersoek na die inhoud van die B Mil -graadkursus’, [Project WIMPOLE: Report on the reinvestigation of the contents of the B Mil-degree course], 30 March 1990, p 1 [Author’s translation from the original Afrikaans]

of the discipline.³⁹ Consequently, a new compulsory subject, Military Strategy, which would address the expectations of the DCC more adequately, was instead introduced in 1991.⁴⁰

Military History, however, regained some of its former prominence with the introduction of the new, outcomes-based degree programmes at the Military Academy in 2001. It currently is a compulsory subject up to the second-year level in the programme in Security and Africa Studies and at first-year level in the War, Environment and Technology programme. It furthermore is offered as an elective up to the third year in both programmes. Military History is not offered in any of the four remaining undergraduate programmes, namely Human and Organisation Development, Organisation and Resource Management, Technology, and Technology and Management, though.⁴¹ This sad omission in the preparation of young officers is certainly contrary to the practice at military institutions abroad, where history and military history form part of a cluster of core subjects that are compulsory for all students.⁴² Retired Canadian General Ramsey Withers stressed in 1998 that:

Officer trainees need a fairly comprehensive introduction to the profession of arms and its component parts. In post industrial, liberal democracies this introduction includes extensive studies of the humanities and solid grounding in the sciences. In addition, the study of military theory and military history is mandatory.⁴³

A final recent development which somewhat enhances the position of Military History, is that a very brief introduction to South African military history was added to the military development programme. As from 2004, this is followed by all first-year students at the Academy as part of the newly instituted Military Skills Development System, which culminates in the Certificate in Military Studies (one year duration). Though this introduction to military history is too brief to be of much significance (it comprises about twelve lectures), it will hopefully create an awareness of the importance of military history to the profession of arms and motivate young officers to continue studying military history, either formally or informally, on an ongoing basis.

Broader context

When the Military Academy relocated to Stellenbosch in 1956, South Africa's military threat perception had not changed much from its immediate post-Second World War stance yet. The Military History curricula in essence followed the same

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- 39 Mil Acad (Current Archives), MA/C/106/1/B vol I, J S Kotze – Dean Faculty of Military Science, 28 May 1990
- 40 G E Visser, "Militêre Professionalisme en die Onderrig van Krygsgeskiedenis in die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Weermag: 'n Historiese Perspektief" [Military Professionalism and the Tuition of Military History in the South African National Defence Force: An Historical Perspective], *Scientia Militaria*, 27, 1997, pp 31-32
- 41 University of Stellenbosch, *Calendar 2004 XIII: Faculty of Military Science*, pp 9-16
- 42 R G Haycock, "The Labours of Athena and the Muses: Historical and Contemporary Aspects of Canadian Military Education", *Canadian Military Journal*, 2, 2, Summer 2001, pp 8, 16; D J Kaufman, "Military Undergraduate Security Education for the New Millennium" in J M Smit *et al*, *Educating International Security Practitioners: Preparing To Face the Demands of the 21st Century International Security Environment* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, 2001), pp 11-12
- 43 R G Haycock, "The Labours of Athena and the Muses: Historical and Contemporary Aspects of Canadian Military Education", *Canadian Military Journal*, 2, 2, Summer 2001, p 8

general course of the evolution of warfare and its governing principles and theories as it had in Pretoria, addressing a possible conventional threat. However, the first-year students now attended Stellenbosch University's normal BA I History course together with the civilian students, while Military History commenced at second-year level. This meant that all Military History content had to be condensed into two academic years, which no doubt took its toll in terms of depth of analysis. A significant departure from previous practice was that more attention was devoted to South African military history. However, true to the political periodization of the day, the South African Military History curricula commenced with the European settlement in 1652 – no mention was made of earlier South African military history. Particular attention was paid to the fortification and defence of the Cape, the development of the commando system as a solution to the unique military challenges in South Africa, the British conquest of the Cape, the Great Trek and the combat methods of the Voortrekkers, the two Boer wars of independence against the British, the establishment and development of the UDF, and finally, South Africa's participation in the two World Wars. In terms of general military history, the only novelty was the introduction of specific, separate themes on the development of air and naval warfare.⁴⁴

Though the broad outline of the Military History curricula under the auspices of the University of Stellenbosch was a continuation of the *status quo* of the Pretoria dispensation, the new Head of the Military History Department, Captain (later Commandant) C.M. Bakkes strove towards placing the study of military history in a broader context than had previously been the case. He summarised the aim and context of the discipline as follows:

Military History as a discipline investigates the perpetual changes in the phenomena of war and warfare. It traces these phenomena to its earliest origins and follows its development to date. From the genetic deployment of war and warfare it endeavours to expose the reasons for victory and defeat and derive military norms in order to promote the military insight of students studying the art of warfare.

Military History is a branch of the mother discipline of History. Furthermore, peace, war and warfare are closely linked to politics, which forms the background against which these processes are enacted. In order to obtain a broader understanding of perpetual evolution in general and of military development in particular, military history is projected against the screen provided by general history.⁴⁵

This effort to broaden the context of Military History is evident throughout Bakkes's term (1955-1968) as Military History lecturer at Stellenbosch and subsequently at Saldanha. The seed that Turner, as the founding father of Military History at the Academy had planted in Pretoria, was nursed and cultivated by Bakkes into a fully-fledged academic discipline at Saldanha.

44 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1958*, p 231; Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1959*, p 246

45 SANDFA, CSP (Classified) 10, OC Mil Acad – C H Hartzenberg, 9 November 1967 [Author's translation from the original Afrikaans]

Changes in the threat perception

When South Africa became a republic in 1961 and left the Commonwealth, its threat perception changed dramatically. The Western powers had withdrawn post-haste from the African continent after the Second World War to avoid any notion of perpetuated colonialism. This was perceived by the Union of South Africa as having opened the door to communist expansion in Africa. Such expansion presented an indirect onslaught on Western capitalism to achieve the Soviet Union's (USSR) aim of world domination and international communism. In pursuance of world domination, the USSR supported and exploited dissatisfaction, insurrection and liberation struggles across the globe to expand its influence, gain footholds and strangle the Western powers. The Nationalist Party government accordingly viewed black resistance against minority rule and socio-political oppression in South Africa as the local manifestation of the Soviet Union's efforts to foster international communism as an instrument to obtain world domination.⁴⁶

Spearheaded by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), black resistance in South Africa steadily built up until it exploded into violence at Sharpeville and Langa in 1960. Subsequently banned by the Verwoerd government, these two liberation movements went underground and formed military wings, namely Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and Poqo, later succeeded by the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA). They established bases outside the borders of the Republic of South Africa and respectively forged ties with the USSR and Red China to obtain support for an armed struggle against the governing forces.⁴⁷ Both MK and Poqo indeed embarked upon a campaign of armed resistance against the state in the early 1960s,⁴⁸ although in practical terms these actions were no more than mere armed propaganda in support of the political struggle.⁴⁹

This internal threat received little emphasis in the formulation of the military threat perception and was primarily the responsibility of the South African Police. The South African government was mainly concerned with possible "terrorist" attacks from outside the borders. By the beginning of the 1970s, the South African Department of Defence stated that:

... the Communists show increasing signs that they regard Southern Africa as a key area in their onslaught on the West [and] hostile African states are mainly armed and organised with aid from Communist countries ... Terrorists are active in Angola, Moçambique and along the Rhodesian border; their training, organisation and armament are improving appreciably.⁵⁰

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- 46 Republic of South Africa, *Review of Defence and Armaments Production: Period 1960 to 1970*, pp 5, 9; Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armament Production 1975*, p 7; Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1982*, p 1
- 47 T R H Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (MacMillan, Basingstoke and London, 1991), pp 356-358, 363-367, 388; Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armament Production 1973*, pp 1-5; Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1982*, p 1
- 48 T R H Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (MacMillan, Basingstoke and London, 1991), pp 364-367, 388
- 49 R Williams, "The Other Armies: Writing the History of MK", in I Liebenberg *et al* (eds), *The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa* (HAUM, Pretoria, 1994), p 23
- 50 Republic of South Africa, *Review of Defence and Armaments Production: Period 1960 to 1970*, p 26

Against this background South Africa's defence policy focused on external threats, both conventional and unconventional. The external based unconventional, guerrilla ("terrorist") onslaught was in fact already materialising. During 1966-1967, a number of guerrillas from the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) infiltrated South-West Africa and clashed with the South African Police in the Caprivi Strip. In 1972 the SADF became involved in counter-insurgency operations against SWAPO in South-West Africa⁵¹ and by the mid-1980s the Republic of South Africa had become involved in large-scale conventional operations against Soviet-led forces in Angola (in support of Unita), as well as in cross-border strikes against guerrilla bases in neighbouring countries. Especially Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique were "increasingly prepared to allow the ANC ... to commit deeds of terror in South Africa through, and from, their territories".⁵² In the meantime, the internal situation in the country had deteriorated to such an extent that the South African Army was deployed in support of the South African Police (SAP) in black townships to curb unrest from October 1984.⁵³

The mid-1970s ushered in the era of "total onslaught" and "total strategy" in South Africa's strategic thinking. The *White Paper on Defence and Armament Production* of 1973 stressed that South Africa was the target of international communism and its allies, namely left-wing activism, extravagant humanism, permissiveness, materialism and associated trends. South Africa was singled out as a special target for the by-products of the conflicting ideologies, such as black racism, excessive individual freedom, one-man-one-vote and a multitude of other slogans. It was faced with an indirect strategy by radical forces through subversion and the utilisation of limited violence in the classical communist tradition of protracted, low-intensity warfare where the insurgent always has the initiative and tries to wear down the state and its supporters through subversion and exhaustion.⁵⁴ The Government accordingly had to formulate a total national strategy involving all government departments and utilising all national resources – including the private sector and every citizen, black and white – on an integrated basis to counter the onslaught on every front.⁵⁵

Curricula responses to the changed threat perception

The changing threat perception at the beginning of the 1960s elicited no immediate response in terms of the Military History curricula at the Academy. The establishment of the Military Academy as a separate faculty of the University of Stellenbosch in 1961 in fact created an opportunity to do that, since Military History henceforth replaced General History at the first-year level.⁵⁶ This made an additional year available for the tuition of Military History and consequently offered the opportunity to restructure the curricula in order to address the question of revolutionary warfare. Despite having this opportunity, the extra teaching time was utilised to study some of the existing themes, *inter alia* the wars between white

51 Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armament Production 1969*, p 5; T R H Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (MacMillan, Basingstoke and London, 1991), p 388

52 Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1986*, p 12

53 Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1986*, pp 13-15

54 Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armament Production 1973*, pp 1-5

55 Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence 1977*, pp 4-5

56 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1962*, p 507

settlers and the indigenous peoples before, during and after the Great Trek, as well as South Africa's participation in the First World War (including the Rebellion of 1914-1915) in greater depth. The only notable addition to the curricula was the inclusion of a study of the Korean War in the third-year,⁵⁷ which, though it included some of the characteristics of revolutionary guerrilla warfare, was probably not related to the new threat perception. The Military History curricula thus only addressed a possible conventional threat against South Africa, but paid no attention to the stronger unconventional, revolutionary threat – internally and, subsequently, from across the Republic's borders.

The South African Military History sections of the curricula in essence portrayed the struggle history of the Afrikaner – the settlement at the Cape and the conflict with the indigenous people, the British occupation and oppression of the Dutch settlers, the frontier wars against the Xhosa, the Great Trek and its wars, and the two wars of independence fought against the British. The South African Military History curriculum of 1959 indeed addressed the themes “Nationalism versus Imperialism”, the “Second War of Independence”, the “Unification of South Africa” and the “Rebellion of 1914/15” in succession and concluded with a study of South African constitutional development since unification.⁵⁸

The curriculum of the B Mil (Hons) in Military History was the first to actually address the unconventional, revolutionary threat against the Republic. In addition to general and military historiography and the methodology of history, the curriculum of 1967 covered two themes each from South African military history and foreign history. The two themes from South African military history were merely a more in-depth study of themes from the undergraduate curricula, namely the defence of the Cape during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the Anglo-Boer War. On the other hand, the two foreign history themes broke new ground and went some way towards addressing the threat perception, since they respectively dealt with the history of communism, fascism and national socialism, as well as guerrilla warfare and revolutions.⁵⁹ These themes were perpetuated right up to 1982, after which date the focus of the curriculum was brought more in line with the threat perception. The honours course forthwith offered two themes only, apart from the theoretical modules, namely “Communism” and “Revolutionary War in Africa”.⁶⁰ This focus however went astray in 1986, when the theme “Communism” was changed to “Communism and the rise of Soviet Military Power”, and students had a choice between that and a new theme only, namely “The development of the SA Defence Force, 1912-75”.⁶¹ The latter did not address the threat perception directly at all.

However apt the postgraduate response to the unconventional threat might have been, its impact was too small. Preparation of the officer corps for the revolutionary onslaught required putting the undergraduate student body in the right frame of mind. The trickle of honours graduates was too small to have a meaningful impact. Though postgraduate studies were already instituted at the Academy with the establishment of

57 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1962*, p 507

58 SANDFA, AG(3) 225, AG(3)1906/9 vol VIII, OC Mil Acad – AG, 12 August 1960

59 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1967*, p 699; Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1973*, p 902

60 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1982 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, pp 16-17

61 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1986 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 19

the Faculty of Military Science in 1961, the first B Mil (Hons) in Military History was only awarded in 1968. The next two candidates followed in 1974 and 1984 respectively, while by the end of 1994, a grand total of only seven officers had obtained the B Mil (Hons) in Military History.⁶² Postgraduate studies beyond the B Mil (Hons) in Military History were not encouraged. The Dean and Officer Commanding the Military Academy, Colonel P.J.G. de Vos, a former Physics professor from the University of Stellenbosch, stated in 1963 that:

As far as postgraduate studies in Military History are concerned, it should be realised that the purpose of such studies is in the first place to produce more capable military leaders, not military historians. It is felt that honours studies still comply with this primary aim ... but it is doubtful if an MMil dissertation in Military History ... would be a cost effective way of spending an officer's time. Such an officer, qualified in the research of military history, could probably do valuable work, after his retirement, with regard to the national task of military history writing, of which very little has been done in South Africa yet.⁶³

The guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War, which had some relevance to the unconventional threat, appeared as a separate theme in the undergraduate Military History curricula in 1969 only.⁶⁴ Whether it was indeed included in order to address the unconventional threat perception, is not clear, but there seems to have been a movement in that direction, since themes about the most important political events of the twentieth century and irregular warfare were included in the curricula in 1972.⁶⁵ The latter theme was redesignated "Guerrilla Warfare" in 1975.⁶⁶ However, it was not until 1977 that the undergraduate curricula responded fully to the unconventional threat perception. That year saw a significant expansion in the scope of the undergraduate Military History curricula that focused on both the revolutionary and the conventional threat.⁶⁷ The Cold War and the Vietnam War were added to the curricula, which clearly addressed the perceived world-wide communist onslaught and the nature of revolutionary guerrilla warfare. On the conventional side, the Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1947 to 1973 were added to the curriculum. Two themes not directly related to the threat perception, namely the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and the rise of Japan and Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, were also included. The former, though probably viewed predominantly from the British side, at least brought more indigenous (African) content to the study of military history. The changed curriculum of 1977 also appears to have put more emphasis on war and society by including a specific theme on the socio-political consequences of the First World War. In 1983 the socio-political consequences of the Second World War were also singled out for attention.⁶⁸

The above-mentioned curriculum additions of 1977 were clearly in accordance with Von Clausewitz's premise⁶⁹ that the most recent military history obviously provides the best examples or "lessons" for the future. It also promoted the understanding of

62 Military Academy Archives, list of Military Academy graduates, 1953-1994

63 SANDFA, CG C43 D81, KG/GPT/1/3/2 vol I, OC Mil Acad – AG, 19 August 1963 [Author's translation from the original Afrikaans]

64 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1969*, p 697

65 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1972*, p 832

66 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1975*, p 581

67 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1977 XIII: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p M15

68 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1983 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 17

69 C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by M. Howard and P. Paret (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976), p 173

the perpetual evolution of warfare. This approach however necessitated the partial neglect of Michael Howard's important premise that military history has to be studied in width, depth and context if one does so with the aim of using it as a guideline for the future,⁷⁰ in other words, deriving "lessons" from past experience. The addition of recent wars to the curriculum indeed enhanced the principle of width, but at the cost of in-depth analysis, since the older wars had to be covered in less detail to make room for the more contemporary ones. A lack of depth, of course, also impacts negatively on the question of context.

Meeting the "New South Africa"

The collapse of the USSR in the late 1980s and the consequent termination of the Cold War changed South Africa's security situation completely. The SADF and Cuban forces withdrew from Namibia and Angola, and the former became an independent state in March 1990. Meanwhile, in February 1990, the National Party government unbanned the ANC, PAC, SACP and other organisations associated with the black liberation struggle in South Africa, and embarked upon an all-party political negotiation process that culminated in a new, democratic political dispensation in South Africa in April 1994.

With these developments, both the internal and external threats that had been linked to communist expansion for so long, disappeared. As was the case immediately after the Second World War, South Africa for all practical purposes once again found itself without any clear military threat, either externally or internally. Even so, the South African National Defence Force's (SANDF) primary function remained to defend South Africa against external military aggression.⁷¹ It was, however, quite clear that the SANDF's likely deployment at the turn of the century would probably be in connection with secondary, non-combat functions relating to internal law and order, illegal immigration, drug-trafficking, civil disasters and regional peace-support operations.⁷² Regional security, peace and stability certainly took a very high priority on South Africa's new defence agenda, especially with a view to the Republic's perceived leadership role in the African Renaissance.⁷³ To date, the SANDF has indeed already deployed to Lesotho, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on peace-keeping missions and might soon find its way to Liberia.

Before the end of the Cold War, Bush War and internal liberation struggle, the former SADF had a significant body of experience on which to base its doctrine and force preparation. Faced with almost no experience to fall back on in terms of its new role, the SANDF has, since 1994, been largely dependent upon the experience of others, primarily contained in military history, to feel its way forward. In addition, the formation of the SANDF, entailing the integration of the former SADF and the defence forces of the former black homelands with the non-statutory forces of the ANC (MK) and the PAC (APLA), and its transformation to meet the needs of a new,

70 M Howard, "The Use and Abuse of Military History", *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution*, 107, February 1962, p 7

71 T Neethling, "The South African Military and Peacekeeping: Reflections on Conditions, Capacity-building and Prospects", *Scientia Militaria*, 31, 1, 2003, pp 99, 104

72 L S Mollo, "Exemplary Leadership and Exemplary Teams: Unleashing Future Defence Leadership", *Scientia Militaria*, 31, 1, 2003, p 117; M Lekota, "Opening Speech at Meeting of SADC Defence Ministers", *African Armed Forces*, July 2003, p 20

73 E A Thorne, "The African Standby Force Takes Shape: An Observation of Needs and Necessary Actions", *African Armed Forces*, July 2003, p 26

democratic South Africa, also created a need for the study of history, or rather military history. To ensure a smooth and peaceful transition, followed by sustained professional development, the various constituting parties and the new generation of SANDF officers needed to understand where they had come from, where they were heading and how they might get there. This naturally required a stronger focus on African and South African military history.

It was against this very background that the Military History Department embarked upon a restructuring of its curricula in 1990. Catering for the never to be neglected conventional threat, the Indo-Pakistan Wars (1965-1971), the Falklands War (1982), the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and the SADF's conventional and semi-conventional operations in Angola (1975-1988) were added to the Contemporary Conventional Warfare curricula in 1991. In 1993 an overview of the Gulf War of 1991 was also included to keep up with new military developments.⁷⁴ In 1996 a study of the role of armed forces in the Post-Cold War era was added,⁷⁵ followed by the inclusion in 1998 of a study of the history of peace-keeping operations, *inter alia* the South Africa-Botswana intervention in Lesotho in 1998.⁷⁶ To address unconventional warfare, a completely new module on Contemporary Revolutionary Warfare (subsequently renamed Internal Conflict⁷⁷) was instituted in 1991, dealing with the theoretical background of revolutionary warfare; case studies of the revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba and Algeria, as well as of the rebellions in the Philippines, Kenya (Mau-Mau) and Malaya, followed by the study of the Vietnam War; the internal war in Mozambique; the revolution in Zimbabwe; the Angolan Civil War; the insurgency in South-West Africa/Namibia; and counter-revolutionary warfare in South Africa.⁷⁸ The latter theme was subsequently expanded to include the history of black resistance movements and the armed liberation struggle in South Africa up to 1994.⁷⁹ To commence addressing the lack of early black military history in the curricula, a study of indigenous South African military history before 1652, and the Difaqane/Mfecane (conflict amongst and consequent dislocation of the Bantu-speaking peoples during the 1820s to the 1830s) were included in 1996.⁸⁰

The curricula adaptations of 1991 extended to the honours course in Military History as well. The two study themes following the theory of history and military history, were broadly defined as a theme from general military history and one from South African military history.⁸¹ This open-ended theme on South African military history makes it equally possible for students to select case studies from the earliest military conflict in South Africa, right up to the conclusion of the liberation struggle in 1994 and the subsequent history of the SANDF. In 1995 the theme addressing South African military history was broadened to one on either South African or African military history.⁸² Apart from strengthening the focus on the African

74 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1993-1994 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 25

75 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1996 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 22

76 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1998 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 26

77 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1995 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 22

78 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1991-1992 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 20

79 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1995 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 22; Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1997 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 21

80 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1996 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 22

81 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1991-1992 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 20

82 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1995 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 22

continent, it also caters specifically for preferences of students from other African defence forces enrolling for postgraduate studies at the Academy.

The late 1990s also saw an increased emphasis on the theory of military history at undergraduate level. Up to 1997, the theory of military history at undergraduate level was restricted to a brief introduction to the scope and nature of the subject at the beginning of the first year. The student's next encounter with historical theory was at postgraduate level. Realising that very few students ever proceed to postgraduate studies, elements of the theory of military history have been introduced throughout the undergraduate curricula from 1997. These aspects include a brief introduction to the scope, nature and functions of military history, general military historiography to 1939, the influence of the Second World War on military historiography, trends in contemporary military historiography, military history and military professionalism and South African military historiography.⁸³ Addressing the theory of military history right from the first year is a significant contribution to officer education, since it enhances the ability of young officers to pursue the study of military history fruitfully and on their own throughout their careers.

Current curricula

The introduction of the Programme in Security and Africa Studies in 2001 set a major restructuring and refocusing of the Military History curricula in motion, in order to meet current challenges and decrease the Eurocentric approach. A new module on the military history of Africa up to 1945 was introduced, covering, *inter alia*, African historiography, warfare in sub-Saharan Africa since the earliest times, state formation, the slave-trade, internecine warfare, resistance to colonial conquest and an introduction to national liberation and post-colonial internal conflict in Africa. In addition, to enhance the focus on the African continent, a new module on low-intensity conflict in Africa since 1945 was also introduced. The rest of the subject content was restructured into modules on general military history to 1914, South African military history, the First and Second World Wars, and contemporary warfare from 1946 to 1991 (the latter theme was expanded in 2004 to include the Iraq War of 2003). The restructured module on South African military history includes a specific theme on military power and the establishment of white hegemony during the second half of the nineteenth century. This brought to the fore formerly neglected indigenous struggles such as the erstwhile South African Republic's wars against the Pedi, the Boer-Bagananwa War of 1894-1895 and the British subjugation of African states. The module on South African military history concludes with the establishment of the SANDF in 1994 and its transformation since. The new module on low-intensity conflict in Africa since 1945, covers the same content as the former module on internal conflict, but with a broader focus on the African continent.⁸⁴

The stronger undergraduate focus on the African continent is perpetuated in the postgraduate programmes. The current B Mil (Hons)-programme in Military History still offers themes from general military history and African or South African military history in addition to the normal theoretical modules. A case study on the insurgent leadership of Amilcar Cabral, head of Guinea-Bissau's nationalist movement and one

83 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 1997 XIV: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 21

84 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 2001 XIII: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, pp 35, 62; Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 2002 XIII: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, p 18; Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 2003 XIII: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, pp 21-22

of Africa's foremost revolutionary leaders, is also currently being developed for this programme. The structured M Mil-programme in Military History, instituted in 2001, includes a theme on War and Society and one on Conflict in Africa as electives. Military History modules on African or South African military history are also offered in the newly instituted B Mil (Hons) and structured M Mil programmes in Security and Africa Studies.⁸⁵

Conclusion

With the exception of the early 1950s and the period from 1970 to 1976, the South African Military Academy historically had not afforded Military History the central position in its curricula that the military profession's emphasis on the subject seems to demand. Since the reorganisation of the Military Academy's academic offerings in 2001, the discipline has regained a degree of prominence through its inclusion as a compulsory subject in the programmes on Security and Africa Studies, as well as War, Environment and Technology. Through its exclusion from the other four undergraduate programmes, however, contrary to the international trend, the bulk of the students still leave the Academy without any exposure to military history and the insight it brings with regard to the military profession.

During its first years of existence, the Military History curricula at the Military Academy were mostly confined to campaign histories, lacking the broader socio-political context within which wars were fought. This hiatus was increasingly addressed from the late 1950s up to the present situation where war and society is a fundamental aspect of the study of military history. The political landscape of the day has obviously had a major impact on the context of the Military History curricula, giving rise to a Eurocentric and Afrikaner-flavoured focus for many years and a more Africanist perspective since the 1990s. Prior to 1972, the Military History curricula at the Military Academy only partially addressed the needs arising from the national threat perception, particularly with regard to revolutionary or low-intensity internal warfare. The postgraduate curricula indeed started to address the revolutionary threat a little earlier, but the postgraduate students were too few to make a significant impact. Today the scope of the Military History curricula is broad enough to orientate young officers in their historical and socio-political milieu and to give them a wide frame of reference with regard to all foreseeable environments within which they may operate in the twenty-first century. Particular attention is paid to the most recent wars in order to keep them current with regard to the latest developments on the battlefield, while at the same time impressing upon their minds the perpetual evolution of warfare. This emphasis on width and currency results in a continuous condensation of older military history, with an unavoidable loss of depth and context in this respect. However, in this case the end indeed justifies the means, since contemporary military history clearly adds more professional value to officer education for the arena of the twenty-first century.

In the final analyses the most serious remaining shortcoming in the teaching of military history at the Military Academy is the fact that it reaches only a small section of the student body. As E.N. Luttwak points out:

85 Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Jaarboek 2001 XIII: Fakulteit Krygskunde*, pp 22-24

[It] cannot be proved ... that the Great captains of the past learned any of their arts from their reading of history; but what *can* be proved is that almost all of them read as much military history as they could. Certainly there is no excuse for wilfully ignoring the record of human experience at war when preparing to assume responsibility for its conduct – at any level.⁸⁶

Abstract

Defence forces globally emphasize the significance of the study of military history in the professional development of their officers, because they attach significant value to the “lessons” of past experience. Furthermore, military history serves as a benchmark to determine the norms and standards of military professionalism and to buttress the military ethos. Military history has thus traditionally been a core subject at most military academies world-wide. This article traces the status and content of Military History as a subject at the South African Military Academy, since the institution’s inception in 1950. It also explores the relevance of the Academy’s military history curricula with a view to South Africa’s historic threat perception and the changing role of its defence force. In conclusion an evaluation is presented of the requirements and challenges which Military History faces at the Military Academy in the twenty-first century.

Opsomming

Militêre Geskiedenis by die Suid-Afrikaanse Militêre Akademie

Wêreldwyd beklemtoon verdedigingsmagte die betekenis van die bestudering van militêre geskiedenis vir die professionele ontwikkeling van hulle offisiere, aangesien ’n hoë waarde aan die “lesse” uit ondervindings van die verlede geheg word. Verder dien militêre geskiedenis ook as ’n peil waarvolgens die norme en standaarde van militêre professionalisme bepaal, en waardeur die militêre etos versterk kan word. Militêre geskiedenis was dus tradisioneel ’n kernvakgebied by die meeste militêre akademies in die wêreld. Hierdie artikel ondersoek die status en inhoud van Militêre Geskiedenis as vak aan die Suid-Afrikaanse Militêre Akademie vanaf laasgenoemde instansie se ontstaan in 1950. Dit bespreek ook die toepaslikheid van die Akademie se Militêre Geskiedenis curricula in die lig van Suid-Afrika se historiese bedreigingspersepsie en die veranderende rol van die land se verdedigingsmag. Ten slotte word gefokus op die vereistes en uitdagings waarvoor Militêre Geskiedenis as vak aan die Militêre Akademie in die twintigste eeu te staan kom.

Key Words

South African Military Academy, Military History, Saldanha, Military History curricula, military education, officer education, officer development, South African National Defence Force.

Slutelwoorde

Suid-Afrikaanse Militêre Akademie, Militêre Geskiedenis, Saldanha, Militêre Geskiedenis kurrikula, militêre opvoeding, offisiersontwikkeling, Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Weermag.

86 E N Luttwak, “Introduction”, in L J Matthews and D E Brown (eds), *The Parameters of War: Military History from the Journal of the U.S. Army War College* (Pergamon-Brassey’s, Washington, 1987), p xvi