

# **Section I Contemporary Large-Scale PME Reform (and Its Discontents)**



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# Re-Evaluating the Strategic Contexts for Professional Military Education in the 21st Century<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This chapter demonstrates how military education at the strategic, operational and tactical levels in Pakistan has been radically influenced by the events of 9/11, the resulting invasion of Afghanistan and the formation of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan terrorist organization in 2005. It highlights the importance of combining active in-theatre training with specialised technical training, enhancing jointness across services, and creating a culture that recognises and incentivises the achievements of high performing students. In doing so, it provides a useful case study of a large-scale educational reform process, undertaken in response to a rapidly shifting and fluid strategic context. It also demonstrates the increasing strategic need for innovative, agile, and operationally adaptable soldiers, with emotional intelligence, technological literacy and cross-cultural skills.

**Keywords:** PME, military education, Pakistan Armed Forces, terrorism, interoperability, Taliban, Pakistan Military Academy

## Introduction

The strategic context of any individual state may be analysed from a variety of different perspectives, including political, economic, social, geographical, and environmental. In addition to these broader contexts, the formulation of any integrated national security strategy requires an assessment of four key elements: the evolving security situation, current and potential trends that are likely to affect the country and shape its future, an understanding of the methods by which the country's leadership can shape events through the application of national power (and the potential risks

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1 This chapter is adapted from a keynote presentation delivered by the author, at a "Professional Military Education Working Group" hosted by the *Centre for Military Education Outreach* (King's College London), held on the 10–11th December 2015 at the *Joint Services Command and Staff College* (Shrivenham, U.K.).

and benefits of these actions), and an awareness of allies and adversaries who can either assist or impede this overall security strategy.

In order to understand the contemporary educational strategies of the Pakistan Armed Forces, therefore, it is necessary to review the political and security environment that has informed Pakistan's strategic security context over the last few decades. In 1991, the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union ushered in a new world order, defined by the pre-eminence of the United States and the West. In its aftermath it was expected that an era of peace and stability would ensue. However, these hopes were soon quashed by the phenomenon of terrorism which, since the infamous 9/11 attacks in 2001, has persisted as the dominant threat to global peace and stability.

The contemporary manifestation of terrorism initially encountered in Afghanistan and Iraq has evolved and multiplied in many ways and has been most prominently evidenced in recent years in the rise of the Islamic State (also known as Daesh). In its heyday, the terrorist acts perpetrated by Daesh represented one of the most significant threats facing both the stability of the region and the inter-state relations of major global powers involved in the conflict. Although Daesh's stated goal is to resurrect a Caliphate with emirates around it, organisations such as Al-Qaeda, Daesh and Boko Haram have created a new world order of sorts, by mobilising social media alongside other methods to inspire lone wolf terrorists to destabilise their adversaries abroad.

Over a decade after the 9/11 attacks, the contemporary strategic context is also characterised by a range of other trends. The first of these is the economic and politico-military power shift occurring from the West to the East. The continued rise of China and other Asian countries including India is producing new complexities, power alignments, and arenas in which both regional and global interests are conflicting, competing and colluding. It could be said that we are living in an era of power redistribution, albeit accompanied with manifold nuances (highlighted by the complex network of by-proxy influences in the contemporary conflicts within Syria and Iraq).

Connected with this power shift is the ongoing proliferation of globalisation at varying paces across different regions, impacting the political, economic and social dimensions. Similarly, developments in

communication and information technologies continue to revolutionise the social, economic and security sectors. These ‘progressive’ global trends have catalysed a range of destabilising effects and security challenges, including climate change, cyber terrorism, pandemics, and increasing economic inequality that are directly affecting contemporary terrorism, international instability and unprecedented global migration flows.

Thus, in two and a half decades the strategic context informing professional military education has altered from a Cold War setting focussed on a large-scale external military threat to a politically fluid and asymmetrical scenario in which ongoing socio-economic, technological and environmental security challenges are punctuated (and often overshadowed) by non-state actors seeking to deploy terrorism as an instrument for political gains. This terrorism pervades both the internal and external security of nation-states and has transformed the character of conflict in many ways, including generating new forms of warfare. As we shall now consider, this broader global strategic context has both affected and effected the security challenges faced by Pakistan after the 9/11 attacks and, thus, has required a significant strategic reorientation of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

## **Pakistan’s Strategic Security Context**

Since its inception as a nation-state, Pakistan has focussed on the external threat from India as the primary threat to its nationhood. This strategic emphasis is rooted in the unresolved Kashmir issue and has resulted in three wars and a few near-wars. Now, over 70 years since its independence from India, the two countries remain locked in a no-war-no-peace situation. This scenario has been cemented by the nuclearizing of the sub-continent, commencing with India’s first successful nuclear bomb test on 18 May 1974. This external threat continues to define the response metrics of the Pakistan Armed Forces. Professional military education is accordingly structured to meet the dictates of full spectrum deterrence against a nuclear-capable adversary.

In addition to this primary threat, since 1960 the Pakistan Armed Forces have routinely deployed troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations across the world, necessitating an additional focus on training and education for such operations. These training programmes are not

inconsequential. For example, from January 2008 to December 2017, Pakistan customarily contributed the largest number of personnel to UN peacekeeping missions, at an average of 8,969 military and police personnel per month, generally exceeding other consistently significant contributors such as India and Bangladesh (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.).

Although these enduring historical contexts still inform Pakistan's military educational priorities, the events of 9/11 and the consequent decision by NATO (led by the United States) to invade Afghanistan significantly altered Pakistan's overarching strategic priorities. The most important part of this shift occurred in 2003 when the United States reoriented its focus towards Iraq to enforce regime change, yet remained unable to extract its forces due to the continued destabilising effects of terrorism orchestrated by Al-Qaeda in Iraq. This diversion of its original mission led to the birth of a terrorist organisation in 2005 known as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which declared war on both the nation and the military forces of Pakistan. This resulted in a range of terrorist operations mainly within the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (see Fig. 1.1) and the Swat District in North-West Pakistan.

This altered strategic context necessitated that, whilst continuing to maintain safeguards against the nation's conventional threats, the Pakistan Armed Forces had to develop and deploy new anti-terrorist capabilities. This resulted in a range of sub-conventional operations by the Pakistan Army starting in mid-2007. To correctly account for the broad number and range of terrorist, civilian and government organisations involved in the conflict, and the intensity of persisting competing interests, a graduated and calibrated approach was essential for this series of operations. As shown in Tab. 1.1, the first major operation was undertaken against a group of terrorists who were using the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad and its affiliated seminaries as a base of operations.

Three successive operations were then required to remove the terrorist infrastructure from the Swat District. This repetition was mainly due to the lack of a significant presence from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Afghanistan National Front (ANF) in the adjoining Nuristan province of Afghanistan. This allowed the terrorist groups to seek refuge in Afghanistan and then return to the Swat District once military operations had concluded. Indeed, until his death in June 2018,



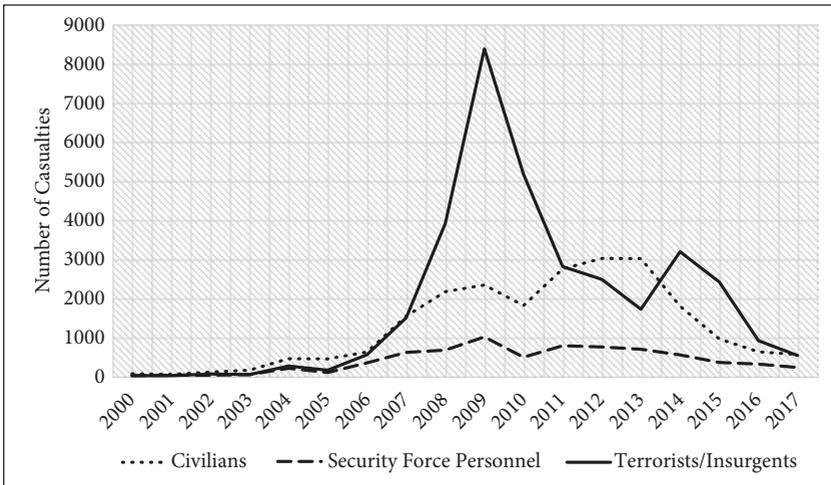
**Tab. 1.1:** Key anti-terrorist operations by the Pakistan Armed Forces (2007–2014).

DATE	NAME OF OPERATION	OPERATIONAL TARGETS	GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS
July 2007	Sunrise	Terrorists based in environs of Lal Masjid	Islamabad
Oct 2007/Feb 2008/Jan–June 2009	Rah-e-Haq, I, II, III	Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM)	Swat, Buner, Lower Dir and Shangla Districts
June–July 2008	Sirat-e-Mustaqeem	Lashkar-e-Islam	Khyber Agency
Aug 2008–Feb 2009	Sherdil	Faqir Muhammad, ex TTP	Bajaur Agency
June–Dec 2009	Rah-e-Nijat	Hakimullah Mehsud, Head of TTP	South Waziristan
Nov 2009	Rah-e-Nijat (Brekhna)	Mixed Terrorist Groups	Mohmand Agency
June 2014–Apr 2016	Zarb-e-Azb	Mixed Terrorist Groups	North Waziristan

A two-year campaign was then undertaken to clear North Waziristan, commencing in June 2014 and leading to the removal of terrorist factions from the region. Following a resurgence of terrorist activities in North Waziristan this was followed by Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad in February 2017. In addition to these operations, the military provided ongoing assistance to the civil government in removing terrorists from the major urban centre of Karachi and elsewhere by pursuing a policy of zero-tolerance for terrorism-related violence.

As shown in Fig. 1.2, in regaining control of the territory that was contested by the TTP, Pakistan suffered significantly. In terms of the human cost, from the years 2000–2017 inclusive, over 60,000 people were killed, including 22,191 civilians, 33,901 terrorists/insurgents, and 6,887 security force personnel, encompassing officers from all ranks (South Asia Terrorism Portal, n.d.).

The country has also paid a heavy economic cost. As noted in figures published by Pakistan’s Ministry of Finance, between 2001 and 2016, “the direct and indirect cost incurred by Pakistan due to incidents of terrorism amounted to USD \$118.31 billion” (Ministry of Finance, 2016, p.290). Moreover, in ensuring a comprehensive and holistic counter-terrorism



**Fig. 1.2:** Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan, 2003–2018 (South Asia Terrorism Portal, n.d.).

response, Pakistan as a nation has seen significant shifts in government policy. Most notably, in January 2015, the Government of Pakistan established a National Action Plan, which included amongst its policies the renewal of capital punishment for terrorism offences, creation of special military courts, registration and regulation of religious seminaries, and the freezing of all funding sources for terrorist organisations (Ministry of Information, 2014). As this chapter shall now explore, in order to best support this evolving combat strategy and wider strategic context, over the past decade, the Pakistan Armed Forces have undergone a significant reorientation of their professional military education system.

## Reforming Military Education

As a form of warfare, terrorism seeks to exploit perceived deprivations, cleavages and hostile undercurrents within society, and to instigate pseudo-nationalism, ethnic rivalries and religious sentiments to increase its support base and perpetuate its goals. In order to defeat such activities, it is necessary to provide senior officers with a broad understanding of the processes and the socio-cultural contexts that can help terrorism to

flourish. Moreover, it is vital to ensure greater mutual understanding and cohesion between these senior officers and civilian leaders in wider society.

To achieve this, the Pakistan Armed Forces reoriented the programmes available at their National Defense University (NDU). This included making significant adjustments to the five-week-long National Security Workshop and its National Media Workshop, which provide executive-level forums for parliamentarians, senior military officers, media representatives, government institutions, academics and prominent members of the civil society to learn and debate candidly about the complex religious, economic, cultural, political and military factors influencing Pakistan's strategic context and to formulate appropriate strategies for national security. In addition to changes to executive level inter-agency courses, the Command and Staff College course was redesigned to allocate more time for the planning and conduct of sub-conventional operations, alongside its core training on conventional conflict.

The curriculum of the Pakistan Military Academy (which delivers junior officer education for the Pakistan Army) was also broadened to provide increased education on Pakistani society and culture, with a focus on promoting skills in civil-military engagement. Upon their commission and prior to joining their units, young officers within these academies were made to undertake five weeks of rigorous training to hone firing skills, tactics and counter-terrorism techniques with a focus on operations at the unit-level. To ensure that these newly trained units and sub-units were actively employed in sub-conventional operations a number of steps were taken. Most importantly, the training was divided into two phases.

The first phase was designed to occur directly after the officer selection process. During this phase, the unit is sent on three weeks of active defensive security operations within Pakistan, in locations that contain an existing or potential terrorist threat (including within the FATA and Swat District). For the second phase, the unit is then relocated to one of seven counter-terrorism training centres, which provides five weeks of joint training on offensive sub-conventional operations for members of the civil armed forces, police and special forces. This includes the National Counter-terrorism Centre (NCTC), which, as of September 2016, had successfully trained 231,000 soldiers from the armed forces and 3,483 officers and personnel of the police and civil armed forces (Associated Press,

2016). Continuity between these two phases of training was achieved from day one, by developing and implementing a centralised and coordinated syllabus, as well as instituting a policy requiring Army Headquarters to undertake a one-week review process at the end of the training cycle.

Outside of the progress made by the Pakistan Army, similar programmes were developed within the other services. For example, alongside the ongoing specialised counter-terrorism training undertaken by the Special Services Group (Navy) (SSG(N)), the Pakistan Navy implemented an extensive training regime. This included participation in anti-piracy and anti-terrorism combined task forces in the Gulf and Indian Oceans, and attendance from over 400 officers at the NCTC course (Pakistan Army, 2015). The Pakistan Air Force has also actively participated in a number of counter-terrorism operations, including Al Mizan in 2004, Tri Star in 2008 and Zarb-e-Azb. In line with this increased contribution, it sought to enhance the capacity for Pakistan and its allies to undertake “air operations against non-state actors” by developing the Airpower Centre of Excellence (Aman, 2016, 00:08:29).

Alongside these service-specific activities, the armed forces as a whole sought to enhance interoperability in sub-conventional operations, as evidenced by their increased participation in bi- and multi-lateral joint exercises with foreign militaries and, in January 2017, the appointment of former Chief of Army Staff, General (Ret.) Raheel Sharif as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Military Alliance, an intergovernmental counter-terrorist alliance of 41 Muslim countries. As well as enhancing counter-terrorism training at the strategic and tactical levels, the armed forces have sought to increase the number of soldiers they have with the specialist skills required for operational success. A key example of this can be seen in the creation of the Counter IED, Explosives and Munitions School in Risalpur, established in 2012 to help train specialist personnel in the identification and neutralisation of IEDs. This remains a key focus area for the military, in line with the continued humanitarian impact of IEDs in Pakistan. From 2001 to 2016, for example, Pakistan as a nation suffered 4,724 deaths from 4,063 IED attacks (Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 2016).

In addition to explosive ordinance disposal, the military has placed renewed emphasis on marksmanship and physical agility. The prioritisation

of sharp shooting skills creates a direct tactical advantage, particularly in view of the peculiar terrain in the FATA and along the Western borders. To optimise efficiency, a marksman unit was created that was capable of assisting other units as well as undertaking independent operations to target terrorist leaders. In line with the difficult terrain along the Western borders, increased fitness for all ranks was also prioritised. Finally, to ameliorate the previous physical standard of its soldiers, the Pakistan Army instituted a Physical Agility and Combat Efficiency System (PACES).

The PACES programme led to significant improvements in physical fitness. In 2014, as a means of incentivising and recognising the achievements of the highest performing participants, the army encouraged certain soldiers to attempt to break Guinness World Records in physical activities. This led to a range of new world records, including the record for ‘most push-ups in 24 hours’ achieved by Captain Muhammad Arbab (Arbab, 2014). In addition to this, the army also created its own PACES Competition, to motivate and celebrate physical competition amongst its soldiers. As of 2017 the PACES Competition has become an international event, welcoming soldiers from any foreign military to compete (Pakistan Army, 2017).

## **Wider Application of Lessons Learned**

The methods employed by the Pakistan Government and its armed forces in preparing and educating its soldiers, civilian leaders, media representatives and wider civilian population for a comprehensive counter-terrorism response may be defined as a success in their effective removal of key terrorist organisations, ongoing decrease in terrorist attacks (especially IEDs) and continued deradicalisation of previously marginalised communities. Yet, it should be considered how far these strategies can be applied to the strategic contexts of other nations and regions. Although the implementation of operational methodologies may differ, it could be argued that there exist certain prerequisites for any successful counter-terrorism operation that can be derived from the Pakistan model.

Firstly, the terrorist agenda is constructed around political objectives, which they seek to achieve by exploiting fault lines and positioning alternative socio-political, economic and religious narratives. To combat this

threat, a nation must stand united, display a strong resolve and reject the terrorist agenda. This includes demonstrating support for the armed forces. Political will, leadership, resolve and popular support are essential ingredients of any counter-terrorist strategy. Although certain terrorist factions may seek to employ the rationale of religion to increase their support base, the Pakistan case-study reveals that the vast majority of people both reject these radical philosophies and manage to avoid a mentality that associates Islam with terrorism as well as violence.

Secondly, terrorism creates a new form of conflict in which there are no front lines and no legal conventions for the conduct of warfare. Terrorists operate in and amongst the people and compete with the government for influence over the people and for control of space. This form of conflict alters the operational environment, making uncertainty pervasive. Heightened complexity, competitiveness and hybrid threats can materialise at any time, and often at the most uncertain time. This new form of conflict requires that today's soldier be innovative, agile and operationally adaptable. They should understand local dialects and have language proficiency skills. Since soldiers must frequently engage and negotiate with the general population, the profession requires individual acumen, a high degree of emotional intelligence, technological literacy and the ability to work with diverse forces effectively. All of this must be imparted by contemporary military education programmes, alongside the basic warfighting requirements that a soldier be physically fit, mentally hardened and capable of withstanding the trauma resulting from terrorist attacks.

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# Professional Military Education for the Modern Officer: The Nigerian Experience<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This chapter examines the need for and potential areas of reform within the Nigerian professional military educational system. It highlights how aspects such as the over-politicization and careerism of military officers, absence of joint doctrine, broad replication of external curricula, and negligent staff recruitment and retention policies have hindered the Nigerian military educational system and, in turn, its capacity to deal with the increased terrorist threat from organisations such as Boko Haram. It then highlights the reforms that were implemented at the National Defence Academy (Kaduna) from 2013–2015, in order to overcome the deficiencies within the academy. It argues that the creation of collaborative links and strategic partnerships between colleges (both nationally and internationally), the need to balance long-term projects with immediate gains, and to safeguard long-term reforms are vital to mitigating the deficiencies of the current system.

**Keywords:** PME, military education, Nigerian Armed Forces, National Defence Academy, Boko Haram, intercollegiate collaboration, educational reform

## Introduction

The primary objective of any armed forces is to defend the nation and secure its people. In order to successfully discharge this mission, military officers must be capable of adapting to the evolving character of conflict at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Furthermore, to maintain its relevance as a fighting force, the military must strive to predict, pre-empt and remain ahead of the challenges it will face.

Yet, the contemporary threat environment facing today's military is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Training, experience and

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self-improvement can enhance an officer's adaptability to this environment. In order to produce the most professionally competent leadership for the officer corps, however, it is critical to implement effective professional military education programmes for officers at all levels of the military hierarchy. The goal of such education is to develop and foster breadth of perspective, critical analysis skills, abstract reasoning, innovative thinking and comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty, particularly with respect to complex and non-linear problems.

To use an analogy, military capability may be compared to a four-legged animal. Each leg represents a critical dimension for the continued effectiveness and success of the military: force structure, combat readiness, sustainability and modernisation. If an animal has a missing leg or even just a damaged leg it will find it difficult to function optimally. Above all, it is the leg of modernisation (whether applied to combat, procurement, policy formulation or any other area) that is driven, sustained and enhanced by education. Without relevant, adequate and functional professional education, the military will continue to struggle and continue to fail in its vision.

This chapter is designed to review the state of professional military education in Nigeria. In order to achieve this, it will consider the security context currently facing the Nigerian nation; the deficiencies within its current professional military education systems; the strategies implemented to overcome these deficiencies; and the actions that must be taken to ensure that these changes are effective in the long term. It is based upon personal experience at all levels of the Nigerian professional military education system.

## **The Nigerian Context**

The contemporary challenges confronting nations today have radically reduced the effectiveness of traditional military strategies. In the case of Nigeria, state security forces have been overwhelmed by the pace and the dynamism with which national security threats have evolved and spread. This is especially the case with the phenomena of terrorism and violent extremism. Although organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) are designed to assist individual nations in counteracting these threats, in reality they "are less well placed to provide or deliver regional security as envisaged

in extant policy documents” and “are limited to legitimizing, coordinating and partnering in regional security interventions” (Ismail, 2015, p.202).

In Nigeria, for example, the Islamist group Boko Haram has waged an ongoing campaign of terror, involving attacks on schools, destruction of villages and mass abductions of Nigerian citizens. This has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands and the displacement of over 2.4 million Nigerians (UNHCR, n.d.; Campbell and Harwood, 2018). Their continuing campaign has led to recurrent questions and criticisms from the Nigerian public and government regarding the ability of national security forces to deal with such threats, with a particular focus on the failings of the Nigerian Army.

There exist, of course, wider socio-economic and geopolitical factors that have helped Boko Haram consolidate its influence both within local communities and on the global stage. Yet, this does not negate the criticisms that have been directed at the army’s attempts to achieve a military solution. Whilst deficits in equipment and the motivation of troops necessarily play a factor in operational success, it is important to question whether the army has provided its officers with the education required to successfully anticipate and swiftly adapt to the continually evolving security threats faced within Nigeria.

As with any military, there are a range of economic and political factors influencing the breadth and quality of educational provision. However, there are four key factors that are of particular relevance to the Nigerian context. The first is the historical and contemporary involvement of military officers within political governance, which has “led to the creation of a politicised force” (Eke, 2015, p.291). As noted by Ouédraogo (2014, p.20), any such politicisation of the armed forces often results in:

“a military that is more partisan and less professional in the eyes of society, thereby diminishing respect for the institution – something that is necessary in order to recruit committed, disciplined, and talented soldiers”.

In addition to issues of corruption and sectarianism, one impact of this politicisation is the increased internal emphasis placed upon career progression and political acumen. Although political manoeuvring does not absolve the average Nigerian Army officer of their PME commitments, the shift from the “Institutional” to the “Occupational” military model

(Moskos, 1981, p.2) has resulted in an ambiguity surrounding students' motivation to participate and excel in PME courses; specifically, the duality of the course's career value versus a genuine passion for intellectual self-improvement.

The second factor is the status of joint training doctrine across the Nigerian Armed Forces. In contrast to other nations, the Nigerian military has been a joint tri-service institution from the moment of its creation in 1960. This conceptual jointness, however, was equivalent to many of Nigeria's other post-independence constitutional policies, which "had little reality beyond their physical existence as a set of written symbols deposited in a government archive" (Zolberg, 1968, p.72; see also Luckham, 1975, p.1). Furthermore, as noted by Omeni (2018, p.94):

"military doctrine in Nigeria for the most part fails to draw on practical experiences within the operating environment. Rather the doctrine draws, extensively so in some places, from Western military doctrine and from a broad range of military practices – except those from within, *ab intra*, Nigeria's own military environment".

Although there is an increasing curricular emphasis on jointness at the staff and war college level, and greater successes in joint exercises since early clumsy attempts such as Operation Sea Dog, there still exist significant failures in collaboration from the inter-service down to the inter-departmental levels. A relevant example of this is the absence of coordination between the training provided at the Nigerian Defence Academy (Kaduna), the Armed Forces Command and Staff College (Jaji) and the National Defence College (Abuja). This lack of coordination has resulted in a system whereby the Commandant or senior directors of an individual college are able to implement significant changes without first consulting or notifying other 'partner' colleges. This environment has led to a counterproductive culture of institutional protectionism between colleges in areas such as curricular reform and knowledge sharing.

The third factor is the lack of evolution in the intellectual content being utilised by officers within the armed forces. A key aspect of this is the tendency in the Nigerian military to mirror the practices of other armed forces, without adapting them to Nigeria's unique socio-political, economic and cultural contexts. As revealed by Omeni (2018, p.14), this "institutional isomorphism" includes a particularly prominent "institutional transfer

between the British colonialist military and the Nigerian military that emerged post independence”. This scenario has led to significant redundancies within the intellectual content available at Nigerian military colleges, as well as a lack of serious curricular development at the institutional level. A key example of this can be found in the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), which is accredited by the Nigerian Government to award civilian degrees to its students, up to the level of PhD. As a result of its status, the NDA has attempted to compete with civilian institutions in its provision of postgraduate education, by developing a broad range of courses with no direct relevance to the military profession.

In addition to their lack of relevance, by 2013 the expansion of subject matters within the NDA had become counterproductive and even overwhelming for the college’s finances and staff workload. This led to a scenario in which the academy was forced to nearly close its postgraduate school altogether. As a result of this, in 2013 when I was placed in the role of Commandant of the NDA, I was forced to wholly eliminate 30 out of the college’s 68 postgraduate courses, due to their complete lack of relevance for the military profession.

Although it can be argued that a learning organisation such as the military should be diverse in its research areas, this does not necessitate placing limited resources and budget into developing these courses internally within military educational institutions. Indeed, in such cases where the military requires expertise in a non-military specialisation, it is often simpler and more cost-effective to send officers to civilian academic institutions. Military academies themselves should focus both their human and financial resources into subjects that are of direct relevance to the military function and are unlikely to be taught in civilian universities.

The final factor relates to the allocation and recruitment of personnel within military educational institutions. By 2013 the National Defence Academy contained a higher ratio of teaching staff with ‘professor’ or ‘assistant professor’ status than many civilian universities in Nigeria, often as a result of political favouritism. This scenario led to a culture of complacency and a lack of competition across college staff. Although such officials possessed masters and doctoral qualifications, they often lacked basic pedagogical training. Moreover, there existed an active opposition to pedagogical or educational reforms.

This lack of proficiency within the civilian college staff was further exacerbated by challenges surrounding the retention of military staff. In the 2014–2015 academic year, for example, the National Defence Academy had a turnover of three registrars; a role of critical importance to the functioning of a college and one that requires a minimum 5-year employment contract in civilian universities within Nigeria. In addition to this, there existed a significant number of short-term military instructors, who were mandated to teach at the college if they had achieved an ‘A’ grade within one of their professional development courses. Although certain college roles (such as that of Directing Staff) are considered prestigious and therefore worthwhile for an officer, these shorter tenures are often undesirable for officers who are seeking to use their learning and specialisation within more prestigious combat roles.

The final personnel-related challenge for Nigerian military education, as well as for the armed forces in general, was the semi-regular ‘compulsory retirement exercises’ undertaken by the Nigerian Government, during which large numbers of senior officers are forcibly retired, as they have either reached the age of 60, served for 35 years in the military, or for other politically expedient reasons. These exercises typically result in the retirement of around 50–70 senior officers per year (see, for example, Special Correspondent, 2014 and Usman, 2016). This retirement age is not an unusual one in comparison to other militaries and creates opportunities for younger, educated and innovative officers to rise through the ranks. However, the practical implementation of this system generates two specific challenges for the Nigerian Armed Forces. Firstly, retirement often occurs at the point at which officers are most capable of making wide-ranging reforms for reasons other than personal career progression or political infighting. Secondly, the process of retiring officers in large annual or bi-annual batches, rather than via a gradual phased method over the course of the year, reduces the military’s ability to create a smooth transition between incoming and outgoing leaders.

## **Practical Strategies for Military Education Reform**

Although the range of challenges facing Nigerian military education both was and still remains significant, the possibility of reform exists. As a means of exploring this potential, I will now outline the four key changes

that I sought to make in my role as Commandant of the National Defence Academy (Kaduna) from 2013–2015. The first change was to initiate the development of a joint training and education doctrine. Fortunately, my tenure as Commandant of the academy occurred at a time when two of my former NDA coursemates were appointed as commandants of the Armed Forces Command and Staff College (Jaji) and the National Defence College (Abuja) respectively. Although at first, we attempted to develop this doctrine in partnership, the process was inhibited by the conventional protectionist mentality that surrounds inter-departmental and inter-organisational collaboration. In order to overcome this, the NDA composed and submitted its own proposal for a joint doctrine to the other colleges for their review and amendments. It remains to be seen however how far this joint doctrine will develop, now that the commandants of all three colleges have been superseded.

The second improvement we sought to achieve was to further contextualise the training and education provided at the NDA through simulation exercises. Such exercises are neither cheap nor easy to implement. To ensure cost-effectiveness and superior quality within a limited time period, we coordinated with the U.S. National Defense University to send our faculty members to attend the annual simulation exercises that follow their capstone course. This resulted in three annual trips with over ten faculty members per year attending exercises of direct relevance to counter-terrorism operations against Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This participation also enhanced the channels of communication and collaboration between U.S. and Nigerian military educators.

The third reform we implemented was a review of our curriculum, in order to better align and connect the processes of ‘education’ and ‘training’ within the academy. Previous to this, there existed a disconnect between these two interdependent aspects. A key example of this realignment is the changes that were made regarding the level of education given to students on the consequences of firing a weapon. Although soldiers were well trained in marksmanship, we had to reorient our programmes so that this technical skill was complemented with increased learning on the tactical, strategic and ethical questions that a soldier must account for prior to discharging their weapon.

The fourth and by far the most extensive set of reforms, however, involved restructuring the departments and courses within the NDA to increase their direct relevance to the challenges facing the contemporary military soldier. This process was designed to radically increase the number of military-specific subjects available within the academy. In 2013, for example, the National Defence Academy featured courses in subjects such as business and management studies, but none on leadership, homeland security or intelligence. Indeed, despite the fact that it possessed a history department, this department was focussed on general historical studies rather than military history specifically.

Prior to our reforms, the academy contained three faculties: The Faculty of Science, Faculty of Engineering, and Faculty of Social Sciences. In order to counteract the deficit of military studies, we gained approval from the government to make three significant changes and one symbolic change. Firstly, we reorganised the engineering faculty into the Faculty of Engineering and Technology, in order to generate a heightened focus on providing technological solutions to evolving threats. Secondly, we gained permission to create an entirely new faculty, named the Faculty of Military Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies. This new faculty was designed to bring together research and researchers with a specific military focus or an interdisciplinary focus of relevance to the military. Thirdly, in partnership with the Office of the President, we sought to expand our psychology department into a new Institute of Psychology, in order to radically enhance the services and research available for soldiers and families affected by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), due to the ongoing trauma of insurgency within Nigeria. Finally, in line with the importance of symbolic narratives in relation to the cultural adoption of any such reform process, we renamed the postgraduate school as the School of Graduate and Advanced Military Studies.

Realistically, these changes at the faculty level were designed to enhance educational provision in the mid- to long-term. This is due both to the fact that staff will require time to become culturally habituated to the reforms, and that it will be three to five years until the first students of these new faculties will graduate. In order to balance these mid- to long-term effects with more immediate gains, we introduced five specialist research and teaching centres. These centres enabled us to introduce a range of new short

courses, in partnership with military and academic partners from countries including the United Kingdom, the United States and India. The first institution was the Centre for Critical Thinking, Teaching and Learning, designed to help develop the lateral thinking skills required for contemporary officers to be capable of adapting to the evolving threat environment. In order to generate internal support for the centre prior to its creation, we sent thirteen senior officers (including the Deputy Commandant and the heads of all faculties) to the International Conference on Critical Thinking. We also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the U.S. Foundation for Critical Thinking, to assist in the development of courses.

Secondly, we created the Centre for Leadership and Complex Operations Studies, which we planned to develop further into an Institute for Leadership, designed to enhance the military's education on governance, leadership management and command skills. Thirdly, we constructed the Centre for Applied Technology and Innovation, to reorient the focus of our military engineers towards the creation of practical solutions for military challenges. Instead of funding broad academic studies with no immediate military relevance, the centre was designed to focus investment on specific military challenges such as protecting urban environments and critical national infrastructures from bomb threats, or tracking the military vehicles, ammunition and armaments that are currently being seized by terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram. The fourth centre was the Centre for Documentation and Applied Lessons, which was intended to act as the central organisation for the simulation and documentation of lessons learned.

The final institution was the Centre for Languages, designed to increase the NDA's provision of foreign language training from two voluntary elective courses in French and Arabic. Specifically, the centre will make it mandatory for every cadet and undergraduate student to take an elective module in at least one of three languages: French, Arabic or Chinese. This emphasis is vital given Nigeria's geographical connection to French- and Arabic-speaking nations, and the increasing role played by China in African economic investment (Mawere and Tandi, 2016, p.394) and global politico-military affairs, including regional peacekeeping operations (Fung, 2016, p.1).

It should be noted that, integral to the development and mid-term maintenance of these reforms was a prominent focus on strategic partnerships, MoUs and service contracts. Over the course of two years, we were able to create two dedicated e-libraries with U.S. partners and to secure agreements to create a specific military-focussed e-library for both the post-graduate and undergraduate schools at the National Defence Academy. In order to initiate postgraduate courses in military-specific subjects such as intelligence and democracy without delay, we created partnerships with institutions including the U.S. National Defense University and the U.S. Army War College. Finally, in order to avoid the talent drain caused by compulsory retirement exercises, we set aside funds to enable retired officers with relevant strategic and operational experience to participate in the NDA's teaching and curricular development as honorary 'fellows'. It should be acknowledged that cultural change within the military is not a rapid process, and the success of long-term reforms requires an ongoing cultural shift within the senior officer corps.

## **The Way Forward for Nigerian Military Education**

It remains to be seen how far these reforms will take hold in the mid- to long-term. What is certain, however, is that the Nigerian Armed Forces face a dire need to create advanced military education programmes that are directly relevant to their current and future strategic, operational and tactical challenges. Moreover, they must achieve this in the era of the 'strategic Corporal', in which even junior officers are required to understand the reasons and purpose behind their actions. How can the military accomplish this in a period of constrained budgets, with an institutional culture that perceives education as detrimental to career prospects?

Firstly, it must substantially increase the professional incentives and career prospects of officers who are appointed to teach within its military education institutions. Secondly, it must create a joint education and training doctrine, and a process of continuous curricular review. Thirdly, it must expand its current emphasis on moral and political education, interdisciplinary sciences and critical thinking skills. Finally, it must embrace technology, especially the use of ICT to enhance blended and distributed learning opportunities. The combination of these factors above all will allow the military to provide strategically relevant and cost-effective

education throughout its hierarchy, from the lowest ranked soldier to the most senior officer.

The primary goal of education, whether military or civilian, should be to change our methods and our mindsets for the better. It should enable us to improve our ways and solve contemporary problems within our own field of expertise. It should make us smarter and wiser. Otherwise, education will simply be a burden of information that we carry around with us. It is due to this high ideal that we as officers must constantly question our existing methods and priorities for professional military education. In practical terms, this means that we must continue to interrogate and reform the structures, programmes and policies of our military colleges and academies because, as noted in a speech made by Winston Churchill at the Pentagon in 1946:

“Professional attainment, based on prolonged study, and collective study at colleges, rank by rank, and age by age — those are the title reeds of the commanders of the future armies, and the secret of future victories.” (United States Congress, 1989, p.12)

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