

From the editor

Contemporary developments in military law show a complex evolution. This is evident in the international realm as well as in the national or domestic realm. International legal instruments and principles shape, and in turn are shaped by, a shifting international order. Human rights law, international military law, operational law, and the law of armed conflict, influence the actions of armed forces both within domestic jurisdictions or when involved in international action. In the national or domestic realm, the development of military law is shaped not just by these international influences but by the constitutional order upon which society is founded. In democratic societies, these norms and values would include the need for civilian legal oversight over the armed forces and adherence to principles of military justice.

Legal perspectives, while open to interpretation across legal systems and a subject of development and debate, must underpin the action of the armed forces. This requires vigilance to act within the law, but also adaptability in responding to changing threats. For instance, the transformation of modern warfare through technology and the variety of transnational security problems are two vectors revealing the complexities of contemporary legal questions in military law. Autonomous weapons system, for example, open a dramatically different strategic environment. Attempts at justifying their legality requires re-examination of principles of self-defence and proportionality even as these principles are redefined in the process. Transnational security problems such as piracy on the high seas or combating transnational crimes like the trafficking in

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human beings also require coherence between international law and national action when armed forces are called to act as law-enforcers.

There is thus a need, in the complex nature of the contemporary military environment, to consider the legal landscape. However, this cannot be left only to scholars of military law or legal practitioners in the armed forces - even though they certainly play a crucial role. In this issue of *Scientia Militaria*, Lt Col (Dr) Michelle Nel brings together a selection from the first international conference on military law in South Africa. As she explains in her editorial, this serves in raising awareness and stimulating academic research.

The editors would like to formally recognize the sterling work of our reviewers. Their contribution is invaluable to the scholarship of military science and critical to the work of *Scientia Militaria*. In order to ensure that published research articles are of a high quality, all accepted manuscripts are peer-reviewed by at least two suitably qualified experts in the field. They remain anonymous to the authors and to each other throughout the review process. We would like to express our gratitude to the following reviewers who have given of their time and their expertise in support of the journal:

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