BOOK REVIEWS

On military culture: Theory, practice and African armed forces
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Francois Vrey, Abel Esterhuyse *&* Thomas Mandrup (eds.)

Bheki R Mngomezulu
International & Public Affairs (IPA) Cluster [Politics]
University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College)
kizulu@yahoo.com

The theme of the book *On Military culture* is encapsulated in the title. Its focus is on how military culture has evolved over time and in different contexts. This is in response to the evident lacuna in the existing literature whereby the theme has either been wittingly or unwittingly ignored in African history or has been addressed by those residing outside of the African continent. The book was triggered by a conference which was hosted by the Danish-South Africa academic partnership in the Faculty of Military Science at Stellenbosch University in 2011. The broad aim of the conference was "to highlight the nature of military culture from a scientific perspective" (p. xv). Its specific dual aim was: (i) to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives from the international community; and (ii) to scrutinize the institutional culture of the South African military as it has unfolded since 1994 (p. xv).

In essence, this book demonstrates the role played by culture in both the nature and overall make-up of armed forces. While not refuting the fact that culture evolves over time and the reality that each nation-state has its own way of setting up and running its armed forces, the book makes a valid point that there is a "military culture" which cuts across the geographical divide. In other words, despite apparent differences on how the armed forces are established and run by national governments, there are blatant similarities that can be discerned.

Structurally, the book is well organised. There has been a conscious attempt in the first part to tackle the theme from a broader theoretical perspective (except for Chapter 4 which focuses on Canada and draws on research conducted specifically in the Canadian context to examine the relations between the armed forces and the Canadian society) (p. 67). This gives the authors the leeway to cite various examples from different countries over time and discuss how military culture has evolved and which factors influenced the direction it took at any given time. Having achieved this goal, the second part of the book (from Chapter 6) uses specific country case studies to expound the broader theme and show through empirical evidence how the theoretical assumptions presented in the first five chapters have worked on the ground. It is in this context that the authors aver that: "This publication explores the military-cultural nexus from a broad strategic outlook and a narrower national and institutional angle, and from an international as well as an African perspective (p. xxi)."

There are several theoretical arguments that are presented in chapters 1 to 5. Amongst these is the acknowledgement of the fact that violence and the use of force is not something new amongst humans. On the contrary, "from the earliest beginnings, violence and coercion have been features of the human condition" (p. 1). According to this trajectory, what has changed over time is the nature and extent of such violence and coercion. The second argument is that in general, the military way of life is distinct from the way in which civil society lives. Implicit in this submission is that the behaviour of the armed forces is bound to differ from that of the civil society because there is a "culture" that the army should and must uphold. Accordingly, Dandeker introduces his chapter by saying: "I explore the distinctiveness of the military way of life and its culture relative to that of the civilian world" (p. 35).

Linked to the above are several assumptions which are presented by McKinley as facts. Included in this list of assumptions are the following: civilisation is founded on violence; political collectivities which emphasise self-interest and collective egoism are inherently brutal; a nation is a group of people united by a common mistake regarding its origins and a collective hostility towards its neighbours; nationalism is a community of blood; we [as humans] are all embedded in violence and, to a greater or lesser extent, benefit from it; government is impossible without a religion (pp. 88-89). Inherent in these assumptions is that there is a way in which the efficacy of the geographical divide could be reduced or entirely annulled by these features. McKinley uses

different literary texts to expound his views.

The time factor is deemed crucial in this book, so is the chronology of events. Amongst other things, Vrey's Chapter 5 focuses on the shifting approaches that have had a direct impact on military culture. In this regard, he identifies three generations. The first generation is premised on relativism, which leads to the understanding of how the other side views matters and reacts to them. The second generation is influenced by the Gramscian perspective which holds the view that "strategic elites dominate in order to continue their supremacy over the system" (p. 51). The third generation allows one to work more empirically when viewing cases; scholars who subscribe to this [third] generation tend to focus more on matters in order to enhance the extent to which strategic culture can be researched in a comprehensive manner (pp. 51-52). The sequence of events is linked to the different time periods.

As times change, expectations about how armed forces should behave also change thus complicating the concept of "military culture". Whilst for many years armed forces were expected to act in a particular way, albeit not exactly the same all the time, there is now a growing expectation across the globe that "the conduct of a nation's armed forces must be seen to reflect the values of broader society" (p. 67). Inferred in this observation is the view that unlike in the past when armed forces had characteristic features which distinguished them from larger society, the former can no longer operate outside of the society. In essence, armed forces are now expected to uphold the societal ethos and paraphernalia.

Chapters 6 to 8 focus on Australia, Kenya and Ethiopia. Each of these chapters identifies and describes the various dimensions of the "culture" of the national armies of the countries being discussed. While the Australian army is said to have conspicuous distinctive features such as: professionalism, community, hierarchy, and conservatism (p. 113), the author (Jans) argues that these features can be adapted and applied elsewhere outside Australia. In the Kenyan case, Katumanga explains the mutating insecurity challenges in Kenya by drawing a nexus between military culture and anomie (p. 129). He identifies three "spaces": gerontocracy which looks at militarised youth formations against older established order; ethnic spaces where traditional warriors engage under appropriate modern modes of extraction of resources such as cattle; and national spaces whereby the state is being constantly undermined by new emerging groups in society which challenge state power (p. 133). The author then looks at the chronology in the military culture

of Kenya from the colonial period to the reigns of Presidents Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi. The Ethiopian case presents 1991 as the watershed in the country's history and the history of Ethiopia's armed forces. Specific reference is made to the end of the 30-year civil war in Eritrea and the civil war in Ethiopia. The three sections of the chapter demonstrate how the Ethiopian military culture has evolved over time.

Chapters 9-13 focus on South Africa. The common denominator in these chapters is that the South African army has undergone a metamorphosis over the years. The sign-posts used in the chapters are: 1910 when the union was established bringing together the former four colonies; 1912 when the Union Defence Force (UDF) was established by the forces from the four colonies; 1948 when the South African Defence Force (SADF) was created; and 1994 which saw the establishment of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). The authors present a retrospective account on South Africa's armed forces (van der Waag), analyse the transformation process undergone by the army after the 1994 election (Nathan) or focus on the contemporary outlook of the South African army (Esterhuyse & Heinecken). Vale asks why social theory matters in knowledge production (including the study of the military) and implores scholars to subscribe to the view that "ideas matter" (p. 199).

Two conclusions are drawn in this book: (i) military culture is closely linked to the task of armed forces; (ii) military culture needs to conform to the driving principle that the armed forces, at all times, have to serve society (p. 266). These conclusions re-state the book's focal point and assist the reader who may have missed the essence of the book in the introduction.

This book is undoubtedly a valuable source on the subject under investigation. It provides the theoretical undertones behind the broader theme and uses specific country case studies to elucidate the key arguments so that the theoretical statements can make sense even to the novice reader. Theory and practice are lucidly merged into one. But there are two glaring biases. The first one is "gender bias". Of the 14 Chapters, only one is written by a female (Lindy Heinecken). The second one is a "country bias". Five chapters focus specifically on South Africa. Invariably, even some of the chapters that do not have South Africa as their primary focus still make reference to this country. In a way, this is not surprising given that the book aimed at scrutinizing the institutional culture of the South African military.

Having said the above, *On Military Culture* is a great contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Its contents cut across disciplines, which include: history (military and political), political science, cultural studies and philosophy, to name just a few. Thus, the editors should be commended for a job well done. The eloquence, dexterity, scholarly approach but yet accessible writing style of this book makes it irrefutably qualify for a "thumbs up"!

Chatsworth: The making of a South African township

(UKZN Press,Scottsville 2013, 504 pp.ISBN:978-1-86914-255-1

Ashwin Desai *&* Goolam Vahed

Betty Govinden
Senior Research Associate
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
herbyg@telkomsa.net

Reading *Chatsworth, the making of a South African township*, I find I inhabit several time zones at once.

I am transported to the time, five decades ago: The Nationalist Government was on an intractable and seemingly irreversible course of Separate Development. Bantu Education had been firmly secured as government policy earlier in 1952; the tribal colleges were being inaugurated all over the country, and soon some of us would be wending our way to Salisbury Island and other bush colleges; the "Homelands" were caught in the carnivalesque of independence; Passive Resistance and the Defiance Campaigns, that blossomed in the first half of the 20th Century, were wilting in the face of the intransigence of the apartheid regime. The Treason Trial and the Rivonia Trial landmarked the late 1950s and early 1960s, and Nelson Mandela would be sent to Robben Island for 27 years. [How ironic to re-live this history now, since we received the news of Mandela's death, and realize that Mandela personifies that "long duree" in our history, his tired body now in the deep

sleep of death…]

And it was at this time that Chatsworth came into being…

The apartheid city is built on the principle of proximity and social distance, and this is the rationale for the location of Chatsworth on the perimeter of the city, or "at the edge", as Ronnie Govender would say. In this, Chatsworth is similar to   other well-known South African townships, such as Soweto and Alexandria, synonymous, as they all are, with apartheid's project of racist social engineering. As the editors, Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, point out,   "Chatsworth was born at the height of apartheid's madness when the government sought to ghettoize persons of "Indian" origin into what it intended to be a frozen racial landscape" (p. 1).

One of the unintended consequences of apartheid policies was the way a new sociological analysis of space, place and people evolved and matured, as attempts to understand what was happening in these apartheid spaces emerged as an important and necessary critical endeavour. This new book on Chatsworth is a worthy addition to this burgeoning scholarship.

In our reading of cities, both globally, and locally, and in the autobiographical writings of a host of writers, such as Ellen Kuzwayo (p. 158) on Soweto and Richard Rive on District Six (1986), to name just two, we have learnt to appreciate that   urban spaces are not inert backdrops. Urban spaces are actively produced by and, in turn, produce social processes. We have learnt to appreciate that physical locations are theatres of living where a range of elements mingle and interact. We have learnt to read a place like Chatsworth as both a symbolic landscape and an embodied, material landscape. Chatsworth, like its counterparts,   is at once a metonymy for the larger history of divisiveness under apartheid, and a testimony of resilience against this very apartheid.

 Indeed, this new anthology of stories on Chatsworth, with contributors from a wide range of fields, both locally and internationally, tells of a dynamic and multifaceted world, a world transforming itself and mutating over the decades.

We are reminded again and again that human beings are not automatons and robots, and that Chatsworth "is a living, breathing landscape of people"(p. 5).

Against the apartheid logic of homogenizing and ghettoizing racial groups, and stultifying them by imposing residential proximity and corralling them, people are endlessly inventive and creative. In addition, diversity of language,

class, ethnicity and religion is not diminished and, if anything, flourishes. The notion of the "tyranny of place, as posited by Mphahlele, where place is crucial in defining and constructing South African identities, is pertinent here; at the same time, there is every attempt to strain at the confining boundaries of such "tyranny", and claim wider life worlds, beyond or even within the confines of ghetto-living.

The approach that Desai and Vahed use is both long range and immediate - telescopic and microscopic – and all with an energy and creativity that animates this collection. Against the broad, diachronic sweep of history, we have narratives - immediate and in flesh and blood - of individual actors [referred to as the "synchronic"]. Deep pasts and surface presents. The collective and the individual. We have fragments of biography and personal narrative, autobiographical micro-history, testimonies, fictional writing – all in a fine orchestration of divergent voices, and exposing layer upon layer of the palimpsest that is Chatsworth. The variety of genres, juxtaposed in the collection, and their diverse themes, exemplify Ali Mazrui's statement that Africa is not homogenous but is a "bazaar" of people, some in-between; some living inside, others living outside (1986).

The stories in this collection describe a wide array of people going about the business of making Chatsworth "a habitable world". Some show the pain and trauma of uprooting and relocation, their lives the stuff of living history, living memory. Hannah Carrim presents a poignant story of loss and nostalgia, through her research with individuals who were removed through the Group Areas legislation from Magazine Barracks. *The inheritance of loss*, might be an apt description of their plight, to use the title of Kiran Desai's Booker Prize novel.

Others, like the renowned playwright, Ronnie Govender, write evocatively of Cato Manor, as he does in his story, "The Son of Matambu", which is also published in this collection. In those former places of abode, people were part of long-established, settled communities; they were then disturbed and uprooted, and the repositories and markers of their identity - temples and mosques, schools and community centres – were left behind. The old places either became ghostly remains of a past life rich in culture and tradition, or strange islands in a sea of increasing dereliction. Yet, as Ronnie Govender prophesies in his story, in the new places of relocation a resurgence of the human spirit is anticipated: "In the place of the intended ghetto, a phoenix is rising and the community of Chatsworth is reclaiming the soul that the

arbiters of human misery tried to destroy in places like Cato Manor"(59).

Indeed, in the graphic stories of the iconic places of Chatsworth, such as the Temple of Understanding, the RK Khan Hospital, and The Aryan Benevolent Home – all vying to be the signature of Chatsworth - we see Govender's hopes, in time, coming to pass…

Exacerbating the debilitating psychological experience of relocation and removal, were gross physical inequities as well, such as the lack of proper transport or of organized sport. This is why the impossible stories of heroism emerging from Chatsworth, such as Judge Nicholson's moving narrative of the legendary golfer, Pawpa Sewgolum, are repeatedly claimed and reclaimed.

We see this resilience manifesting itself among a variety of people from different spheres of existence, whether priests or religious leaders, educational leaders, sportsmen, traders, fisher folk, domestic workers, and those cadres keeping out of official view [*the underground people*, to use the title of Lewis Nkosi's book]. We appreciate the stories of struggles of the small traders against the titans, who enjoyed patronage. The picture presented here by Jo Rushby of the Bangladeshi market is a remarkable testimony of bravery among the traders to survive in the face of competition from the large chain stores.

The story of the flourishing of music in Chatsworth, as told by Naresh Veeran, from a long line of musicians, and the remarkable story of the Denny Veeran Music Academy, recalls the monumental achievements of Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela in Soweto, and of Shunna Pillay, the Durban singer whose book, *Shadow People*, provides a portrait of Durban, District Six and Sophiatown of the 1950s. The stories show, again and again, the human ingenuity that pervaded a place like Chatsworth where, as David Coplan noted of Soweto, "a wasteland of oppression and neglect" was "humanized" (1985:6).

I was impressed with the way the voices and images of women pervade this collection. A number are women contributors, and the stories of women are given equal currency. Reshma Sookrajh's story, for example, illustrates the influence of her remarkable mother, as well as her own achievements as a Comrades Marathon runner, a professor of education at the University of Kwa-ZuluNatal, and her growing immersion in a life of Hindu spirituality.

It is not surprising that religious groupings rallied among themselves. The stories of the survival of Hinduism on rugged terrain [narrated by Brij

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Maharaj], the establishment of Islam and the work of leaders such as Mawlana Dr Abbas Khan [as told by Sultan Khan], and the phenomenal growth of Christian Pentecostalism, with leaders such as Dr Paul Lutchman [narrated by Karin Willemse and Goolam Vahed], are compelling.

With in-roads into the traditional extended Indian family through the Group Areas Act, there are various other formations, including an array of civic organisations, with all their joys, as well as their faultlines. Finding "psychic shelter" in an alienating world is necessary and understandable, but also spawns tensions. We see competing forces at work as the contributors, in their varied and different ways, reveal not only continuities, but ruptures, in people's lives.

Broader social processes and structural constraints from above intersect with internal divisions and constraints imposed from within and below. While the family, for example, might have provided an "inner sanctum" in an otherwise alienating world, it can also be one of those deeply oppressive places.

Thembisa Waetjen shows in the wrenching account of Mariammah Chetty, whose husband was detained and held in solitary confinement during the apartheid years, the destructive impact this had on her family life. Waetjen argues that "the zones of domestic life are portrayed as non-political spaces of struggle", and that it is necessary to complicate "the often triumphal narratives of family solidarity" (p. 111). We need to write women's hidden struggles - often locked away in the private space of the home - into the liberation narrative as well which has generally extolled "masculine political agency".

Chatsworth is presented then as both a site of social encounter and of social division. These tensions are also manifest through another blight on the social landscape - the prevalence of drugs - showing the social malaise that is just below the surface. As Ronnie Govender has written, "Cato Manor has paid its penance. Chatsworth is still doing so" (p. 58).

Chatsworth was, and continues to be, a smorgasbord of political activity. Alongside the fearless struggles of extra-parliamentary resistance in the 1980's, chronicled by Desai in the collection, with the fighting spirit of activists such as Lenny Naidoo, Kumi Naidoo, Kovilan Naidoo and others, there was the work of the LAC's, and the pro-apartheid champions, who grew tall by fighting for what should have been rightfully the people's rights and due anyway. Documented too are little acts of political protest, such as those

by Ganpat Foolchand, principal at Welbedacht School, who said, "I closed school as a mark of protest at the passing of the Group Areas Act in 1948."

Desai and Vahed also explore what Chatsworth as a social space means today, more than 50 years after its formation and almost two decades after racial segregation has been dismantled as a formal policy. The overarching concern of their book is to examine what a space constructed as an Indian township by the apartheid government means half a century after it was established and almost two decades after apartheid has ended.

The stories depict contestations and collaborations with the local state in the post-apartheid period. Thembisa Waetjen and Goolam Vahed, in their chapter, "Gender, Citizenship and Power – the Westcliff Flats Residents Association", tell of the incredible agency of those who run the residents' associations, especially the women, and the "concerned-citizens groups" that preceded them, all of whom are in the forefront to co-ordinate struggles around housing, electricity and water, given that these basic resources are now privatised.

The problems of economic uncertainty remain, penury and unemployment have deepened, as Desai had also noted in his earlier book, *The Poors of Chatsworth – Race, Class and Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2000) - "the poors" for whom it is "not yet uhuru".

Vahed and Desai, and Waetjen and Vahed, in their contributions, show the coming together of various racial groupings, together with transnational migrants from other parts of Africa, to fight social problems. Does this offer hope of a post-racial community, or a melting pot, they ask? The authors show that there is both unity and friction, camaraderie across racial borders, alongside continuing and enduring dynamics of race and racial ideologies. The demolition of apartheid fences is, at best, uneven.

In his study of Chatsworth, Thomas Blom Hansen (2012) refers to the present state as the "melancholia of freedom" where, with the new democracy, there are also new uncertainties and anxieties that are experienced, as the old securities, that were ironically buttressed by apartheid, now dissipate.

Imraan Coovadia is more direct, and observes that "we panic when the chariot of historical inevitability is following us too closely from one day to the next", when some South Africans feel there's a doomsday clock ticking for them... (2012:77).

Indeed, the earlier "resilience" that I noted has a darker side, as some of these

stories show. The residential segregation of the old apartheid era, inducing ethnic insularity, and that brought a place like Chatsworth into being, forged a distinctive identity that separated and   continues to separate "us" from "them", and all from becoming "one of a living crowd".

So while we engage in "reflective nostalgia"- which lingers on the ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dream of another place and another time, as Jacob Dlamini has reminded us in *Native nostalgia* (2009), living in the present and into the future might not be so easy, but must become the new imperatives.

In conclusion, Fanon criticizes the "native intellectual" who wishes to attach himself to the people; but instead he only catches hold of their outer garments. He had urged that we train our eyes to the hidden and obscured places where the people dwell: "It is to this zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come; and it is there that our souls are crystallised and that our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light" (1961:183). Fanon had also urged that "native intellectuals" delve into the past in order to construct the future as an invitation to action and a basis for hope.

In their remarkable compendium, *Chatsworth – The making of a South African township*, Desai and Vahed have come to the zone of occult instability where the people dwell, and catch in these stories much more than the outer garments of   a multitude of worthy Chatsworthians...

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