

Issues relating to weapons' purchases, roles and missions of the armed forces, the defence budget and strategy are ongoing areas of disagreement, debate and compromise. The requirement of independent advice based on objective information collection and analysis is crucial for competent executive decision-making on military affairs. Estimates on the nature and content of any threat to a nation, especially in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 environment, requires more than a security-centric approach for effective, objective and accurate analysis. Civil control of the defence function is thus a critical success factor for effective and appropriate defence policy formulation. Effective civil control demands that all governmental decisions, including those relating to national and internal security, are made by elected officials, or their civilian appointees, outside the ranks of the armed forces. Civil control is absolute; thus no decision, or action falls to the military without the clear delegation of the civil authority. Even command decisions, such as the selection of strategy and tactics and the management of the armed forces are in effect delegated to the armed forces by civilian decision-makers. The state must clearly specify the role of the armed forces, ensuring that the military leadership does not define its own role and purpose. Thus the proposed updated White Paper should provide for

a strengthened and more effective civil Defence Secretariat that is better able to carry out its mission. Moreover, Parliament should be further empowered to advance effective and intrusive civil control. Defence policy in a democracy is made by democratically elected officials, in consultation with military leadership. The updated Defence White Paper itself should be the product of civil policy-making, with military input and advice but not formulation preeminence, in order to ensure broad public approval and adequately provide for all future security related contingencies.

### **South Africa: Security Threats**

Any effective defence policy should be based on a realistic, comprehensive and meticulous analysis of the threats facing South Africa, now and over the medium-to long-term. Without a threat analysis, defence policy, procurement and training will be driven by institutional needs (survival and growth) and industry needs (profits from existing weapons systems and programmes). The absence of an objective threat analysis as the key driver of defence policy will produce a distorted military structure, based on narrow institutional goals and defence industry interests. The 1998 Defence Review was not adequately informed by a comprehensive threat analysis, hence a resultant force structure was

inappropriate for the present security environment. The updated White Paper should include a comprehensive and exhaustive assessment of the various threats facing South Africa over the medium-to long-term. An analysis of the regional and extra-regional strategic environment would suggest no possibility of a conventional military threat to South Africa in the foreseeable future, even using a long-term worst-case scenario.

In the context of a broad definition of security, South Africa's and Southern Africa's immediate security concerns include:

- poverty /lack of economic growth;
- disease (malaria, infant mortality, TB, HIV/Aids); unemployment;
- famine, (by 2010, one in every three people in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to be food insecure);
- social decay (The *SADC Regional Human Development Report 2000* indicates that human development has declined sharply over the last five years in terms of longevity, education levels and standard of living);
- economic marginalisation (globalisation) and debt (the

developing world now spends \$13 on debt repayment for every \$1 it receives in grants and approximately 7 million children die each year as a result of poverty);

- ecological degradation (the need for sustainable development);
- domestic and transnational crime;
- illegal migration (undocumented migrants); and
- natural disasters (floods, cyclones, etc.)

While it is obvious that the SANDF cannot directly apply military assets to appropriately address this broad security agenda, it is also obvious that a significant contribution can be made in a number of clearly defined areas. The absence of a conventional military threat to South Africa, now or in the long-term would confirm the availability of SANDF personnel for collateral deployment in specific areas. Where and how the SANDF can contribute to addressing human security needs could be clearly identified in an updated Defence Review.

### **The Regional and Continental Strategic Environment**

Political developments in the Southern African region as well as the continent as a whole, forms the strategic

framework for defence policy making and planning in South Africa. The South African Development Community's (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS) provides a legal framework for SADC's security integration, clarifying defence co-operation and interaction. The Protocol calls for a professional regional peacekeeping force along with a range of conflict resolution mechanisms and an arbitration process. The Protocol covers traditional state security objectives as well as broader security concerns. The emphasis of the OPDS is on conflict prevention, management and resolution (as outlined in Article 11), but where this fails to be effective, provision is made for "enforcement action to be taken against one or more of the disputant parties." (Article 11, 3c). The Organ is intended to establish an early warning system in order to "facilitate timeous action to prevent the outbreak and escalation of conflict." The Protocol envisages "enforcement action as a matter of last resort and in accordance with Article 53 of the UN Charter, with the authorisation of the UN Security Council." The SADC Mutual Defence Pact envisages operationalising the mechanisms of the Organ for mutual co-operation in defence and security matters. Article 9 is particularly relevant, as it urges African states to realise the objectives of the Pact by "co-operating in defence matters" and

facilitating "interaction among their armed forces and defence-related industries" with a view to:

- joint training and the holding of joint military exercises;
- exchange of military intelligence and information;
- joint research, development and production of military equipment and the facilitation of supply, or procurement of defence equipment.

Thus in terms of South Africa's SADC treaty obligations, a commitment to provide the necessary support for the OPDS's stated objectives would be an appropriate component of an updated Defence White paper. With a view to advancing continental peace and security, the African Union (AU) has provided for the development of a common security policy and the establishment of an African Standby Force (ASF), specifically designed for rapid deployment to keep and enforce the peace. The Protocol outlining the Peace and Security Council (PSC) indicates that the PSC "shall be a collective security and early-warning arrangement to facilitate a timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa." The specific requirements of the ASF implementation process includes the following key elements:

- establishment of a standing advisory Military Staff Committee (MSC);
- an early warning system - to anticipate and prevent conflict-organisation of a brigade size (approximately 3 800 personnel) standby force in five different regions : North, West (ECOWAS), East, Central and Southern (SADC);
- training and equipment modification for African conditions and to meet UN training standards; rapid deployment capability, that is, 30-90 days with an eventual 14 day deployment period for a “robust” peace enforcement capability.

The overall objective is to provide the AU with an effective military capacity, at short notice, which can intervene on the African continent in situations of armed conflict. The specific design of the ASF implies a capacity for both peacekeeping and peace enforcement. South Africa's AU treaty obligations complement the regional (SADC) security framework and thus necessitate an unequivocal commitment to support and advance peacekeeping, peace enforcement and post-conflict peace building on the African continent, which should be a major focus of an updated Defence White Paper.

### **The Global Environment**

South Africa is unlikely to be directly affected by the USA's “war on terrorism,” or “irregular warfare” operations, (so-called fourth-generation warfare [4GW]). This point was recently emphasised by President Mbeki's statement at the United Nations, where he pointed out that the developing world are at war with poverty and disease, rather with terrorism. Moreover, the apparent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (along with preparations to counter “catastrophic” threats) have little or no relevance to South Africa's defence function. South Africa's policy on WMD and active diplomatic participation in international fora to this end is comprehensive and effective. The long term focus of South Africa's defence policy should thus be informed by an Afro-centric approach concentrating on the enhancement of peace and stability on the African continent, rather than a US-centric approach which emphasises different security priorities and concerns. The updated Defence White Paper should thus clearly outline how the SANDF will contribute to the success of the AU and SADC in terms of South Africa's treaty obligations and commitment to promoting peace and stability in Africa.

### **Role and Function**

Given South Africa's commitment to peace and security in Africa, manifest in

South Africa's enthusiastic endorsement of the AU's Peace and Security Council, as well as SADC's Mutual Defence Pact, this places new and significant demands on the SANDF in terms of foreign policy implementation and the fulfilment of international obligations. In effect, the SANDF has a new role to play, already initiated via peacekeeping operations in Africa, with wide implications not provided for in previous defence planning. Moreover, given the present threats to South Africa, the SANDF needs to become far more active in collateral activities and less focused on preparing for a conventional war. Obviously, the SANDF needs to retain a limited, cost effective and appropriate war-fighting capability, but should at the same time expand and augment its collateral utility. In terms of a collateral applications, the SANDF can be more effectively deployed (and is already effective) in the following five areas:

- contribution to fighting domestic crime - increased support for the SAPS
- illegal migration and transnational crime - enhanced border protection
- expanded humanitarian relief activities - such as the provision of emergency food supplies,

casualty evacuation and medical support;

- disaster relief - expanded disaster relief capacity;
- regional conflict prevention - increased involvement in peacekeeping, designed specifically to advance sub-regional and continental security.

The existing defence modernisation programme is not ideally suited for an adequate response to new security threats. The defence package is designed for the SANDF's primary function, that is conventional war-fighting, and has limited collateral utility. Thus the updated Defence White Paper should explain how the SANDF will enhance its collateral utility in order to contribute to urgent and immediate national security concerns. The Defence White Paper should clearly explain how existing weapons systems can be used for collateral functions (for example, transport aircraft, etc.). Obviously, due to budget constraints no new major purchases of weapons systems, even to support peacekeeping, would be appropriate at this time. A further explanation of the SANDF's core function, that is, conventional military capacity requires no elaboration as this objective is clear from the extensive heavy weapons purchases and ongoing defence preparations. Moreover, given

the commitment to continental peace and security, South Africa should become the centre for peacekeeping training in Africa. It would be appropriate for the updated Defence White paper to propose a plan for significantly enhancing South Africa's peacekeeping training and preparation.

### **Human Resource Management**

Human resource policy, recruitment and training should be driven by the specific policy objectives outlined in the updated White Paper. This would imply the preparation of personnel capable of conventional war-fighting as well as an ability to effectively and efficiently perform collateral functions. In addition, the widely reported and well known problems relating to human resource issues in the SANDF need to be urgently addressed. The *DOD's Strategic Plan to 2004/5* highlights and identifies many of the issues relating to the perceived lack of effectiveness in the SANDF, but offers solutions largely based on increased defence expenditure which is inappropriate, given the urgent need to increase socio-economic and welfare-related budgets. The SANDF must be able to deploy fit, healthy and well-trained personnel at short notice for a variety of contingencies. This demands a constant renewal of personnel capacity in the form of regular and appropriate annual intakes of new recruits.

### **The Defence Budget, Arms Purchases and the Arms Industry**

In a recent United Nations report on Africa entitled *The Causes of Conflict and Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa*, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on all African nations to freeze defence expenditure for a period of ten years. Concerned at the increasing number of armed conflicts in Africa, Annan also urged African governments to reduce defence expenditure to below 1,5% of annual gross domestic product. The Defence White Paper should clearly commit South Africa to limit defence expenditure in line with UN recommendations. The obvious and desperate need for increased social spending in South Africa demands a defence capability within a contained and appropriate defence budget.

Despite suggestions that arms offset programmes are on track, in terms of monitoring the implementation of industrial participation (IP) programmes, (either DIP - Defence Industry Participation, or NIP - National Industrial Participation) there is growing doubt that this can be done effectively, given commercial confidentiality and a lack of capacity.<sup>1</sup> There is no clarity on how over the longer-term job creation linked to the arms deal is to be monitored and verified. Moreover, if the arms deal is

largely unaffordable, impedes training and operational deployment while being largely inappropriate for South Africa's longer term defence needs, the NIP and DIP programmes become largely unimportant. The updated Defence White Paper should clearly indicate how NIP and DIP programmes, as well as related job creation is to be monitored and fully verified. The Defence White Paper should clearly explain how the new (and planned) weapons purchases will impact on the defence budget and enable the SANDF to carry out anything but its core function. In the context of the changing role and mission of the SANDF, further purchases of heavy weapons need to be very carefully assessed and openly debated.

The armaments industry is heavily subsidised, thus diverting public funds away from socio-economic programmes. Arguments for or against a domestic defence industry would obviously be based on potential sales and profitability and would thus be inappropriate for inclusion in the updated Defence White Paper. Rather, an independent audit of the defence industry should be conducted and updated quarterly, as is best practice for normal commercial enterprises, to determine ongoing viability. Recent reports that Denel had a loss of R377,5 million over the past twelve months requires urgent investigation.<sup>2</sup> Given

that South African can now purchase arms and related material from any country in the world, the maintenance of a pre-1994 defence manufacturing industry which is unprofitable and possibly largely irrelevant in terms of the nation's defence needs, requires a comprehensive review.

### **Future Defence Requirements and Capabilities**

South Africa's defence policy has largely produced a military force that is becoming less relevant and less applicable as time passes and new priorities emerge. Given the absence of a clear conventional military threat, the SANDF's priorities must remain in the area of collateral activities. While the SANDF remains a key element in the foundation of South Africa's post-1994 democracy, and stands as the key guarantor of the country's security, many new missions and challenges have materialised. The SANDF should focus on new priorities, along with the appropriate application of existing military equipment and technologies. In the context of South Africa's constitution, the SANDF is tasked with defending and protecting the country, its territorial integrity and its people. However, in times of peace the SANDF and all armed forces for that matter, are required to carry out other functions in order to maintain relevance and public support. Moreover, the concept of

security defined in South Africa's constitution goes beyond only territorial defence. It includes the security of persons and the environment. The SANDF should thus equip and train for non-core functions in addition to maintaining an appropriate conventional combat capability. The longer-term objective would be for South Africa to develop and advance a "soft-security" framework, rather than the present "hard-security" system. In this context, the South African soldier "of the future will have to be versatile and multi-skilled.... he/she must be capable of participating in different types of operations."<sup>3</sup>

Added to the primary defence role and collateral activities, South Africa's commitment to the growing African security regime suggests a need for the SANDF to address defence development in the following areas:

a. *Expand warning intelligence capacity.* This should be designed to alert decision makers to future security threats, thus giving time for an appropriate peacekeeping, or peace enforcement response. Early warning intelligence, and comprehensive information exchange, is a key component of

both the SADC and AU security framework.

b. *Advance the regional/continental security regime.* This implies an integrated approach to regional defence and a SANDF policy alignment with regional structures. The development of a co-operative security framework would advance the SADC Defence Pact and AU security protocols. Commitment to a collaborative security framework would also imply that the SANDF adopt a clear non-offensive defence (NOD) posture.

c. *Operationalise the SADC Defence Pact.* This requires building on the OPDS framework and enhancing a regional defence framework, in response to a range of possible scenarios (to be determined in conjunction with other SADC partners). Operational plans for collective action with SADC partners require drafting and testing via joint exercises. Moreover, the development and maintenance of a robust, rapid reaction force (out-of-area deployment) for either peacekeeping, peace enforcement, or defence against external attack should be prioritised.

d. *Advance the African Union's Security Framework.* In this context, the SANDF should expand its capacity to contribute to the AU's Military Staff Committee (MSC) and energetically implement the already drafted plan for regional brigade size ASF with rapid deployment capability.<sup>4</sup> This implies developing a robust force capable of peacekeeping and peace-enforcement, along with a capacity to participate in humanitarian emergencies and complex interventions.<sup>5</sup> The specific training requirement points to more peacekeeping and peace-enforcement training by developing best-practice guidelines for peacekeeping and conflict resolution.

The UN presently has 18 peace missions (observer, peacekeeping, peace-building and combined peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations) in progress. An additional 30 multilateral peace missions are being conducted by regional organisations such as NATO, EU and the OSCE. Given South Africa's new commitment to peacekeeping, the SANDF's participation, on a small scale, seems appropriate in these other missions as part of a learning/skills enhancement process. Argentina, for example, with

an armed force of 72 000 has over the last 10 years sent 9 485 soldiers to participate in various peacekeeping operations. South Africa's present peacekeeping deployment of approximately 2 700 is respectable in international terms, but still short of a number of other countries such as Bangladesh (6 006); Pakistan (5 455); Nigeria (3 489); and India (2 877).<sup>6</sup> As the key driver for peace and security in Africa, South Africa needs to urgently participate in peacekeeping operations (one or two officers at each UN mission to observe and learn), while advancing active peacekeeping and related deployments on the African continent.

### **Conclusion - A Commitment to Peace in Africa**

The present SANDF force structure and posture, based on the 1996 Defence White paper and 1998 Defence Review is inappropriate, given the zero-conventional threat environment and other more urgent security demands, such as internal deployments against crime and peacekeeping commitments. The altered strategic environment and the existing defence requirements as well as South Africa's evolving regional and continental obligations need to be fully addressed in the updated White Paper. Short-term commitments require a capability to support President Thabo Mbeki's increasingly effective shuttle diplomacy in Africa.<sup>7</sup> Long-term

requirements demand an enhanced SANDF peacekeeping capacity and an ability to effectively participate in SADC and AU security structures. The updated Defence White Paper should clearly articulate the SANDF's agenda for promoting peacekeeping, such as the urgent deployment of officers to UN missions with a view to further training and appropriate skills enhancement. As the major economic power south of the Sahara, South Africa is expected to play a role more commensurate with its economic strength. The SANDF should play a key role in operationalising the SADC/AU security agreements, thereby helping to provide "African solutions to African problems." As President Mbeki has pointed out, ending African conflicts is an urgent priority and "participating in a practical programme of their resolution is the joint responsibility of each and every African patriot."<sup>8</sup> The SANDF can and should play a leading role in this process, thereby confirming its African patriotism and active support for Africa's renewal.

### **Policy Considerations for an Updated Defence White Paper**

In response to the changed security environment, new treaty commitments and the urgent need to reformulate the SANDF's role and function, it would be

appropriate for an updated Defence White Paper to include the following:

- A comprehensive and realistic threat assessment which serves as the foundation for defence preparation. A threat assessment based on a broad definition of security would confirm the SANDF's need to retain a limited and cost effective conventional war-fighting capability, in addition to being equipped, trained and prepared for a range of collateral missions.
- The primary role and function of the SANDF remains to deter aggression against South Africa, however, in the absence of an external conventional military threat, the SANDF should actively participate in collateral activities, such as policing, border protection, disaster relief and peace keeping. The force design and structure should be driven by the SANDF's new roles and missions. (In this context, South Africa's recent decision to acquire a fleet of military transport aircraft as the logistical platform for peacekeeping is appropriate.)<sup>9</sup>

- An unequivocal commitment to democratising defence, thus ensuring that defence policy is devised, articulated and endorsed by civil, elected authorities. The updated Defence White Paper should thus clearly outline methods and procedures for enhanced civil control of the SANDF through the Defence Secretariat, Parliamentary Committees and other related processes and procedures.
- The updated Defence White Paper requires a clear commitment to advance the SADC and AU security regimes through an undertaking to expand and share early warning intelligence; develop a co-operative security framework through SADC's OPDS and the AU's Military Staff Committee as well as provide a comprehensive framework for the SANDF's non-offensive defence (NOD) posture as the foundation for regional peace and security in a non-threatening SADC environment.
- Confirmation that global trends such as preparation for participation in "irregular warfare" and the spread of weapons of mass destruction have little relevance to South Africa's defence preparations; in effect, fully endorsing an Afro-centric security perspective, rather than a US-centric security approach. Extra-regional and continental security trends should not detract from the SANDF's commitment to clear national defence and collateral priorities.
- Human resource policy, recruitment and training should stress the need for combat ready/peacekeeping ready forces capable of war-fighting (primary function) as well as being able to effectively carry out collateral activities (secondary functions). The SANDF thus urgently requires regular new intakes of recruits each year in order to effectively prepare for its assigned roles and functions.
- South Africa's defence industry requires a separate and urgent investigation to determine its long-term viability and commercial relevance. An independent and objective audit of the defence industry to determine profitability, significance and ability to support the SANDF's new roles

and functions would be appropriate, but not as part of an updated Defence Review.

### **Suggested Readings:**

1. L Le Roux and H Boshoff, "The State of the Military" in John Daniel, *State of the Nation : South Africa 2004-2005*, HSRC Press, Pretoria, 2004.
2. V Kent and M Malan, "The African Standby Force - Progress and Prospects," *African Security Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2003.
3. R H Kohn, "How Democracies Control the Military," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1997.
4. G L Shelton, "The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and President Mbeki's Peace and Security Agenda : New Roles and Mission," *IGD Occasional Paper*, No. 42, March 2004.
5. United Nations Peacekeeping, <http://www.un.org/Dept/dpko>.
6. A Van Nieuwkerk, "The SADC Mutual Defence Pact : Si Vis Pacem, Par Bellum?" *Global Insight*, No. 26, October 2003.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Benjamin, C.: "Arms Deal is Paying Off - Defence Study," *Business Day*, 23 July 2003; Lourens, C.: "State Confident About Arms-Deal Offsets," *Business Day*, 3 June 2003; Cokayne, R.: "Offsets Worth Four Times the Arms Deal," *Business Day*, 16 July 2003; Lourens, C and Benjamin, C.: "Are the Defence Suppliers Delivering?" *Business Day*, 13 May 2003 and Wray, Q.: "Arms Offsets on Track to Create up to 15 000 Jobs, DTI Says," *Business Report*, 11 August 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *Business Report*, 1 September 2004, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Lt Col Ramasodi, R.S.: "Force Preparation," *SA Soldier*, August 2002, p.15.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Heitman, H-R.: "Crisis Response Capability - A Role for South Africa," *African Security Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> See Heitman, H-R.: "African Bid for Peace and Security," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 July 2002, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Malan, M.: "The Post-9/11 Security Agenda and Peacekeeping in Africa," *African Security Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2002, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> See Editorial "Mission Possible," *Saturday Star*, 15 January 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Mbeki, T.: "Address by the President of South Africa Delivered to the Joint Sitting of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces," 31 October 2001, in Gibd, R et. Al. (Eds): *Charting a New Course : Globalisation, African Recovery and the New Africa Initiative*, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, 2002, p. 140.

<sup>9</sup> See Dawes, N.: "No Plane, No Gain?" *Mail & Guardian*, December 10 to 16, 2004.

**Dr Garth Shelton is Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand and serves on the board of directors of the Institute for Global Dialogue.**

---