Number 170 March 1995

CSIS AFRICA NOTES

A publication of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C.

South Africa's New Defense Force: Progress and Prospects

by Rocklyn Mark Williams

The overall transition in South Africa has confounded skeptics and surprised many Africa-watchers. And in the military area, despite some serious teething problems, a consensus has emerged that quite a few pundits would have regarded as impossible two years ago.

The long-term success of the defense transition will depend on four critical factors: (1) the extent to which the integration process can be managed without "fear or favor" to any of the new military's formerly embattled components; (2) the extent to which stable and robust civil-military relations can be established in the emerging South African democracy; (3) the role that the integrated defense force will play in relation to the overall transition in South Africa; and (4) whether the revamped military will dominate the southern African region or instead contribute to regional stability through a range of collaborative ventures.

An Integration Without Precedent

Unlike other governmental departments, South Africa's militaries in the wake of the 1994 election were confronted with a set of challenges unprecedented elsewhere in the continent. The integration processes in Zimbabwe and Namibia, for instance, involved three armies in the former case and two armies in the latter. Integration in these countries was managed and directed by an outside party—in both cases the British, whose presence prevented politicization of the process and ensured its relative neutrality.

The South African integration process is different. It has involved six, and later seven, armed forces—each with its own doctrinal, political, institutional, and regional peculiarities. The apartheid-era South African Defense Force (SADF) was numerically, technologically, organizationally, and doctrinally superior to the other participating militaries. Moreover, the numbers to be dealt with in the integration process were significantly greater than in either Zimbabwe or Namibia. It was anticipated that Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK, the ANC's military wing) would deliver some 22,000 personnel to the process, the four homeland armies around 11,000, and the former SADF some 90,000. The logistical and administrative aspects of this exercise have been, accordingly, complex. (For additional background, see "The SADF Revisited" by Herbert M. Howe, *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 126, July 1991.)

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The Preliminary Steps

It was not until November 1993 that the armed forces of the two major political actors, the South African government and the African National Congress, became involved in direct negotiations. This contrasted significantly with the political and constitutional negotiations, which date back to February 1990. (See "Postapartheid South Africa: Steps Taken, the Path Ahead" by Witney W. Schneidman, *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 156, January 1994.) There were essentially two reasons for this "lag" between the political and military talks: (1) Both negotiating parties saw the retention of a "security fallback" as a means of appeasing their constituents, still wary of the compromises being brokered by their representatives. (2) The retention of armed forces was seen as a physical guarantee should the negotiation process falter.

A series of informal meetings did take place, however, involving members of the different armed forces. These were initially under the rubric of political negotiations. When issues of a security nature were addressed, the major parties would co-opt senior representatives of their militaries as either advisers or party representatives. Although these meetings were limited to the senior echelons of the participants' forces, they enabled the commanders to meet one another and dispel long-held stereotypes.

More direct contact between the armed forces began to take place when specialist committees were established in 1993 to investigate and make recommendations on various military-related problems. These committees of SADF and MK representatives produced (after considerable debate and wrangling) a series of proposals on the identification, registration, and monitoring of armories and arms caches; the location of "assembly areas" for returning guerrilla personnel; and even agreement on which clauses affecting defense should be incorporated within the interim constitution.

The early meetings were characterized by considerable suspicion and uncertainty, aggravated by the different political, strategic, tactical, and personal approaches in the SADF and MK. Moreover, inadequate communication within the respective hierarchies resulted in important decisions being taken without proper briefing of subordinate personnel—a problem that was to surface repeatedly in the strategic management process and the post-April 1994 integration process. These early meetings were nevertheless significant in both a practical and symbolic sense. In practical terms, they provided the normative and strategic basis for the later deliberations of the Joint Military Coordinating Council.

The Transitional Executive Council

The establishment of the Transitional Executive Council in late 1993 was accompanied by the creation of seven subcouncils. Of these, three had jurisdiction over activities of the security community: the subcouncil on defense, the subcouncil on law and order, and the subcouncil on intelligence. The role of the subcouncil on defense was essentially political-strategic. It was assigned responsibility for oversight of the armed forces during the run-up to the election and for initiating planning relating to the creation of a new melded military—the South African National Defense Force (SANDF).

The Joint Military Coordinating Council

The operational and tactical responsibility for the management of the Strategic Planning Process (or SPP, as it subsequently became known) was delegated to a structure known as the Joint Military Coordinating Council (JMCC). The JMCC (which did not possess the attributes of a formal command structure) consisted of representatives of all armed forces with political representation in the Transitional Executive Council—the SADF, MK, and the armies of the homelands of Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana, and Ciskei (collectively referred to as TVBC). To facilitate the Strategic Planning Process, the JMCC was divided into a range of working groups according to the functional area being addressed (e.g., operations, personnel, intelligence), the arm of service (Army, Navy, Air Force, or Medical Service), or the specialist area under consideration (e.g., force preparation, uniforms).

It was to be the SADF and MK which would emerge as the major players in the Strategic Planning Process. The reasons were various:

- The SADF's influence over the process was most manifest in its virtual monopoly of formal staff skills and strategic management concepts, its keen sense of bureaucratic politics, and its familiarity with the practical, conceptual, strategic, and doctrinal issues underpinning strategic management and force design. Without these skills and the coordinating role played by the structures of the SADF, the SPP could not have succeeded.

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Telephone: (202) 775-3219. Telex: 7108229583.
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ISSN 0736-9506

• MK's influence was manifest both via its close relations with the political leadership of the ANC (an access that significantly empowered it in dealings with the other contenders in the JMCC) and its relatively developed intellectual tradition—a strategic advantage that allowed MK to participate in what was otherwise a highly technocratic process. MK's de facto veto power over the entire process (no agreement could be reached without its participation therein) undoubtedly prevented the SPP from being totally dominated by the SADF.

• The TVBC (homeland) armies had no significant impact on the integration process. A parochial regional focus, lack of intellectual and strategic exposure, lack of a political and institutional power base beyond their regions, and sheer lack of confidence among many of their officers contributed to their relative marginalization. Some officers, however, were an exception to this rule—most notably certain senior officers from the Transkei Defense Force.

There were three stages in the JMCC's planning cycle: (1) an assessment of the internal and external factors relating to the strategic environment, (2) formulation of an appropriate strategy for the National Defense Force, and (3) planning for the implementation of this strategy (particularly as it pertained to major activities, budgets, strategic gaps and risks, etc.).

Within a surprisingly short period (January to April 1994), two major developments emerged from the JMCC: (1) The foundation was laid for the force design of the new National Defense Force. This was accomplished in considerable detail, including proposed "rationalization" (downsizing) of structures, reorganization and renaming of units, formulation of operational doctrine, and identification of anticipated strategic gaps and risks. (2) The JMCC established the principles, procedures, and mechanisms for the integration of the six armies involved in the JMCC process. Bridging training that all parties agreed was essential to equip former guerrillas for service in a modern conventional military was identified (covering such areas as staff and management skills as well as general orientation), selection procedures and mechanisms were determined, assembly areas were identified, and it was agreed that a British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT) would be based in the country to oversee the integration process. The BMATT role was not to manage the process but rather to provide an adjudicating function should disagreements emerge between the military forces over training, promotion, or evaluation.

The force design of the new SANDF, as determined by the component working groups of the JMCC, was similar in many ways to that of the old SADF. Both urban and rural counterinsurgency responsibilities were retained, along with the needed accompanying structures (Territorial Commands and area-bound militias). A conventional force capability was also retained, consisting of three conventional divisions, a rapid deployment force, and a special forces brigade. The staff structure and headquarters functions of the different arms of service remained virtually unaltered, as did the training institutions and service colleges.

At the same time, however, a new structure of some significance was proposed. This "Services Brigade" was organically linked to the downsizing program envisaged in the Strategic Planning Process—a reduction (motivated by anticipated budgetary constraints and a reassessment of the external threat to South Africa) in the force levels of the new SANDF from 120,000-130,000 to around 90,000 over three years. The Services Brigade would provide both skills training for demobilized personnel and temporary employment before their release into the civilian sector. The tasks of the Brigade would be primarily socioeconomic in nature; personnel would be used in a variety of roles (e.g., medical assistance, engineering support, relief assistance) in support of the Reconstruction and Development Program (see "A Conversation with F.W. de Klerk," *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 167, December 1994, page 2).

An Integration Scorecard

The integration process to date has been characterized by a contradictory mixture of strategic successes and very real short-term obstacles. Successful aspects of integration include the following:

• Within the first two months of the integration process, no fewer than nine senior generals were appointed to the SANDF from the ranks of the Non-Statutory Forces (the former guerrilla armies). These included three lieutenant generals and six major generals placed in a variety of different positions including chief of staff of the SANDF (the de facto second-in-command of the Defense Force), a deputy chief of staff intelligence, two Territorial Command general officers commanding, and a number of other senior staff appointments. The rapid movement on these appointments was in stark contrast to the lack of progress in other governmental executive departments, most of which had failed, within the first five months after the election, to appoint even directors general.

• Within the first two months of the integration process, hundreds of senior officers from the Non-Statutory Forces (major to brigadier) had been confirmed in the ranks and placed within different corps and positions. Although the process of distributing these officers to various units was to prove time-consuming and frustrating, it did represent the largest numerical influx of affirmative action candidates into any governmental department.

• By the end of July 1994, some 6,000 former MK soldiers had been barracked at three assembly areas throughout the country. In addition, several hundred personnel of the Azanian People's Liberation Army (the armed wing of the Pan-Africanist Congress) had been included in the integration process by late July—a noteworthy achievement given APLA's refusal to participate in the Strategic Planning Process.

But even as integration was becoming increasingly visible within the command structures of the SANDF,

serious obstacles were manifesting themselves at the assembly-area level. Initial euphoria regarding the rapid processing of thousands of former guerrilla fighters dissipated as the enormity of the task became more evident. Although integration proceeded relatively smoothly in both the Air Force and the Navy, where the small numbers of integrating personnel and the less cumbersome organizational structures of these services proved to be an asset, the process within the Army was less easily manageable.

In late 1994, a majority of the approximately 6,800 MK personnel at the assembly areas went absent without leave in protest over grievances relating to such matters as living conditions, service conditions, racism encountered in relations with white officers, nonpayment of salaries, and delays in being processed. At one point over 5,600 MK soldiers were AWOL.

President Mandela and Minister of Defense Joe Modise initially took a relatively lenient approach toward the absentees, most of whom returned to base within two weeks. Barely a week later, however, over 2,200 soldiers went AWOL in a new walkout. The president's response was decisive. No army, he stated emphatically, could tolerate indiscipline in its ranks. He gave the absentees two options—either leave the Army forthwith or return within two weeks and face a court-martial. Most personnel chose to return to base and a lengthy series of court-martials began.

President Mandela's intervention was important for two reasons: (1) It demonstrated his determination to ensure the orderly nature of the defense transition. (2) It earned him the respect of the General Staff—a critical factor in the transition.

The reasons behind the desertions were multifaceted. Most important were the following:

- The staff and administrative functions of the integration process were managed by former South African Army personnel within what were largely unchanged South African Army finance, personnel, and logistic structures. Clearly these structures and personnel were unprepared for the abnormality and the urgency of the integration process. Old administrative rules and procedures were inadequate for a period of profound organizational change.
- There was suspicion and mistrust between lower-ranking (including NCO-level) SADF and MK personnel, who (unlike the senior members involved in the Strategic Planning Process negotiations) had not had the opportunity to meet one another, dispel fears, and establish a consensual framework. These tensions were exacerbated by salary problems, inadequate living conditions for many MK members, sluggishness in the processing system, and lack of effective communication within and among the different armed forces.
- Divisions also existed within MK itself. There were two primary groupings: those who had received their training outside the country, and those who had been trained within. The former category tended to respond well to the rigors of a conventional military environment and, based on their experience and qualifications, assumed most of the leadership positions within MK and in its delegation to the JMCC. The latter, drawn mostly from the so-called "self-defense units" of the black townships, tended to be somewhat more anarchic; the bulk of the absentees came from this group.
- During its first six months, the integration process suffered due to an absence of clear and unified leadership over the armed forces. Insecurities were amplified by the fact that the leadership echelons were themselves being reshuffled, while newly appointed generals had to deal with the twin imperatives of overseeing the integration process and adapting to new roles, new colleagues and commanders, and new environments. MK's difficulties were compounded by command-and-control problems—partly a result of the onerous workload on its command cadre, but also partially due to a weak and decentralized regional command structure. (See "The ANC in Transition: From Symbol to Political Party" by Marina Ottaway, *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 113, June 1990.)

A number of working groups were either formed or restructured to expedite resolution of these problems. They included a working group established within the Ministry of Defense given responsibility for overseeing the integration process; an integration committee established at the overall Defense Force level and made up of members of all armed forces involved in the integration process; and integration committees and directorates within each arm of service, responsible for managing that arm's integration process.

Long-Term Integration Outlook

Any predictions about the long-term prospects of the integration process must be tentative, but the following developments seem likely:

- The officer corps of the SANDF will remain factionalized to a certain extent. Regardless of their common training, their emerging normative consensus, and their shared institutional loyalties, officers will continue to identify themselves according to their common institutional, experiential, and historical origins. Although a certain amount of regimental and service rivalry can be healthy, it is important to ensure that this does not evolve into a rigid "us versus them" scenario (with all the attendant political intrigues that could accompany such a situation).
- The creation and maintenance of internationally accepted military standards will come under pressure in the decade ahead as the new amalgamated SANDF attempts to standardize and stabilize its training and learning culture, and the mixture of military traditions it is currently in the process of inheriting are sorted out. Professional standards will also have to adapt to the likely deployment of the new Defense Force in hitherto "nontraditional" roles—peacekeeping operations, possible nation-building tasks, and other secondary missions.
- The integration process may turn out to be less complex and politically contentious than the proposed military downsizing. Within three years, in theory at

least, the SANDF will have to be reduced from an estimated 120,000 to 90,000 personnel. This presents a major problem for both planners and politicians. Who will be discharged among former SADF and MK members? It will be difficult to fire the former within the next five years given their right to job security as civil servants stipulated in the interim constitution. The political problems with regard to terminating MK personnel are evident if one considers their underrepresentation within the senior officer corps and the limited amount of time they will have to prove themselves before the cuts are made.

• The integration process has thus far concentrated exclusively on the integration of full-time, active-duty personnel. Yet the SANDF remains primarily a part-time force army, largely white, and bearing the responsibility for the bulk of the country's counterinsurgency and conventional warfare tasks. Thus, the creation of a truly representative force will be determined by the transformation of both the color and the traditions of its reservist formations—a process that still has to be initiated. This arena will possibly be strongly contested in the coming decade.

The merger process has been characterized by both absorption (assimilation) and true integration. Non-SADF personnel have thus far largely been absorbed into the former SADF's command and control structures, regiments, and training schedules. This has been the result, to no small extent, of the numerical superiority of the SADF, its organizational complexity, the permanence and diversity of its training institutions, and the use of its command and control structures and management systems to oversee the integration process.

Real integration, however, has taken place within the executive reaches of the SANDF, where senior MK generals have been appointed to some of its most senior and influential positions. The multiparty management of the placement of MK personnel has prevented any one force from dominating the placement of MK personnel of all ranks. (Each placement board consists of MK members, SADF members, and, when possible, a member of the TVBC armies. A British Military Advisory Training Team officer may be present in an adjudicating capacity if so required.) Former SADF personnel have also been compelled to concede and accredit, if somewhat reluctantly, the validity of training received by MK personnel abroad. Perhaps most significant, an intellectual and cultural absorption has not yet taken place with respect to former MK officers. Great stress is being laid on the diversity of military traditions and the multicultural nature of the new Defense Force—by former MK officers primarily, but also by many former SADF officers. Indeed, the success of the integration process will largely depend on the extent to which this diversity is translated into a new training culture, a heterogeneous regimental tradition, and a redefinition of the SANDF's concept of military professionalism.

In this regard, it is instructive to recall that the SADF and MK have never engaged in a protracted conflict against each other. The former SADF's adversaries were largely SWAPO fighters in Namibia, Cubans, and Angolan FAPLA personnel, whereas MK engaged South African Police personnel in most of its operational encounters. This lack of animosity and recrimination has allowed these former ideological adversaries to bond more quickly than was the case in integration processes elsewhere in southern Africa (most notably Zimbabwe).

Future Prospects for Civil-Military Relations

Although the armed forces did not traditionally play a strong role in national (white) politics, their influence in the policy-making process (and later within the political arena) grew steadily from the late 1960s onward. The "moment" marking the rise of the military was South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth in 1961 and the associated severance of formal military intelligence links between the SADF and MI6. Forced to rely on its own resources, the SADF established its own intelligence network and began developing an indigenous counterrevolutionary strategy. The 1967 decision to transfer all financial and policy functions from the civilian Secretariat of Defense to the SADF gave the latter unprecedented influence over both defense policy and overall national decision-making.

During the 1970s the SADF became increasingly involved in that era's intense governmental inter-apparatus and intra-apparatus struggles. A de facto political alliance was forged between the military and P.W. Botha (then the leader of the "liberal" faction within the National Party). Both the SADF and the Botha faction argued strongly for the necessity of socioeconomic reform (not including a universal franchise) as a prerequisite for political stability. After Botha's 1978 election as National Party leader and ratification as prime minister, he elicited the SADF's organizational, strategic, and managerial skills in his attempted reorganization of both the state ensemble and civil society. (See "The Botha Era: An End or a Beginning?" by Brian Pottinger, *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 104, October 1989.) Military influence was thus not so much a product of deliberate intervention but rather "influence by invitation" from a technocratically inclined prime minister. The interesting aspect of military influence in the 1980s was not the extent to which the military's outlook differed from the perspectives of the executive civilian elite, but rather the extent to which a commonality of values and vision existed between the two sectors.

The year 1989 was a watershed for South African civil-military relations. The election of F.W. de Klerk as National Party leader over the heads of strong "securocrats" within the cabinet and his subsequent selection as state president marked a reversal of the three-decade trend toward expanded military influence and signaled the emergence of a strong civilian ethos within both the state and the National Party. (See "The South African Military Reassesses Its Priorities" by Robert S. Jaster, *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 102, September 1989.)

The subsequent unbanning of the ANC, the emergence of consensus politics, and the ANC's victory at the polls in April 1994 further strengthened the hand of civilian government. De Klerk purged the armed forces of renegade intelligence operatives, made a civilian agency the senior intelligence organ, and ensured that, where possible, civilians rather than soldiers would chair executive state committees. Consequently, the ANC-led government of 1994 inherited a state that had largely restored the role of Parliament and civil control over the armed forces.

Civil-military relations in all democratic countries are characterized by either the presence or the absence of certain control mechanisms over the armed forces. These can be grouped into three main categories: (1) formal control over the armed forces via the mechanisms of political society, (2) informal control over the armed forces via civil society, and (3) subjective control over the armed forces as a result of their own internal organization, their professional ethic, and their roles and missions. Proper interaction between these different forms of control is vital to the success of civil-military relations. Africa is littered with constitutions outlining formal mechanisms of control over the armed forces that have proved worthless in practical terms.

The period since the April 1994 election has witnessed the emergence of a number of vibrant and resilient mechanisms of political control over the SANDF, all of which bode well for domestic security and stability. The first is undoubtedly the emergence of Parliament as both the de facto and de jure locus of power within political society. Via its emerging multiparty committees, Parliament has proven its commitment to transparency and accountability. Commanders of the armed services have appeared before these committees, and (to the chagrin of former "securocrats" within the defense community) the press has been allowed access to almost all their proceedings.

The second area of control relates to the influence of the president and the cabinet over the armed forces. President Mandela has managed, in his own unique style, to retain the confidence of the armed forces via his acknowledgment of and respect for the role they played in both the preelection and postelection periods. He readily admits, correctly, that the election would not have been possible without the support of the military—and the Army in particular—while at the same time insisting on the principle of civil supremacy in civil-military relations. The cabinet is characterized by a strong civilian ethos and orientation and the absence of a defined and influential securocrat faction—unlike the cabinet during the P.W. Botha period.

The third factor that bodes well for formal control over the armed forces is the interim constitution itself. Although many of its provisions closely resemble their counterparts in the former constitution (e.g., the state president as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the bestowing of commissions on officers by the state president), two new items are noteworthy: (1) Parliament has the power to terminate any National Defense Force operation in the areas of national defense, international military operations, or internal stability; (2) the National Defense Force is required by law to uphold the constitution and to abide by its provisions.

The fourth mechanism of control is the growing assertiveness of civil and political society in relation to the state and state policy. The liberalization of the political system has produced a range of pressure groups and lobbies that have proven capable of influencing national policy and contributing to its formulation. The influence of the trade unions and the extent to which civic organizations have made their presence felt at both national and regional levels of government is indicative of this trend.

The fifth area of control—potentially the most significant—relates to the creation of a Ministry of Defense. South Africa, as previously noted, has not had a civilian defense ministry for the past three decades. The functions traditionally associated with such a ministry—policy, planning, finance, personnel, logistics—were militarized in the late 1960s. In early 1994, the Joint Military Coordinating Council invited a range of defense and strategic study institutes to make presentations to and participate in a newly created Ministry of Defense working group. The rationale behind this working group was to provide a series of balanced policy options on the creation of a ministry that could be utilized by the incoming minister of defense. Members of those armed forces participating in the JMCC were also invited to participate in the working group, as were the representatives from those staff functions likely to be affected by the creation of a civilian ministry.

The working group achieved consensus relatively easily, reaching agreement on the principles underpinning defense in a democracy, those SADF staff functions likely to be affected by the creation of a Ministry of Defense, the mixture of civilian and military personnel within the ministry and their reporting relationships, and the relationship between the minister, the defense secretary, and the chief of the National Defense Force.

Of the various models presented, Minister of Defense Modise decided that the "balanced model" was the most appropriate for South Africa's anticipated defense needs. According to this model, the secretary of defense (the head of the civilian secretariat and the minister's chief policy adviser) and the chief of the National Defense Force (the commander of the armed forces and the minister's chief military adviser) would report to the minister on an equal basis and with equal seniority.

It appears unlikely that the new military will contemplate formal intervention in the political process. For a variety of reasons, the SANDF will avoid full-blown praetorianism of the type witnessed in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere in Africa: (1) Neither the SADF nor MK, the two major components of the new Defense Force, has ever formally challenged the principle of civil supremacy. (2) The resilience of South African civil society—with its multitude of political parties, civic organizations, trade unions, interest groups, and pressure

lobbies—would make the consolidation of a coup virtually impossible. (3) South Africa is marked by neither the political disintegration nor the degree of economic malaise that have elsewhere impelled the military into a "saviors of the nation" mode. Indeed, the existence of a common vision and shared normative framework at the national political level makes the appropriation of national symbols by the military a difficult exercise. (4) The legitimacy and robustness of the new Parliament provides a powerful counterbalance against the influence of the executive. In addition, the dispersion of power among the various provinces creates a range of "checks and balances" that impede strong military influence over the political process. (5) The factional and political differences within the SANDF's officer corps are another barrier to cohesive and purposeful military intervention. (6) The sheer institutional, geographical, and infrastructural complexity of South Africa leaves little doubt that any coup would be a technical and logistical nightmare.

The armed forces will, however, retain an influence over policy that will remain disproportionate to that of the civilian apparatuses within the state ensemble. A number of reasons can be proffered for this observation: (1) It is readily acknowledged that the new Ministry of Defense will rely heavily on either former or seconded military personnel to staff its functions—most notably in the critical functional areas relating to finance, personnel, and logistics. This reliance on military personnel in the short to medium term will make problematic the creation of a truly independent civilian ethos within the ministry. Much will depend on how the minister, deputy minister, and secretary (all of them former commanders in the armed forces) perceive their roles in the ministry. (2) The sheer organizational capabilities of the SANDF—best exemplified by the range and depth of its strategic planning process—will be a source of strength in both its interapparatus dealings with other elements of the state and its parliamentary lobbying. (3) The central role being played by the SANDF in border protection and internal stability gives it a legitimacy and importance that make excessive budgetary reductions difficult to justify (both to the public and in terms of policy priorities). (4) The SANDF inherits a generation of former SADF officers who are politically astute (in a bureaucratic sense) and who can be expected to use this political competence to influence the national policy process in favor of SANDF corporate interests. Former MK officers joining the SANDF enjoy a privileged access to the new political leadership and will try to use this influence to prevent the marginalization of their new institutional home. Former TVBC officers possess administrative and political experience that they could use in an unconstitutional manner (military coups were attempted in all four homelands between 1987 and 1990, succeeding in all but Bophuthatswana), but their actual future behavior will depend to no small extent on the political direction provided by either former MK or SADF personnel.

In sum, the SANDF will remain subordinate to the civilian and political authorities and will uphold and defend the new constitution—which bodes well for both domestic and regional stability. Its formal involvement in the political process will be substantially reduced, although its influence over the national policy process will continue to be more pronounced than that of other state departments. Caught between the "professional-constitutional" model of the armed forces in Western democracies and the nation-building tradition of armed forces in developing democracies, the South African armed forces will exhibit a hybrid identity.

Role in Domestic Security

The SANDF has enjoyed a legitimacy since the elections that is perhaps unprecedented (with the exception of MK's legitimacy during the ANC's period of illegality and the popularity of the Union Defense Force in World War II). This respect largely derives from the military's critical part in guaranteeing preelection and postelection stability as well as the border-protection mission of the South African Army. Indeed, some pundits venture that without the role being played by the SANDF at present, the entire transition would be in jeopardy.

The SANDF has been impelled into the areas of internal security and border protection in part by the weakness of the South African Police Service (SAPS), which suffers from personnel shortages, poor training, low morale, and commanders who lack a shared vision. The welcome accorded the army in most townships since its preelection deployment illustrates the extent to which the Police Service has been discredited as the sole guarantor of internal stability. The SAPS will need an estimated three to five years to restructure itself into a legitimate organization capable of carrying out internal stability tasks without SANDF support.

Similarly, the SAPS admits that it does not have the capacity to protect the borders, and consequently the army has assumed full responsibility for this function—a significant one given the fluid and volatile character of the southern African region. Thousands of refugees and illegal immigrants flood into the country on a monthly basis, and the consequences of "Africa marching south" into the Republic could be severe unless these human flows are appropriately monitored and managed. The presence of the migrants has already generated such problems as competition with locals over scarce resources, strains on provincial economies, weapons smuggling, and drug smuggling. Resolving these difficulties remains a regional endeavor to be addressed at a political and economic level, but in the meantime the armed forces will have to contain and monitor the border areas.

What should be the relationship of the SANDF to the Reconstruction and Development Program? On the one hand, cutting the defense budget is seen as an obvious way of freeing more funds for socioeconomic programs. At the same time, however, the Defense Force could render assistance to the RDP in the areas of medical assistance, logistical support, engineering skills, and training programs. Although budget cuts are likely in

the coming years, and the defense community is wary of committing itself to civic action roles (particularly in view of their deleterious effects on training schedules and budgets), it is almost certain that resources and infrastructure will be used in support of the RDP—specifically in underdeveloped rural areas.

South Africa's Regional Role

Given the fact that southern Africa experienced 12 years of instability between 1978 and 1990 compounded by the political, economic, and military dominance of South Africa, it is understandable that the region is of two minds over the possible role of South Africa's armed forces. On the one hand, there is concern over what might happen if South Africa chose to exercise unbridled military dominance in the region. Offensive postures by the SANDF would justify the adoption of more assertive military postures by neighboring countries; increased force levels would discourage force reductions by others; maintenance of sophisticated equipment could precipitate an arms buildup in the region (depleting budgets that are already overstretched); and lack of transparency would undermine attempts at regional confidence-building.

At the same time, there is the pragmatic recognition that South Africa's infrastructure and resources will, in all likelihood, provide the basis for any regional security arrangement. This understanding was reflected in the outcome of the Workshop on Democracy, Peace, and Security of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held in Windhoek in July 1994, the recommendations of the Front-Line states meeting in Windhoek later that month, and the deliberations of the SADC Council of Ministers in Gaborone (Botswana) in August 1994. Concrete proposals emerging from these discussions include the creation of a Committee of Ministers on Defense and Security that would be responsible for policy with regard to regional peace operations, combined training, relief operations, and information exchange.

Positive aspects of South African regional involvement could include the following: (1) The SANDF has the capability to provide the infrastructural support required to ensure the effectiveness of regional peacekeeping operations. South Africa occupies, in this regard, a position similar to that of the United States. Although wary of committing combat personnel to peace operations, it can deliver logistical support, medical assistance, communications systems, and air transport facilities to any regional security endeavor. It is precisely in this sphere that neighboring countries are lacking. (2) The SANDF's infrastructure can be used to provide humanitarian assistance to the region, as the SADF has done in the past three years (e.g., relief aid to Malawi, Zaire, Sudan, Somalia, Mozambique, and Rwanda). (3) The SANDF can use and has used its training institutions and expertise to assist neighboring countries. Military personnel from Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, and Namibia have taken courses at the SANDF's various training colleges. SANDF personnel have trained regional army personnel in engineering skills (notably in connection with mine demolition in Mozambique and Angola). Indeed, the SANDF can offer extensive infrastructure-rebuilding assistance to the region. (4) The presence of the SANDF working in a collaborative and nonthreatening manner could provide the psychological basis for the allaying of many regional fears and insecurities. If well managed, a security alliance with South Africa in a leadership role could contribute to the stabilization of the region (socioeconomic reconstruction will, however, be the key determinant in this process).

Although there are evidently a number of spheres within which such regional arrangements could be constructive, the following caveats should be mentioned: (1) The SANDF should be wary of committing operational personnel to peace operations until such time as the integration process has been completed. The experience of South Africa's National Peacekeeping Force (a poorly trained multiparty paramilitary election oversight force created in great haste just three months before the voting) underlined the possible dangers—fragmentation of units under fire, undermining of internal cohesion, and discrediting of the structure in question. (2) The SANDF should be wary of committing itself to regional operations that involve the deployment of military personnel in internal stabilization roles. Internal stability in a country that has not yet fragmented or faced a serious civil war remains its own responsibility. (3) South Africa should avoid developing a regional praetorianism or "fix it" mentality. Although the SANDF will undoubtedly be the leader in any regional security arrangement, it can nevertheless benefit from the insights of others—the experience of Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe in continental peacekeeping operations, for instance, and the development by the British of the Zimbabwe Staff College. South Africa has much to learn from the region at a conceptual and political level and should avoid a technocratic arrogance in this regard. (4) The creation of a regional security alliance or alliances should not become the basis for the formation of a regional military bloc—a development that could contribute to militarization and worsened insecurity in the rest of the continent.

Future Relations with the United States

Unlike many African countries that more or less unavoidably inherited the institutional and political forms imprinted by former colonizers, South Africa now has the opportunity to design its new organizational structures in an eclectic and needs-based fashion. This does not imply the wholesale transplantation of foreign models, but rather the selective adaptation of specific trends and features to the South African environment.

Much of the defense establishment is clearly marked by British influence. South Africa's Ministry of Defense is more closely modeled on the British Ministry of Defense than on other Western models; its regimental system is basically British in origin; and the institutional culture of the SANDF has strong

similarities with British military traditions.

There are definite areas, however, in which the SANDF in particular and the South African defense community in general could well look to the United States for inspiration. (See "U.S. Military Interests in Postapartheid South Africa" by Chas. W. Freeman, Jr., *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 160, May 1994.) Despite the absence of formal institutional similarities between the United States and South Africa, a range of key social and political similarities exist that are relevant to the political and institutional restructuring that the defense community is currently undergoing. These deserve mention:

- The distribution of political power throughout the various South African provinces and within the central state has parallels with the U.S. model. The consequences of this quasi-federal system will have definite repercussions in connection with defense restructuring (e.g., effects of base closures, the lobbying power of regional leaders with regard to defense contracts and reductions, the development of area-bound militias, the siting and development of defense production facilities). Exposure to the dynamics of defense management in a federal environment could be of benefit to many members of the South African defense community.
- The issue of equal opportunity is a pressing and direct challenge to the transformation of the South African defense community. Unless adequately addressed at both a policy and training level, racism and gender inequality threaten to undermine the cohesion of the SANDF and adversely affect the combat readiness of its personnel. The only national military bureaucracy in the world with a proven track record in this regard remains the U.S. Department of Defense, and South Africa has much to learn from its policy and training programs.
- Civil-military relations training is a new area in South African defense discourse. The experience the United States possesses in this arena—at both a military and civilian educational level—can be gainfully applied within the South African situation. This can translate into functional training programs for future Ministry of Defense personnel, normative training for military practitioners, and policy preparation for influential actors within both the foreign affairs and defense communities.
- South Africa faces the challenge of transforming its reserve forces from a conscript-based system into a volunteer force. The experience of both the National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve is worth considering in some detail—particularly with regard to the inducements and service conditions accompanying service in the reserves. Of equal importance is the extent to which the U.S. reserve forces have transformed themselves from being largely white bastions to representative military units.
- The wealth and variety of training institutions would be of immense benefit to a Defense Force coming to terms with new roles and missions, as well as doctrinal challenges. Exchange programs, study visits, and U.S. assistance in South African curriculum design are obvious areas of cooperation in this regard.
- U.S. experience in regional security arrangements and combined military operations can provide South Africans with salutary lessons and cautionary indicators in a number of critical fields (e.g., interoperability, forms of peace operations, problems in combined operations).
- Most important, the U.S. experience of civil-military relations and the efficacy of civilian control within its political culture can provide an emerging democracy with valuable lessons.

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SOUTH AFRICA: TWELVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRANSITION

Helen Kitchen and J. Coleman Kitchen, editors

Washington Paper Series (Praeger) #165 196 pp. $18.95 (pb)
Publication date: November 1994 $58.00 (hb)

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