

International military-scientific cooperation through the ISMS

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Security in a Multi-Polar World

“Security in 2020 in a Multi-Polar World”, the first meeting of the International Society of Military Sciences (ISMS), held in Amsterdam on 25 and 26 November 2009, attracted an audience of over 150 experts and speakers from all over the world. The founding meeting of the ISMS, which especially aims at the forces of smaller and medium sized nations and the academic education of officers, was avidly used to debate global military and security challenges and to determine research programs for the future.

The idea for such a platform was born in consultations between researchers of the Netherlands Defense Academy (NLDA) and the Austrian Landesverteidigungsakademie (LVAK). Both institutions were confronted with problems of size and a certain lack of connections to national and international research groups. The logical next step was to find partners and set up a network. The ISMS is the result.

Knowledge Intense Environments and Academic Education as Push Factors

Annually roughly 30 wars and armed conflicts take place. Mostly, they are internal and often characterized by long ideological fights, ethnic confrontations and political power plays. More often than not, conflicts are rekindled after years of peace and the ever larger number of actors makes it difficult to reach an encompassing peace agreement. In many nations of the so-called Third World, peace is a concept unknown to many youth. War and conflict are to them and many millions more a daily reality. Conflicts in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and their effects demand a continuing engagement of great powers and others in the new century. Since the end of the Cold War, Western armies, in trusted constellations (NATO) or recently in “Coalitions of the Willing,” have intervened to curb these developments.

These operations prove that contemporary and future actions will center around three characteristics: 1) Internal unrest, complex conflict structures and civil war are “normal” when Western armies are deployed; 2) International operations and multi- or international

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cooperation are the standard way of doing things; 3) Soldiers are constantly surrounded by cameras in operation areas. This means officers have to be prepared for these scenarios in the military and academic training. The reality of a “strategic soldier” is becoming ever urgent and poses great challenges to military educational institutions.

On top of these developments two unrelated issues are important: defense budgets are under stress everywhere and the military profession is less and less a lifetime fulfilment. Both developments require new approaches by military and political leaders. Increasingly physical, psychological and intellectual challenges to soldiers of the future demand that soldiers are recruited and trained in a new way. In the Netherlands, recruiting officers is becoming harder and harder, especially for technical functions. All over the western world, MOD's are therefore differentiating their pay scales and educational opportunities to lure new officer recruits, particularly because most new officers serve on contracts that oblige them to leave the service at 35 years of age and seek civilian employment. European armies are also confronted with changes in the civilian educational structure, where an Anglo-Saxon style bachelor-master structure is now being implemented. This process is the result of the so-called Bologna agreements, whereby European nations – aiming at creating a Europe-wide labor market – decided to streamline university education into one European model. Military educators have to adapt and offer parts of their officer education in this same two-step model, whereby a bachelor is the first degree (3 years of study) and master is the second step (one of two years depending on the subject). Some ISMS members are changing to this model while at the same time striving for academic accreditation.

This new environment invigorates academic research yet also highlights deficiencies: some military universities experience difficulties to connect with research communities or universities in their respective nations due to size or other limitations. The ISMS is thus a way to increase intellectual economies of scale.

The Dutch and Austrian Road to ISMS

When the faculty of military sciences of the Netherlands Defense Academy (NLDA) was instituted in 2005 it encountered similar problems. As it turned out, most international and national academic contacts were individual, not institutional and therefore liable not to last over time. In 2007, a commission was ordered to find new ways to institutionalize and stabilize national and international contacts related to the three core NLDA areas war studies, military management and military technology. The commission members, Netherlands Royal

Marines LtCol Allard Wagemaker M.A. (chair), Alexander Bon M.A. and Dr. Rene Moelker, planned for an organization that would enable cooperation in scientific research, conferences and publications. A cooperative effort would generate the critical mass for the member institutions and inspire to new research.

The commission focussed on the military academies of medium sized European nations and Canada as potential partners, as these institutions represented nations that had a more or less comparable military posture and political ambitions as the Netherlands. The goal was not so much to exclude the larger nations, but to gather the countries whose militaries grapple with similar military-political, operational and technical problems. Larger nations often think in terms of divisions instead of battalions; in thousands rather than hundreds of vehicles; in large headquarters with their own generals in command, not so much about multilateral European cooperation, where nations contribute a handful of officers.

The Austrian armed forces (Bundesheer) faced many of the same challenges: accession to the Bologna model of Bachelor-Master introduction in higher education as well as a greater need for scientific knowledge. The highest educational institution in the Austrian armed forces, the Landesverteidigungsakademie (LVAK), and particularly its Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management (IFK), also needed more cooperation. Its researches had no access to large empirical data collections and its research would benefit from contacts with other experts. During a meeting in Vienna in 2006, Allard Wagemaker and IFK commander Brigadier General Dr. Walter Feichtinger quickly agreed to try to work together, hence the constellation of the original planners of the ISMS.

From Plan to Reality

In 2007, the Dutch commission contacted the Austrians at IFK and in the spring of 2008 travelled to Sweden to confer with the National Defense College (FHS). By phone and email, the Royal Military College of Canada was informed and became a partner. These institutions were selected because of the profile of the nations they represent and the personal contacts that existed between Gerry Larsson (FHS), David Last (RMC) and Walter Feichtinger (IFK) and the Dutch commission. By 2008, the partners were ready to set up an Association of War, Conflict Management and Peace Support Studies. The idea was to promote research, set up a website and a peer-reviewed publication. This would be the way to build the critical mass to bridge the gap between military and civilian universities. The new organization was to set up an annual conference and have at least two seminars. A timetable was developed to formalize

the organization through a letter of intent to be signed in the fall of 2008 by the deans and commanders of the member institutions, as well as to plan the first formal conference in 2009. Originally the members were to be Netherlands, Austria and later Canada and Sweden. As it turned out, the commission's arrival in Sweden coincided with the meeting of Nordic military academies for setting up roughly the same sort of institution. Quickly, the Dutch decided to broaden the cooperation offer to the Baltic Defence College, the Danes, Norwegians and Finns as well. Since all parties agreed on the basic idea, home institutions were informed and the delegates agreed to meet in May 2008 in the Amsterdam Naval Barracks for a founding meeting of all eight partner academies.

The meeting in Amsterdam was attended by Tomas Jermalavicius MA for the Baltic Defence College; Dr. David Last (RMC); Dr. Flemming Splidsboel Hansen (Royal Danish Defence College); professor Dr. Hannu Kari (Finnish National Defence University); Alexander Bon MA, Dr. René Moelker and LtCol. Allard Wagemaker MA (NLDA); LtCol. Dr. John Olsen (Norwegian Defence University College); Brigadier General Dr. Walter Feichtinger and Captain Benedikt Hensellek (LVAK/IFK); professor Dr. Gerry Larson (FHS).

Spurred on by Allard Wagemaker, the group agreed to name the organisation International Society of Military Sciences (ISMS) and decided to institute eight working groups led by a researcher from one of the eight founding member institutions. The Letter of Intent spelled out who would organize the annual conferences to 2012 and who would run the ISMS on a daily basis. The Dutch, as the main instigators of the project, declared their willingness to preside over the ISMS and organize the first conference.

Commanders and deans signed the Letter of Intent in October of 2008 in Copenhagen. During this session in the Naval Club, Alexander Bon was named first President of the ISMS and tasked with organizing the first conference. Allard Wagemaker was unable to take on the Presidency as was he was slated for deployment to Afghanistan in 2009.

Within the NLDA, a ISMS Board was instituted for the organization of the November 2009 conference and the establishment of a website. The website (www.isofms.org) was ready by March of 2009 and mentioned in the digital library of the renowned ETHZ technical university in Zürich. In May, the ISMS Council, consisting of representatives of the eight founding members, met in Vienna, where a combined IFK/ISMS seminar on conflict prevention on the Caucasus took place as well. At the council meeting, representatives agreed on ways to organize the Working Groups. In April, a seminar on Strategic Decision-Making in Crisis and War was featured at the Finnish National Defence University and billed as a ISMS seminar as well.

Organization of the ISMS

The ISMS is organized the following way: The President of the ISMS is chosen each year from the Council, which consists of the eight representatives of the founding member academies. The President's institution is tasked with planning the annual conference. A secretariat (Board) is established for the organisation of the conference, to maintain the website and for outside contacts. The Presidency together with the Council is the highest organ within the ISMS, which decides for instance on the adoption of new members. The Council meets at least twice a year, once during the conference and a second time during a seminar at one of the member institutions. The Working Groups are led by ISMS chairman, yet open to researchers from other (non-ISMS) institutions as well. In order to grow as an organization, it was decided not to allow new members until 2011, when the Council at the suggestion of one of the member nations may decide on a new member academy. The ISMS does not have a common fund; the academy organizing the annual conference pays for it in toto.

The 2009 Amsterdam Conference

The first conference of the ISMS, "Security in 2020 in a Multi-Polar World", was held in Amsterdam on 25 and 26 November 2009 and attracted an audience of over 150 experts and speakers. The conference was opened by NLDA dean Professor Dr. Wouter van Rossum. Major General Patrick Cammaert (retd.), former MONUC commander in the Democratic Republic of Congo, explained the difficulties of multinational operations in Africa. ISMS-President Alexander Bon spoke about the emerging Euro-Mediterranean society, which was followed by a lively discussion. The second day, Dr. Sebastiaan Reyn, head of 'project reconnaissance' (Project Verkenningen), a multi-ministerial endeavour to sketch the world situation in 2030 and to deduce what kind of military the Netherlands would have to build to face the challenges outlined in the document. Before Alexander Bon handed over the presidency to Professor Dr. Maja Kirilova-Eriksson, Vice-President of the Swedish Defence Academy, Professor Dr. Franz Kernic spoke about peacekeeping in a globalizing and multi-polar world in sociological perspective.

The actual core of the conference was the meeting of the researchers in the working groups, whose chairmen had selected a number of stimulating papers to be presented. Next to the intellectual exchanges in the working groups, the conference was a moment to connect with other researchers and to discuss future research themes to be taken up by the ISMS.

David Last's War Studies group heard such papers as *Piracy and the International Privatization of Security: A Security Governance Assessment* by Dr. Christopher Spearin of the Canadian Forces College. Sjef Orbons (Netherlands Defence Academy) spoke about *Nonlethality as a Military Option in the Afghanistan Security Context: Experiences and Prospect*. Another country addressed was Iran. In the Security, Defence Policy and Strategy group, led by Walter Feichtinger, discussion centered on China, development of intelligence services and the increasing importance of maritime forces and the alarming situation in the South African armed forces. Presenters were among others, Flemming Splidsboel Hansen, Capt. RNLN Sjoerd Both and Prof. Liselotte Odgaard from the Danish Defence College. Prof. Dr. Gerry Larsson, chair of the Leadership, Command and Control, and Basic Competence group, introduced new research on *Leader development in natural context*. Prof. Eyal Ben-Ari of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem spoke about *Hybrid wars, complex environments and military leadership: Notes on current developments*. Drs. L. G. Gulpers, Dr. R. J. M. Beeres, Dr. J. M. I. M. Achterbergh & Dr. D.J. Vriens (Radboud University of Nijmegen/Netherlands Defence Academy) presented their study into *Moral responsible behaviour in the military organization: An argument for a study of the relation between moral decision making and infrastructural design*.

The Military Technology Working Group (chair: Prof. Dr. Hannu Kari) listened to papers on sensors and Dr. L. Koene, A. Papy, (Netherlands Defence Academy/Royal Military Academy Belgium) presented their project on the *Role of tissue simulants and their physical properties in the evaluation of non-lethal weapons* vor. René Moelker selected for the Working Group Armed Forces and Society papers by Dr. Theo Brinkel (NLDA) *religion as a motivating factor in international security: Searching for indicators*) and Dr. Łukasz Kamiński (University of Krakow), who explained the *Perfect soldiers of the future: On chemical enhancement of the American military*. Three Norwegians - LtCol. Dr. Nils Terje Lunde, Dr. Ingeborg Mongstad-Kvammen and Associate Prof. Sigrid Redse Johansen – are chairing the working group Law & Ethics, which heard results by Jouni Westling (NDU, Finland) on *Transnational justice and punishing for past injustices* as well as Prof. Dr. Desirée Verweij (NLDA) on the theme *Integrity and the risk of just another polished blazon*.

Defence Management and Economics (Dr. Robert Beeres, NLDA) dealt with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and Canadian Reservists. Markus Gauster (IFK) presented on *the underestimated relevance of economic impacts of crisis response operations*. Military History (Chair: Dr. Eric A. Sibul, Baltic Defence College), enjoyed Prof. Dr. Wim Klinkert (NLDA/University of Amsterdam) on *Fighting the next war: Early Dutch*

military reactions on World War I, 1918/1922. Dr. Sibul presented Military history in professional military education to prepare for a complex and dangerous world. Dr. Kjeld Hald Galster (Royal Danish Defence College) explained Power preservation.

The Future

The ISMS needs to expand its working groups to serve the member organizations with fresh research, necessary to better understand, plan and execute present and future operations of the smaller and medium sized nations. The annual conference and the work in the working groups will prove to be the leading instruments for that task.