

THE MILITARY, WAR AND SOCIETY: 'THE ACHILLES HEEL'
OF SOCIOLOGY AND THE NEED FOR REFLECTION

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AND THE NEED FOR REFLECTION*

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Lindy Heinecken was formerly a researcher and Deputy Director of the Centre for Military Studies (CEMIS) at the South African Military Academy, where she worked for 17 years. Since 2006 she has been at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Stellenbosch University where she lectures in political and industrial sociology. The main focus of her research is in the domain of armed forces and society where she has published extensively on a range of issues including gender integration, civil-military relations, military unionism, the military profession, HIV/AIDS and security and more recently on the experiences of military personnel on peace operations and on post-conflict reconstruction and development. She holds an MSocSc in Industrial Sociology from the University of Cape Town and a PhD from Kings College, Department of War Studies, University of London. She serves on numerous academic boards, including the Council of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society (USA) and the International Sociological Association's Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution working group; she is also working group convenor for Crime, Violence and Security of the South African Sociological Association. She serves on the editorial board of the journals *Armed Forces and Society* and *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* and is a reviewer for more than eight scholarly journals in the field. She is a NRF C1 rated researcher and is also one of the pool of specialists conducting research for the South African Army.

THE MILITARY, WAR AND SOCIETY: ‘THE ACHILLES’ HEEL’ OF SOCIOLOGY AND THE NEED FOR REFLECTION

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, war has led to epochs of social change. Even when there is relative peace, the military continues to be an important social and political actor. Holding the monopoly of collective violence, they remain central to state power and continue to exercise a considerable influence over society. Consequently, sociologists need to reflect upon the relationship of the military with society, as ultimately their disciplinary claim comes from the study of human society. Yet, as I will explain in the course of this lecture, the study of the military, war and society remains at the fringes of the discipline and is often invisible to students of sociology. This is despite the fact that war continues to have a profound effect on humankind, not least on our own continent where violent conflict continues to undermine human security and development.

Given this, many ask how I came to study the military. Looking back I believe it must have been my destiny. My grandfather was in the First World War and this affected the upbringing and future of my father. My father served in the Second World War and my mother experienced the direct effect of war on her home and family as a teenager. My brother served as a conscript in South Africa’s Border War and returned with many interesting and disturbing stories. As a student at the University of Cape Town (UCT) during the height of the state of emergency in the eighties, I became an ardent supporter of the End Conscription Campaign, opposing the deployment of troops in the townships. To top this, I later married an ex-naval officer and would eventually be employed in my first ‘proper’ job at the Military Academy as a researcher at the Centre for Military Studies. This has meant that military and war talk has been part of my psyche, both in the private and public spheres of my life.

Subsequently, I have developed both an intellectual interest in and concern about the effect of war on humankind. Studying the military, how the military causes and adapts to societal change and the consequences of war have absorbed my thoughts for almost three

decades. In this lecture I try to capture the trajectory of my academic career. I begin by providing a broad overview of why the study of the military and war has become removed from the sociological canon and where I find myself, before moving on to some of the central themes of my research on the military profession and institution, on civil-military relations, and lastly on gender, security and development.

THE INVISIBLE DISCIPLINE

Despite the pervasiveness of war and violence in the world, sociology in recent years has lacked a tradition of studying and analysing the effect of the armed forces on society (Kilby, 2013:261). The most common explanation cited for this is the foundational heritage of the Enlightenment, which rather than seeing war and violence as structurally intrinsic to social life, perceived it as irrational and bound to dissipate with modernity (Malešević, 2010b:17). Whilst this is partly true, the main reason why the study of the military has remained peripheral to mainstream sociological analysis is due to the nature and effect of the two World Wars on humankind. The distaste for war and violence on the part of the general public was shared by many post-WWII sociologists. This, according to Malešević (2010a:195), led to “the hegemony of anti-militarist social theory that cleansed sociology from its militarist heritage” and meant that even the work of the classic theorists are interpreted in strictly pacifist terms.

This has not always been the case. Prior to the fifties, the holy trinity of sociology – Marx, Weber and Durkheim – were critically engaged with the effect of war on society. In fact this, together with the growth of industrial capitalism, was central to their understanding of social change and modernity (Walby, 2012:1). As conflict theorists, both Marx and Weber analysed this primarily in relation to its influence on the modern capitalist state, albeit from different ontological perspectives. Marx’s theory of social change inevitably implied an interest in the mechanics of collective violence by both the state, to uphold capitalist interests, and by those seeking to transform the social

order through revolutionary action. Accordingly, Marx saw capitalism as the root cause of war and contingent upon the existence of class divisions (Dandeker, 1989:18). While this is somewhat reductionist, Marxist understanding and analysis of contemporary warfare and revolution remain relevant to the sociological study of war, as is so aptly outlined by Giddens (1985) in *The nation state and violence*.

Of the three classical social theorists, Weber made the most significant contribution to our understanding of the relationship between the military, war and society (Malešević, 2010b:25). He emphasised the link between politics and violence, and the importance of the state's control over the legitimate use of violence (Weber, 1994:360). His concept of bureaucracy emerged from his analysis of the military as a prototype for the modern state, and remains central to our understanding of the military as an ideal type bureaucracy and the effect that bureaucracies have on society (Shields, 2003:181; Caforio, 2003:12). Although Weber never completed his military sociology (Miewald, 1970:129), the study of bureaucracy remains pivotal to our understanding of how militaries function. This is demonstrated most aptly by the influential sociologist C. Wright Mills (1956), who, in his study of *The power elite*, shows how the military, in collaboration with government and the corporate elite, come to yield considerable power and influence over society. Similarly, building on the work of both Weber and Durkheim, Zygmunt Bauman (1989), in his work on *Modernity and the Holocaust*, shows the effect that dehumanised bureaucracies (like militaries) can have on society and why we have atrocities such as genocides.

In comparison to Marx and Weber, Durkheim was a pacifist who considered violence to be a largely irrational, anachronistic feature of life (Kilby, 2013:262). With his emphasis on cohesion and the need to establish consensus in society, he appeared almost disinterested in the question of social conflict. This is not to say that he ignored the influence of the military on society, but that this was a subtext in his work. As Mukherjee (2010:7) states, it was theorised by caveat, by silence and implied as present by its absence. Even though Durkheim's (1952) work never theorised violence, his understanding of the effect of anomie and social disintegration on society is of practical value in understanding the effect and consequences of war on society. War creates large-scale anomie, destroys the social fabric of society and evokes a state of normlessness. As pointed out in a recent publication by Mukherjee, titled *Durkheim and violence* (2010), if nothing else Durkheim highlights the important link between social cohesion and consensus in the process of preventing conflict and resolving it.

Even so, these founders of modern social theory hardly "foresaw quite how savage and destructive would be some of the forces unleashed in current times" (Giddens, 1985:3) and this is why there is concern about the disappearance of the study of war and society from the sociological canon (Ashworth & Dandeker, 1987:1; Malešević, 2010a:194). To illustrate this, a cursory study of introductory sociology text books shows that scant attention is paid to the military and war and peace studies. This has led Ender and Gibson (2005) to conclude that "the military is an invisible institution" to students of sociology. This is compounded by the fact that very few universities, internationally and in South Africa, offer a specialist course in the sociology of war (Heinecken & Visser, 2008). Students of sociology may well be led to believe that the military and war is of little consequence to human society. Hence, they will fail to understand the causes and consequences of war, the effect of militarisation on society, the link between conflict, security and development and so forth. As such, the study of the military, war and society has been left largely to those working in the field of political, international and security studies (Walby, 2013:96-97).

This is not to say that there are not a number of seminal works that have crept into mainstream sociology, most notably the publications by C. Wright Mills (*The power elite*, 1956), Samuel Huntington (*The soldier and the state*, 1957), Morris Janowitz (*The professional soldier*, 1960), and Anthony Giddens (*The nation state and violence*, 1985). In terms of the subfield of military sociology, the influence of Morris Janowitz remains ever-present. He was instrumental in soliciting scholarly debate among sociologists and others through forums such as the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society (IUS), created in 1961, and the establishment of two scholarly journals, the journal *Armed Forces and Society*, as well as the *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* (Siebold, 2001:141). He was the founding member of the International Sociological Association's (ISA) Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution Research group (RC01). Both the IUS and RC01 research groups serve as important forums that stimulate research and collaboration among scholars (Ferreira, 2012), and I am fortunate to serve on the boards of both.

Although still a relatively minor subfield of sociology, the sociological analysis of the military spans a broad spectrum, as reflected in *The handbook of the sociology of the military* (Caforio, 2003) and the more recent four-volume publication by Segal and Burk, *Military sociology* (2012). Numerous publications by scholars in the field contribute to our understanding of how the military organisation and profession are changing, civil-military

relations, the experiences and consequences of war and the use and control of force. These are making military sociology more visible, and slowly one is seeing the study of the military, war and violence creeping back into the sociological discourse, as reflected in the publication of a number of influential books (Collins, 2008; Ray, 2011; Shaw, 2005). One of the most noteworthy contributions of late is that by Malešević (2010b), titled *The sociology of war and violence*. This is one of the few scholarly works that uses sociological concepts to understand the changing character of war and organised violence, and is a significant step forward in terms of reintegrating the study of war into the sociological canon.

THE MILITARY PROFESSION AND INSTITUTION

This brings me to the subject of my own research, which has focused more narrowly on the military profession and institution, the relationship with broader society and, more recently, on post-conflict reconstruction and development. From the onset, my analysis of the military institution was informed by my grounding in the sociology of work. Coming from this background, most of my research has focused on the nature of military work and the military as an employer. This became the subject of my master's degree, titled *The soldier as an employee: The compatibility of labour rights for military service*. This would later serve as a reference document in the controversial Constitutional Court case that extended labour rights to soldiers in 1999. My PhD, on *Military unionism and the new dynamics of employment relations: A four country comparative study* (2006), focused on the issue of military unionism. This led to the publication of a book, together with Richard Bartle, on *Military unionism in the post-Cold War era: A future reality* (2006), which examined the experiences of 12 different countries.

Through the course of my reading on the subject, I became intensely engaged with the work of Morris Janowitz (1960) and Charles Moskos (1977, 1986), which to my mind are the two sociologists that have made the most impact in the subfield of military sociology. Both claimed that the military was undergoing a strange process of civilianisation. Moskos (1977) described this in terms of an institutional/occupational (I/O) drift, where those who were joining the armed forces came to see military service as less of a calling and more of a job (Moskos, 1986:378). This raised the question of the effect this occupationalism was having on the military profession, where soldiers become motivated to serve based on purely material concerns, such as pay and working conditions. At the time, this was becoming an

issue in South Africa and was associated with the shift to an all-volunteer force in 1994.

Upon the completion of my doctoral studies in 2006, I had come to realise that Moskos' institutional/occupational model was outdated, and even the more recent update by Moskos, Williams and Segal (1999) failed to recognise the effect that neo-liberalism and the implementation of flexible employment practices were having on the military profession. My thoughts were profoundly influenced by the work of Richard Sennet, specifically his book *The corrosion of character* (1998), which looked at the consequences of the shift to more flexible employment practices for society. What I failed to realise at the time, until I read the work of Peter Singer (2001), was that it was not the adoption or implementation of flexible employment practices or material concerns that was causing discontent within military ranks, but the outsourcing of public security to the private sector. Military professionals had come to feel that their profession was being undermined by the civilianisation and outsourcing of military work.

Since the late 1980s many governments, particularly those of the United Kingdom and United States, started to advocate the use of private sector business practices and market methods to provide public goods and services to society. This led to the implementation of the New Public Management (NPM) approach to public service delivery (Jongergórd & Erlingdóttir, 2012). Underlying this philosophy is the aim for greater economic efficiency of government through the contracting out of certain tasks previously considered the exclusive domain or responsibility of the state. The rationale behind this is that the successful implementation of NPM practices leads to a more effective and efficient public sector, whether this be the delivery of public services, or security (Peters, 1996). As with other government departments, the military came under pressure to implement post-fordist employment practices to render them more cost-effective, and to outsource those tasks not central to their core function, namely war-fighting.

The impact on the military profession was profound. Some claimed that this was resulting in the "deprofessionalisation or proletarianisation" of the military profession (Nuciar, 1994:8). As the state came to cede military tasks to the private sector under the banner of cost-effectiveness and efficiency, so the jurisdiction over state security changed. Civilians now become delegated agents of the state in the provision of collective security (McCoy, 2010) and called into question whether the state and national armed forces still held the monopoly over collective violence. The

success of the South African private military company Executive Outcomes in Angola and Sierra Leone as a 'private army for hire' catapulted this subject into prominence. This provoked a whole range of questions for me as a sociologist. What does this mean in terms of the hegemony of the military profession? Has the outsourcing of military tasks caused the military to lose control of their profession; and if so, what are the implications? Scholars of the sociology of the professions all concur that knowledge is the core generating trait of professionalism (Abbott, 1991; MacDonald, 2006). So what happens when a profession fails to exercise professional, economic and social closure or control of their professional domain?

In an article, due to be published in the journal *Armed Forces and Society*, titled "Outsourcing public security: The unforeseen consequences for the military profession", I attempt to address these issues. In this article I make the claim that the military has lost control of their profession – that they have unknowingly ceded their knowledge and skills to outsiders, that their autonomy has been undermined by the invasion of outsiders, that their sense of corporateness has been eroded, and that their service ethic based on selfless service has been destroyed. The article is provocative and although it is still only available in electronic format it has solicited heated scholarly debate and has been placed in the *Disputatio sine Fine* section of the journal. This no doubt will put my scholarly credentials to the test, but ultimately this is what academia is about.

More recently I have become engaged with the work of influential micro-sociologist Erwin Goffman (1961) and his work on total institutions. This was prompted by two of my students working on military recruitment and the transferability of military skills to civilian employment. The military is a total institution as it requires, at least during the first phase of a person's military career, that recruits are separated from the outside world in a military barracks. Here they are subjected to an intensive process of resocialisation that involves separation from civilian society, harsh physical training, bureaucratic control and regulation, strict routine, discipline and surveillance. They are turned into what Foucault (1977) would term 'docile bodies', broken down and remoulded into soldiers. This process of radical resocialisation is deemed necessary to ensure that they are able to fight and not to flee when confronted with dangerous or stressful circumstances. While this is required to ensure combat effectiveness, little attention has been paid to the effect this has on both the willingness of recruits to enlist in such an institution and the ability of individuals to reintegrate

back into society. After being subjected to extensive regulation and control, how fluid is this military identity? Can they seamlessly re-enter civilian society, or do they experience problems of adaptation? Studies of military veterans, for example, show that they find it difficult to adapt to civilian life and find gainful employment (Heinecken & Bwalya, 2013).

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

From the above it is apparent that a sociological analysis of the military is important to deepen our understanding of how the military influences society (Dandeker, 1989:24). The dilemma facing most democracies is "how to reconcile a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to do with a military subordinate enough to do only what civilians authorize them to do" (Feaver, 1996:149). The military needs to be strong enough to protect the nation, but not act in such a way as to destroy the society it is intended to protect, or to drain its resources. How to achieve this has been a subject of intensive scholarly debate between Huntington (1957) and Janowitz (1960), who remain pivotal to our understanding of civil-military relations. For political scientists (Huntington) the focus is on the state and on institutional objective civilian control; for sociologists (Janowitz) it is about the integration or convergence of civil and military institutions and the need to not become too isolated from society (Feaver, 1996:166).

Admittedly I have followed the Janowitzian school by focusing on how the military as a subsystem of society has responded to social and political change. This has included looking at the emergence of what has been termed the civil-military gap, the chasm that is seemingly developing between the military and civilian society and how this affects both cooperation and military effectiveness (Feaver & Kohn, 2001). Since the end of the Cold War there has been much debate within Western democracies on the growing gap between the more liberal civilian society and the more conservative military society. These debates have become more pronounced with the end of conscription and the adoption of an all-volunteer system, where people have little experience or knowledge of the military and question its relevance in society (Feaver, 1999).

This has numerous consequences for both society and the military. The first is that it makes civilian control of the military even harder, especially where the military becomes insular and isolated from society. Where civilians have less contact with the military and know little of military affairs, it impacts on the ability of politicians and civil society to influence defence policy (Feaver, 1999).

Some refer to this as an connectivity gap (Cohn, 1999), which is leading to increasing tension between military leadership and civilian politicians. The second is the notion of a cultural gap, where the culture, norms and values of the military and civilian world differ to such an extent that it affects dialogue (Muchow, 1995). This leads to the military becoming either openly contemptuous of civilian norms and values, or results in the military losing public support, which affects aspects such as funding, recruitment and the legitimacy of the armed forces.

In South Africa, the most serious gap is essentially a knowledge gap that has deepened since the end of all-white conscription. With no obvious military threat to the country, the public have become increasingly apathetic and disengaged from military affairs. Their interest is often limited to wider public concerns such as the arms deal, the recent Gupta saga, the SANDF's involvement in the Central African Republic, and scandals relating to the disciplinary conduct of soldiers. This has a profound influence on the ability of civil society to influence defence policy and debate military affairs. The military in South Africa is becoming more and more insular as the media tend to focus on sensational issues and this has become worse as the military has become more politicised.

As members of the former revolutionary forces have come to take control over the South African military, one of the main challenges have been "how to disarm these soldiers politically and re-arm them professionally" (Perlmutter & Bennett, 1980:23). What one observes is a merging of traditional Weberian legal-rational bureaucratic models of command and control, with a more patrimonial system based on patronage which operates through bureaucratic officials. This is leading to a politicisation of the military, a disrupted chain of command, and alienation among certain race groups (Heinecken, 2013a). This raises some serious concerns for civil-military relations and ultimately democracy itself. As Lutterbeck (2013:33) points out, the armed forces that are most likely to suppress pro-reform movements are those who have become politicised, in which favouritism and corruption are present, and who have strong ties to a political regime. In South Africa, there are troubling signs that the military is being manipulated by the political elite in self-interest, as reflected in the public debates around South Africa's involvement in the Central African Republic and landing of the influential Gupta's family planes at Waterkloof Air Force base.

More recently, much of my research has focused on gender integration and the effect of war on women. Given that the military is a highly masculine profession

and institution, it is not surprising that the recent pressure to increase the number of women to 40% across all ranks and branches has been fraught with controversy. There are two contending paradigms that influence gender integration – the one based on equal rights feminism, and the other on differential radical feminist arguments that advocate the need to recognise gender difference in accordance with UN Resolution 1325 on gender mainstreaming (Alvesson & Billing, 2009:50; Malešević, 2010a:276-307). This has given rise to new tensions around issues of equality and meritocracy associated with masculinity on the one hand, and the special contribution and alternative values arguments, based on feminine traits, on the other. However, within the military, where the emphasis is on conformity and standards within an over-riding masculine culture, accommodating these demands has not been easy. Even where women attain the required levels of training and competency, discrimination still prevails as they are still in the minority and their special contribution to security remains questionable (Carreiras, 2008:175).

Although men in the military acknowledge that women have a unique contribution to make based on the way they have been socialised, it is clear that they are not yet valued as equals. Both military men and women tend to emphasise the gender-neutral equal rights approach to gender integration, and consequently the differential arguments that tend to place importance on the social competence of women are undervalued. The implication of this is that the alternative values associated with femininity are superseded and reinforced by the dominant hegemonic masculine warrior identity. The problem that this evokes is that where women continue to serve in inappropriate occupations and in numerically skewed work groups, they experience all the negative consequences of tokenism – performance pressure, social isolation and role encapsulation (Yoder, 1991). In my assessment, nothing is being gained from the manner in which gender equality is currently managed in the SANDF, because the rhetoric is out of touch with reality, is ideologically driven, and ultimately detrimental to operational effectiveness.

While gender remains a highly controversial issue, this has certainly not been the most pressing societal demand enforced upon the military. Nothing has been quite as contentious as the issue of military unionism. Unlike other countries that have some form of military unionism and where the relationship is cooperative if not corporatist, in South Africa it has remained essentially confrontational. This is due to the fact that military leadership continues to manage labour relations from a unitarist perspective, while the legal dispensation

supports a pluralist approach. This has placed the management of labour relations under considerable strain, making it unable to move towards a more cooperative dispensation. The refusal to negotiate with the military unions has meant that they have needed to 'bargain on the courts' to obtain concessions, rather than on the process of collective bargaining (Heinecken & Nel, 2009). As regards the future, only time will tell whether the granting of labour rights to soldiers in a fledgling democracy such as South Africa has been too liberal, or will pose a threat to civil-military relations.

As for the military unions, their credibility has soared with every court battle they have won. One of the most noteworthy relates to the exclusion of HIV positive persons from recruitment and deployment (Heinecken, 2003). This led to a complex human rights debate. From the side of the individual, there are the basic first-order human rights, such as the right to privacy and dignity, fair labour practices, freedom of trade, occupation and profession, and the right not be unfairly discriminated against. From the side of the military, there is the second-order duty to perform certain functions for the public good in the most efficient and cost-effective manner, given that they derive their mandate and income from society. Then there is the right of society to have an effective and efficient defence force to ensure their safety and security, which is also a guaranteed basic human right. The implication is that one cannot look merely at the rights of the individual (Heinecken & Nel, 2009). Interestingly, the SANDF did not contest the case in court, and has since revised its policies and adopted a more nuanced approach to the management of HIV/Aids.

GENDER, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Besides the need to accommodate pressures emanating from broader society, armed forces across the world have needed to adapt to a new strategic environment in which security is no longer defined in military terms. A new paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities emerged where security was defined more broadly in terms of the lack of economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (Hough, 2004). Subsequently, two schools of thought developed in terms of how to address these human security concerns that related to the need to achieve both '*freedom from fear*' and '*freedom from want*' (UNDP, 1994). Those placing emphasis on the *freedom from fear* focused on how to protect individuals from violent conflict, while

the emphasis on *freedom from want* placed emphasis on development. This reconceptualisation of security resulted in armed forces trying to balance their mission priorities in terms of peacekeeping/peace enforcement (freedom from fear) and post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) (freedom from want).

How armed forces have adapted to these new missions has been the focus of my most recent research. The military is not structured, trained or equipped to deal with the wide range of humanitarian concerns stemming from PCRD. Just in terms of meeting the first objective of *freedom from fear*, peacekeepers face an arduous task in trying to protect innocent civilians caught up in the wars ravaging the continent. "These new wars are premised on different fighting tactics (terror and guerrilla actions instead of conventional battlefields), different military strategies (population control rather than territory capture), utilise different combatants (private armies, criminal gangs and warlords instead of professional soldiers or conscripts) and are highly decentralized" (Malešević, 2010b:312). This has led to these violent conflicts being called irregular, asymmetric or fourth-generation warfare. For peacekeeping forces that are ill prepared and equipped for these operations, this has posed a considerable challenge in both stemming the conflict and protecting civilians affected by it.

As a member of the ISA's Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution Research Group, I was part of an international study, together with Prof Rialize Ferreira, to examine how the South African armed forces, which have embraced the human security paradigm, are coping on these missions (Heinecken & Ferreira, 2012). What emerged was that soldiers deployed on peacekeeping operations found it extremely difficult to execute their mandate to protect civilians. Not only were these missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Darfur/Sudan often very dangerous and unpredictable, but the rules of engagement were considered restrictive, which undermined their ability to assist civilians caught up in the conflict. This engendered a sense of helplessness and frustration, which clashed with their inner desire to protect those harmed and attack those responsible for the violence. Logistically they were not equipped for these missions, nor sufficiently prepared to function under hostile environmental conditions, particularly in Darfur/Sudan.

What featured strongly in the findings is that the peacekeepers experienced many difficulties in interacting with the local population. Besides the language barrier, they expressed the view that they were ill equipped in

terms of their knowledge of local cultures, practices and power dynamics to adequately assess security situations – in short, they lacked cultural intelligence. In some armed forces, such as those of the United States, this has led to the appointment of anthropologists and sociologists as part of their human terrain teams (HTS). This has given rise to widespread controversy and ridicule by the American Anthropology Association (AAA, 2007), based on the ethics associated with inflicting no harm on those they study, as well as the question of informed consent. The present SANDF lacks this capacity; however, it is of interest that under apartheid the SADF was the largest single employer of social anthropologists, as their inputs formed part of the Winning Hearts and Minds (WHAM) campaign both internally and in cross-border operations (Gordon, 1988:550; Seegers, 1996:226-227).

Knowing your enemy is the first principle of warfare, and military operations have often failed due to a lack of knowledge of foreign cultures. Similarly, peace operations and post-conflict reconstruction missions that aim to assist and help the local population can fail if such knowledge is lacking. For example, misunderstandings of culture at the strategic level can produce policies that can exacerbate an insurgency. A lack of cultural knowledge at the operational level can lead to negative public opinion and hostility towards peacekeepers. Ignorance of culture at a tactical level can endanger both civilians and troops, if it exacerbates tensions on the ground (Heinecken & Winslow, 2010). Where peacekeepers are expected to engage with the local population in order to assist them, an understanding of local culture, politics, social structure and the economics of their area are important to address the human security needs of civilians (McFate, 2005:58).

This deficiency is felt most by the battalions, companies, platoons and squads that are closest to the local population in their daily tactical actions. In my interviews with South African peacekeepers, almost two-thirds indicated that they lack this knowledge and that this created difficulties when interacting with the local civilian population, local authorities, the different fighting factions and the media. They mentioned numerous cultural blunders that they had made and how in some situations this exacerbated tensions between rebel groups and the civilian population (Heinecken & Winslow, 2010). Their understanding of these issues was limited to a few briefings during their mission readiness training. Interesting in this regard is that neither sociology nor social anthropology have ever been taught to junior officers at the South African Military Academy (Heinecken & Visser, 2008).

Recent attempts to introduce these subjects, given the necessity, have been hamstrung by budgetary constraints.

In light of the shift towards developmental peacekeeping and the involvement of the armed forces in PCRDR, the need to understand the broader social, economic and political context becomes all the more apparent. This has been highlighted in a recent book on *Post-conflict reconstruction and development in Africa* (Neethling & Hudson, 2013). This book underscores the need for the armed forces to adopt a human security approach to peace missions in order to pave the way for longer-term sustainable peace (De Carvalho & Ettang, 2011:8-9). An aspect that my contribution to the book addresses is the role of women as a driving force for peace and PCRDR (Heinecken, 2013b). War affects both men and women, but often impacts more heavily on women, given their role in the household and family, and due to the extensive use of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in these conflicts that destroys women's lives (Cahn, 2006:336; Mobekk, 2010:283). Combatting this, in these highly patriarchal societies where women have few rights and where sexual violence is used as a deliberate strategy of war, has become a priority. The fact that the rates of SGBV tend to increase in post-conflict contexts, and that mechanisms to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice are lacking, has led to calls for the deployment of more female peacekeepers to conflict zones (Cahn, 2006:345; Sims, 2012:6).

The question is whether female peacekeepers are able to reach out to the civilian population in ways different to male peacekeepers, given that they are trained and deployed in the same roles as men. Claims are made that they are in a better position to enhance access of local women to services, improve community relations, reduce the incidence of SGBV, build the capacity of local women, break down traditional views that discriminate and marginalise women, are more effective in defusing potentially violent situations, and improve community security (Carey, 2001; Olsson, 2000; Peuchguirbal, 2003). While my research does show that female peacekeepers are more able to engage with the local women, they had little impact in terms of any of the other expectations, given that they were not trained for these roles. In fact, in some instances their gender was a liability rather than an asset and they often had to conceal their identity for cultural or security reasons. Had the SANDF spent more time evaluating the religious, gender and cultural aspects of these deployments, these female soldiers could not only have been better prepared, but used more appropriately.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is clear that the use of sociological concepts and theories are important to understand both the character and effect of the military and war on society. There is not only a need to interrogate the nature of military institutions, but to examine how pivotal social forces such as culture, inequality, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, family structure and the economy influence war and peace. Whether we like it or not, violent conflict remains an integral part of human experience and social life. The fact that the study of the military, war and society remains at the periphery of sociological enquiry is a disciplinary weakness, given the effect that militarised conflict and violence has on society. One merely has to think of our own country, which has been profoundly shaped by the experience of war (Cock & Nathan, 1989) and reflect on the effect of war on Africa today.

Given this, as sociologists we need to be concerned about the professional conduct of the military as this has profound consequences for society. Who joins and rules the armed forces and what power and influence they exert over society are important. What does it mean when the military and society become detached, and the military becomes insular, secretive and less responsive to society? What are the long-term implications where public security is outsourced to corporate 'military professionals' and the management of collective violence becomes shared between soldiers and civilians? What effect does military socialisation have on citizens entering and reintegrating into civilian society? Is there a link between militarised masculinities and gender-based violence? Should the military be tasked with post-conflict reconstruction and development when they are essentially trained for warfare? These are the research topics of many of my postgraduate students.

My passion is to ensure that my research and those of my students make a difference where it counts, that it informs policy and practice and generates scholarly debate on a topic that has been neglected by sociologists for too long. Hopefully in some way this will ensure that the study of the military, war and society no longer remains the Achilles' heel of the discipline – at least not at Stellenbosch University.

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