COMPARING APPLES WITH PEARS: THE PRE-1994 AND POST-1994 SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY CULTURES

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Abstract

*This article aims[2] at providing an exposition of the most important factors that have shaped and are still shaping the institutional culture of the South African (SA) military. The view is broad and holistic and places the timeframe from 1961 to the present under review. It makes sense to divide the article into a discussion of the military cultures of the pre-1994 South African Defence Force (SADF) and the post-1994 South African National Defence Force (SANDF) respectively. However, it is not necessarily a comparison of the two timeframes. There are obvious links between the two eras and two organisations, and a comparison is almost inevitable. This is, however, not done on purpose and not to reflect either positively or negatively on any of the two periods or institutions. Instead, the article highlights the fact that both the SADF and the SANDF are products of their time and the societies they have served or are serving. The military cultures of both the SADF and SANDF were influenced by identity politics, the political structures within which they had to function, the underlying political outlooks of the reigning political elite and the prevailing views on military professionalism. From an organisational perspective, the military ethos was shaped by factors such as the personnel system (conscript **vis-à-vis** all-volunteer), the size of the military budget and the operational responsibility and missions of the military.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The creation of a formal statutory military for South Africa in 1912 was in essence rooted in the need to develop a landward defence capability for the Union of South Africa. Independent air forces would only become a reality after the publication of the Smuts Report in Britain in 1917, while South Africa was still relying on the presence of the British Royal Navy in Simon's Town and the oceans around the country's coast for seaward defence. The development of a landpower capability was a geostrategic reality and the natural outcome and recognition of the fact that South Africa was and still is a continental power. As a consequence, the Army has

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always been the primary service in the South African military. The institutional culture of the South African military, thus, has always been largely defined by the Army. Of course, armies are always much more a reflection of the society they serve than air forces and navies because armies are personnel-centred instruments of power.

Each and every soldier (airman and sailor) has to learn and understand "… how things are done in a military organization" (Center for Strategic and International Studies 2000:xviii). Culture is thus inescapable. As Gray (1999:141) points out, "… culture is as culture does". However, much can be learnt about a particular military's culture through an analysis of the parental society from which it recruits its personnel, the military's demographics and the education, training and development of its soldiers. *What* individuals, institutions and even countries do and, more importantly, *how* they do it, are shaped by cultural considerations, influences and frameworks. Military culture, like societal culture in general, is multi-layered and multi-dimensional. Individuals form part of different cultural entities, which in turn influence individual and institutional behaviour. The same is true of the nature of the armed forces, their roles and tasks. All people and all institutions are necessarily encultured in a particular way and no institution can operate "beyond culture"(Gray 1999:129). The culture of a particular military is therefore rooted in the ideas and behaviour of its personnel and institutions while, at the same time, the ideas and behaviour of its people and institutions underpin the culture of its military. In short, soldiers make armies and armies make soldiers. Military culture is further described as the "… amalgamation of values, customs, traditions and their philosophical underpinnings that, over time, have created a shared institutional ethos". It provides "… a common framework for those in uniform and common expectations regarding standards of behaviour, discipline, teamwork, loyalty, selfless duty, and the customs that support those elements" (Center for Strategic and International Studies 2000:xviii).

These attributes of military culture (behaviours, traditions and artefacts) are the most visible and outward manifestations of military culture. As visible parts of military culture, they are rooted in certain values and norms that are not directly observable. In many cases, even military personnel may be able to explain what they are doing, but not necessarily why. Some of these values may become so deeply embedded that military personnel take them for granted. Thus, soldiers may be unaware of or unable to articulate the beliefs and assumptions forming their deepest level of culture. Through military socialisation, the values are often deeply inculcated– almost like children who are shaped from birth according to societal values. Soldiers are socialised into the military culture from the moment they enter the military system, put on a uniform and enter into a specific corps (army, infantry, artillery and so forth). The focus in this article, though, is on the culture of the

organisation as a whole and the factors that shape that culture. As such, the purpose of this article is to provide a descriptive analysis of (some of) the factors that have shaped the military culture of the pre-1994 South African Defence Force (SADF) and the post-1994 South African National Defence Force (SANDF). It is therefore not necessarily the aim of this article to compare the military cultures of the SADF and the SANDF. Although there are obvious links between the two organisations, making it sometimes inevitable to make use of such a comparison, the aim is not to reflect either positive or negative on any of the institutions.

2.   MILITARY CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE SADF (1961–1994)

The SADF came into existence in 1957, four years before the formation of the Republic of South Africa. The creation of a republic was in many ways the culmination of the Afrikaner's aspiration for political control and independence in South Africa. By 1961, that control was already well established in the military sphere, with a range of changes that were introduced during the 1950s through the reform programmes of the Minister of Defence, Mr FC Erasmus. Erasmus served as Minister of Defence in the National Party government between June 1948 and 1959. He introduced a rigorous programme of Afrikanerisation that included changes in the uniform and rank structure as well as what some perceived as a purging of the officer corps to rid it of its English ethos, character and personnel. Of course, these changes were part of a much larger Nationalist agenda to place Afrikaners in positions of control and influence in the public service, parastatal bodies, state-owned industries, universities and the media (Boulter 2000:438). These changes forever compromised the political neutrality of the SADF in apartheid South Africa (Du Plessis 2012).

However, the strategic realities of the 1960s directed the defence force towards a more realist approach that was underpinned by the dialectic that was soon visible in the interaction between foreign realities and domestic political dynamics. This specifically concerned the interplay between the beginning of the process of decolonisation and independence in Africa in the 1960s (which soon turned out to be a real threat to white rule in Southern Africa) and black civil unrest and rising expectations of South Africa's black population. In the military, the Afrikaner populism of the 1950s was thus replaced by a more professional orientation and ethos. This was partly due to strategic realities that confronted the Afrikaner establishment from the mid-1960s onwards[3] and partly due to the appointment of a pragmatic military-minded politician by the name of PW Botha as Minister of

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3   This includes *inter alia* the process of decolonisation that was gathering speed in Africa, the Sharpeville incident in 1961, and the increasing militarisation of liberation movements' struggle in South Africa.

Defence in 1966. Botha's term in office, 1966 to 1980, would eventually cement the military culture of the SADF through priority of funding, the introduction of two-year conscription for white South African males, and a high operational tempo and involvement in wars all over Southern Africa (Alden 1996; Seegers 1996). It is a matter of irony that in the 1950s, the military was used as a means to establish Afrikaner superiority and at the same time, from the 1960s onwards, to build the (white) nation, making the military the one establishment where Afrikaans- and English-speaking South Africans served together. More specifically, the need for operational effectiveness turned the SADF into a strong meritocratic institution.

Botha, more than any other person, was responsible for the political and defence policies and higher-order military doctrine that shaped the SADF's institutional culture. The ideas of total onslaught,[4] rooted in the academic writings of the French General André Beaufre (1965), became the overarching framework shaping the threat perception of the SADF. It provided a relatively simplistic framework for tying the many diverse problems facing the apartheid government, specifically the problem of *swartgevaar* (black danger), into the Western ideological framework of the Cold War – fighting the *rooigevaar* (red danger) of international communism (Malan 2006). An in-depth analysis of the Defence White Papers (1969, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1982, 1984, 1987, 1989) provides a clear indication of the growing sense of isolation and hostility in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s. The threat perception, i.e. the black and red danger, together with the increasing isolation of the country through international sanctions, had a defining influence on the cultural outlook of the SADF and, in particular, led to a growing sense of fear in the white conscript-supporting community.

From a cultural perspective, the SADF turned out to be a very interesting blend of British military regimentalism and Afrikaner frontierism. Whether this was deliberately planned as such or created by default is not clear, but the SADF reserve forces became the embodiment of its military culture. The SADF was designed as a small standing military whose ranks, in times of crisis, could be expanded on short notice through a relatively large reserve force. The reserve forces, though, were very cleverly designed around the English and Afrikaner cultures in South Africa as two culturally different forces. The conventional reserves, better known as the Citizen Force, embodied the British regimental model in structure and ethos. Many British soldiers would have been quite happy to be able to serve in regiments with names such as Cape Town Highlanders, Durban Light Infantry and South African Irish. The territorial reserves, known as the Commando Force, were area-bound, and embodied to a large extent the Afrikaner culture and traditions of the traditional

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4   The idea of *totale strategie* (total strategy) was used for the first time in official policy documents in the White Paper on Defence and Armament Production, 1973, brought before Parliament by the Minister of Defence, Mr PW Botha.

Boer forces in South Africa. However, many Afrikaans-speaking South Africans served with distinction in the regimentalised Citizen Force and many English-speaking South Africans served in the territorially based Commando's inside South Africa. The regular forces thus became a very interesting blend of British military regimentalism and Boer pragmatism (Esterhuyse 2007:131–132).

These organisational considerations were underpinned by a relatively professional officer corps. Philip Frankel (1984:xvi) noted that the long-standing British heritage of the SADF ensured "… the technical subordination of the military to civil political authority". This tradition was supplemented by various South African statutes that barred SADF soldiers from any partisan political activity. The 1987 White Paper on Defence (Republic of South Africa 1987:6), for example, stated explicitly that all members of the SADF "… are by regulation prohibited from taking part in, or encouraging any demonstrations or procession for party-political purposes". Thus, Frankel (1984) describes the SADF as highly professional in its political relations with the civilian government. The SADF enjoyed functional autonomy in return for its subordination to civilian rule. The absence of political interference from the 1960s onwards led to an absence of factionalism in the military and, consequently, less incentive for the officers to intrude into government affairs (Howe 2005:52).

Over time, though, and primarily because of Magnus Malan's appointment as Minister of Defence in 1980, civilian oversight over the SADF declined and, specifically in the 1980s, operations were conducted that neither the public nor parliament approved of. In addition, the SADF became an important political entity within the country, and even though its members and institutional culture were apolitical, the SADF, as an extension of the apartheid government, was not non-political. As tension levels in the black communities started to rise, black South Africans, for example, found it increasingly difficult to distinguish between "military white" and "civilian white" South Africa. White South Africa reacted to the higher levels of tension by an inability to distinguish between "militant black" and "complacent black" South Africa. By the mid-1980s, the security apparatus found it increasingly difficult to deal with these tension cycles (Du Plessis 2012).

Since the mid-1960s, the organisational culture of the SADF was dramatically influenced by its involvement in a variety of counterinsurgency wars throughout Southern Africa. Through its involvement in the counterinsurgency wars in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and the former Portuguese colonies in Southern Africa, the SADF had the luxury of time to prepare itself for counterinsurgency in South-West Africa/Namibia and inside the country. Counterinsurgency campaigns necessitate a holistic, comprehensive and intellectual approach from militaries. At the same time, the SADF needed to be very pragmatic, particularly in fighting the counterinsurgency campaign in South-West Africa/Namibia. It had to be very

adaptive in approach and in the development of and collaboration with indigenous forces. This was clearly reflected in the bureaucratic, structural and organisational flexibility that was demonstrated in the creation of unconventional military units like the 32 Buffalo and the 31/201 Bushman Battalions. The indigenisation of the SADF's counterinsurgency effort, through the creation of white-led ethnic battalions, added a very interesting African blend to the SADF's regimentalised frontier culture.

As part of the counterinsurgency doctrine, the SADF had to balance an aggressive offensiveness against opposing forces with a caring defensiveness towards the local population. Typical of any counterinsurgency campaign, a culture of positive interaction with the local population was encouraged and became a routine matter for most of its members. In the context of the UN armament boycott, the SADF had to develop an "outside-the-box" approach to solutions, specifically with regard to the development of technology. This was clearly illustrated through the development of countermining technologies and a preference for wheeled vehicles to allow for force projection over long distances. A point that should not be ignored, though, is that the SADF, like all militaries facing a high operational and warfighting tempo, had to place a high emphasis on sound tactical training and operational experience. As a result, and from a cultural perspective, the SADF, over time, developed into a very tactically and operationally minded military (Esterhuyse & Jordaan 2010).

The SADF's involvement in counterinsurgency and the influence thereof on its organisational ethos, were truncated by the reality of identity politics and the society (or the white part of that society) it served. On 31 May 1961, the then Prime Minister, Dr HF Verwoerd, noted, "The Republic of South Africa is the only sure and stable friend the Western nations have in Africa" (Republiek van Suid-Afrika 1971:9). There is absolutely no doubt that the SADF, as an expression of the white South African society it served, identified itself with the Western way of war and, by implication, tried to emulate what Biddle (2004:28) described as "… the modern military system". An overview of the characteristic of the modern military system that underpinned the Western way of war provides an interesting analysis of the approach by the SADF to the use of armed force. It is, firstly, an approach to conflict and the use of armed force that places a heavy reliance on technology. This does not imply universal technological superiority. Rather, it is an approach in which technology is used as a substitute for numbers and in which technological innovation and the need for the "technological edge" is pursued. Secondly, it is an approach that highlights superior training and discipline as a means to foster cohesion in the technical and tactical realms of war. Training and discipline are the tools for the creation of a cohesive fighting force that may consist of culturally and racially diverse groups of people. Thirdly, the modern military system relies on an

aggressive military doctrine that has its roots in the Clausewitzian paradigm of total defeat, destruction and annihilation of the enemy. This military doctrine is shaped, however, by an acceptance that past examples could and should influence present practice, i.e. the need to learn from experience. Thus, the Western way of war is, fourthly, shaped by a willingness to accept ideas from all quarters and to adapt to present realities in the warfighting domain. The ability to change and at the same time conserve military practices through an effective system of military training provides for a dynamic military ethos. Lastly, the Western way of war is rooted in an ability to finance military changes, technology and war (Parker 2005:1–11). Biddle (2004:48–51) highlights the fact that the modern system poses difficult political and organisational problems that prevent many states from implementing such a system. It was the SADF's emulation of these basic characteristics of the Western military ethos that made it "… retaine[d] a functional autonomy highly unusual in Africa during the 1970s and 1980s" (Howe 2005:51).

Through conscription and the reserve force system, the SADF had access to the best manpower available in South Africa. Apartheid South Africa was an economic and educational success for its white population. A well-nurtured threat perception (the *swart* and *rooigevaar*) created a sense of fear in the white community that, until the late 1980s, ensured their continuous support for the SADF in general and conscription in particular (Moorcraft 1990:4). SADF access to the best available manpower in South Africa ensured its development into a well-trained and well-led organisation whose white manpower deficiencies were augmented through the use of white-led indigenous forces. One of the greatest ironies of the apartheid military system was the continuous availability of black manpower to serve in the SADF and fight the wars of the apartheid state (Steenkamp 1989:183–223). The SADF, for example, never had any problems in making its recruitment targets for the ethnic battalions in South Africa and South-West Africa/Namibia. Moreover, even though the white population in South Africa was highly sensitive about white conscript casualties, the names of the casualties in the ethnic battalions, including for example those of 32 Battalion, were never announced in public. A well-nurtured threat perception, white societal support and military professionalism based on sound training and political control were therefore the ingredients of the defining essence of the SADF's cultural ethos, which defined its basic values and behaviour.

The need to finance operations, military changes and technology, more than any other factor, eventually led the SADF leadership into an acceptance of the need to explore non-military avenues of peace in Angola, South-West Africa/Namibia and eventually South Africa. Howe (2005:52) is absolutely correct when he notes that the SADF's allegiance in the movement towards majority rule in South Africa "… revealed the force's ingrained sense of political loyalty to the state – despite the widespread personal opposition to De Klerk's reforms by many

white SADF personnel". Financial pressures and political realities eventually overrode the tactical and operational mindedness of the SADF in the creation of the circumstances necessary for peace in Southern Africa in the early 1990s and the development of a "new" military for the country under the banner of the South African *National* Defence Force (SANDF).

3. MILITARY CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE POST-1994 SANDF

Since its inception in 1994, the Defence Force has been at the receiving end of divergent expectations from three different ANC government administrations. The Mandela administration was primarily concerned with the demilitarisation of the South African society as a whole. The military, in particular, had to withdraw from domestic deployment and so-called "township duty". At the same time, and from a civil–military relations perspective, the Mandela regime was concerned about the – still predominantly white – SANDF. In view of the integration process, the dramatic decline of the defence budget, and the need for reorientation of South Africa's defence policy, the focus of the Defence Force was on internal organisational restructuring. In contrast, the Mbeki administration articulated a vision for a better Africa and utilised the military in pursuing that vision. This resulted in the Defence Force being widely deployed all over Africa on peace and other missions. These deployments had a dramatic effect on the military, since the increased operational tempo was not necessarily reflected in the defence budget. Increasingly, the Defence Force faced tension between strategy and structure, between expectations and capability. With increasing service delivery questions of government in the domestic environment, the Zuma administration turned towards the military to, once again, become involved domestically and to help with services like borderline protection and anti-poaching operations (Esterhuyse 2010).

Of course, the negotiated revolution for the creation of a democratic South Africa in 1994 served as the basis for the creation of the SANDF. With the creation of the SANDF, the military was transformed from a conscript military into an all-volunteer force that necessitated the establishment of an "up-or-out" approach to the management of military personnel. This was accompanied by a process of integration of the former belligerent forces into one statutory military for South Africa. Of course, the integration (some would say absorption) of the armed wings of the different liberation movements into the statutory military (SADF) had a defining influence on the military culture of the SANDF.[5] Whereas the SADF's

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5   The SANDF was formed through a process of integration and amalgamation of the former South African Defence Force (SADF); the defence forces of the former black so-called independent homelands of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (the TBVC countries); and the former

military culture was the operationalization of British regimentalism and Boer frontierism in the African context, the SANDF's culture was supposed to be an amalgamation of the Western military tradition of the SADF with the revolutionary non-western tradition of the liberation movements. Needless to say, revolutionary armies are diametrically the opposite of regimentalised statutory armies. They differ in ethos, structure, doctrine and procedure.

One of the most outstanding features of revolutionary armies is their unique penetrative model of a civil–military interface with a deliberate fusion of the military and political dimensions of the revolutionary struggle. Politics are an integral part of revolutionary armies. Whereas statutory armies, like the pre-1994 SADF, consciously de-politicise their members, revolutionary armies deliberately politicise their members through political indoctrination and the use of political commissars to ensure that individual soldiers and units stay politically dutiful (Liebenberg 1997:105–132). Thus, in contrast to the very tactically and operationally minded SADF, the soldiers from the armed wings of the revolutionary movements were highly politically minded. Mixing the (apolitical) tactically and operationally minded personnel from the SADF with the politically minded soldiers from the revolutionary armies had a defining influence on the organisational ethos of the SANDF. This had two specific and immediate implications for the SANDF. The first was an exodus of ex-SADF members who felt themselves out of place in the SANDF. This not only helped the process of downsizing and affirmative action to ensure representivity in the SANDF; it also led to a growth in the private military and security industry in Africa and elsewhere that benefitted from the drain of experienced SADF personnel. The second was an immediate influence on the cultural ethos of the military. The SANDF lost a large part of its warfighting experience in a very short time. It was, at the same time, transformed from a tactically and operationally minded force into a force that, at times, tended to be too politically inclined. The growing political-mindedness, together with a radical change in the operational tasks of the military, dramatically affected civil–military relations (Heinecken, Gueli & Neethling 2005).

As was the case with the SADF, the policy environment continues to influence the military ethos in the SANDF. One of the outstanding features of the post-apartheid South African security and defence landscape is the general absence of a broad debate

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armed wings of the African National Congress, known as Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Pan Africanist Congress, known as the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA). Two thousand members of the KwaZulu-Natal Self-Protection Force (KZSPF) were also brought into the SANDF. It is interesting to note that both MK and APLA have been integrated into the SANDF, but that they are still seen in their former uniforms – very often at funerals of former comrades, public rallies and COSATU-organised strikes.

on societal security in general and defence in particular.[6] There are no explicitly formulated and published security policy documents. More specifically, there is no defence debate in South Africa at the conceptual level of defence and there are no in-depth, independent and critical questioning and scrutiny of defence and the defence policy documents. This lack of debate, Mills (2011:5) argues, is also a reflection of the disregard for consultative and parliamentary processes, vested interests in procurement decisions and the weakened and politically emasculated nature of civil society. The lack of debate is underpinned by a general lack of knowledge on defence and military-related issues inside and outside the military and political domains in South Africa. It is a fact that defence in general and the military in particular are not a priority for the post-1994 South African government.

The near absence of a broad societal debate on defence is further complicated by an inward-looking bureaucratisation of the defence debate by the SA military. Stated differently, the defence debate is mostly a bureaucratic debate. The defence agenda is the result of a military bureaucratic process, and the defence debate within the military is formal, but not necessarily well structured. The Ministry of Defence, the Defence Secretariat and the military command structure dictate to a large extent the underlying approach to the defence debate in South Africa. There is reason to question the political expertise on defence-related matters within the ruling ANC government. Politicians in general, and those from the ruling ANC in particular, are not necessarily military-minded in their approach. Many ANC politicians approach defence-related matters with a struggle mind-set. The ANC, as the ruling party, does not necessarily draw a very clear line between the notions of "a military for a political party (ANC) and a military for the country". In addition, since Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the ANC, and its structures were never closed down after 1994, it is still a military in the ANC barracks. MK cadres are still often seen at ANC party gatherings. In not knowing what can be expected from defence, the political debate on defence and military issues is very often very superficial. The role of the opposition parties, sometimes with a good grasp of defence-related matters, is often seen as destructive by the ruling ANC government. It is therefore very difficult to achieve or reach some form of consensus on defence and defence-related matters in the political domain (Du Toit 2011:2). Thus, very much like the apartheid defence debate, the post-1994 defence debate is highly bureaucratic whilst the reigning governing party tends to exclude both the opposition parties and the public at large from all things military.

From the military's side, the defence debate is often driven by a number of fears. The most prominent in this regard is the fear that the military may lose its

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6   Recognition should be given to the fact that social issues such as crime and joblessness, as security concerns, are dominating the South African security agenda. The security agenda, though, does not necessarily imply an in-depth security debate of the issues on the agenda.

conventional warfighting capability. At a political level, the ANC government is not necessarily interested in the publication of the formal security and updated defence policy papers. The 1995 White Paper on Defence and the 1998 Defence Review are outdated. The fears and neglect to publish the formal policy documents may be rooted in the reality that these policies will highlight the disequilibrium in the South African defence domain, namely that the military in general does not really need the equipment that was and still is on the procurement list (Mills 2011:5). Hopefully, this situation will change with the publication of the 2012 Defence Review.

In most modern democracies the public and media play an indispensable role in shaping the culture of the military forces and the nature and content of the defence debate. The shift towards a more human security-oriented paradigm in the 1990s was accompanied by a waning interest from the (mostly civilian) scholarly community in defence-related matters. South African academics, in many instances, are simply not interested in defence-related research. It is interesting to note, for example, that since 1994, the Department of Strategic Studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the Strategic Studies Institute at Pretoria University (UP) have either been closed down or they have amalgamated with some other departments and institutes. At the same time, the role of the media is questioned. The lack of a public defence debate is to a large extent reflected in the dreadful nature of military–media relations in South Africa and the very superficial reporting of all matters military in the media. The SANDF's approach in dealing with the media is often rooted in the need to prevent the spread of information that may harm or embarrass the government and its military. It is a known fact that nobody in the military is allowed to engage with the media without explicit authority from the Office of the Minister of Defence. Thus, the media frequently relies on rumours and unofficial discussions with military personnel. Defence-related matters that are reported on by the media and which come into the public domain are therefore often sensational. Stated differently, media reporting on South African military-related matters are mostly sensational by nature due to the non-responsiveness of the military to media enquiries and the absence of a formal relationship between the media and the military. Since the public is not well informed about the military and the military is more often than not negatively portrayed in the media, the military is seen by many as dysfunctional. Thus, from a cultural perspective, the SANDF has become a peripheral societal entity, isolated from society in general, and with a growing civil–military gap (Heinecken *et al.* 2005).

The South African military and its cultural ethos is hamstrung by a disconnection between funding, missions and expectations. The decline of the defence budget since the early 1990s is well known. At the same time, the military is often confronted with policy directions that are not necessarily in line with its capacity. This strategic planning gap is underpinned by policy decisions

that are often not necessarily well reasoned and that do not always have South Africa's best interests at heart.[7] The human security paradigm, for example, features very prominently as a South African government policy stance. There is, however, a divide between the idea of human security as a security paradigm and the way by which and the reason why the South African military is employed. More specifically, the SANDF never embraced the notion of human security in organisational structure, doctrine and equipment. In the end, human security is not what armies are about, and very few of the South African military programmes can be considered as human security-related. At a political level, the notion of human security has contributed towards the marginalisation of the military in society. It also influenced the military organisational ethos in ways that were not always conducive for professional military development. It is possible to argue, for example, that the creation of military unions and many of the military disciplinary challenges that dramatically affect the cultural ethos of the SANDF since 1994, have its roots in the idealistic notions of the human security paradigm.

The military ethos of the SANDF is affected by a host of command, control and management challenges. There is without doubt a (COSATU) unionist and occupational mind-set in the South African military at present (Gibson 2010:10). It is an approach to command which is characterised by management through consensus with an accompanying lack or absence of clear-cut decision-making. An occupational approach to command is characterised by a high level of centralisa-tion. The chain of command of the South African military was profoundly influenced by the business-driven structural transformation of the military in the 1990s (Baker 2009). A variety of historical and other influences affect the military command culture of the SANDF. This includes the ethnical background and the pre-1994 service culture of military personnel. Many of the white leadership, for example, have become intimidated, and most white officers serve with a retirement mentality in which they do not want to cause a stir, or make decisions and take stances that may have a ripple effect and harm their careers. At the same time, though, many black soldiers still tend to see themselves as freedom fighters or they serve with a "freedom-fighting" mentality in the SANDF.

One of the key challenges confronting the SANDF is a military culture that is entrenched in a disabling bureaucracy. The SANDF inherited a strong military bureaucracy from the SADF. However, the apartheid military was staffed by skilled and efficient bureaucrats with a nuanced understanding of the need to

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7   A good example in this regard is the ANC government's outright refusal to work with the US Africa Command in Africa on matters where a clear confluence of South African and US interests is obvious. At the ANC's December 2007 Polokwane Conference, the ANC accepted a notion in which "the conference urges Africa to remain united and resolute in the rejection of the Africa Command Centre (*sic*) (AFRICOM)". The resolution is available on the web at <http://www.anc.org.za/docs/misc/2007/abstracto.pdf>, [Accessed 6 September 2011].

keep the military at all times operationally effective. This does not necessarily seem to be the case at present with the SANDF and its bureaucracy. A working, enabling bureaucracy is an indispensible part of military effectiveness. However, from a more critical and theoretical perspective, bureaucracy is something that may be used in defence of everything or that may serve as an excuse for anything. Bureaucracy is a tool that may be used to cover up inactivity, incapacity and incompetence and to escape accountability and responsibility. In a bureaucratised institutional environment it is very difficult to determine by whom, when and where a decision was made. A disabling bureaucracy suffocates all forms of initiative and undermines operational effectiveness. One of the key problems of a bureaucratised military is its organisational centralisation of decision-making – making a mockery of the military operational need for *Auftragstaktik*or mission-command. It would not be wrong to argue that the SANDF's military culture is suffocated through a process of increased bureaucratisation.

Populist tendencies[8] and a unionist mind-set impinge on discipline and military professionalism in the SANDF. It dramatically affects the cultural ethos of the post-1994 military. Since 1994, South African military personnel have a choice in belonging to a military union. There is a widespread belief that the unions are undermining the military professional ethos of the SANDF. This limits the capacity of the military and the willingness of its members to deploy, and gives rise to a lack of discipline in the training environment. The unionised nature of the military is closely linked to its command culture and quality of internal communications (Kaplan 2011a:7). The unions create the opportunity for soldiers to disobey orders and to undermine the command structure. Whether the military and the military unions understand their respective roles in interacting with each other in the context of the Constitution, is unclear (Hawker 2010:15). The unionist mind-set affects the way soldiers view their own military careers as "just another job". This is augmented by perceptions about the acceptance of mediocrity and the lack of a disciplined work ethos in the SANDF. Soldiers in general and officers in particular often seem to be promoted in spite of involvement in situations that border on criminality (Kaplan 2011a:1).

Government policies of affirmative action and equal opportunities are being enforced since 1994. Many individuals from the previously disadvantaged groups were and are still awarded with promotions and appointments. Frequently, no questions were or are being asked about the suitability of candidates for particular positions or appointments. Appointments often seem to reflect a "body-in-a-post" approach. An

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8   Populism as a political idea describes any of various, often anti-establishment or anti-intellectual political movements or philosophies that offer unorthodox solutions or policies and appeal to the common person rather than according with traditional party or partisan ideologies. This was clearly demonstrated through the strike by Defence Force personnel in Pretoria in August 2009.

overemphasis on race, and the accompanying exclusivity, implies that mediocrity is often tolerated rather than to appoint personnel from the "wrong" race group. Considerations such as political influence, race and gender – rather than merit – are often the drivers in the appointment procedures. The emphasis is thus on race rather than on diversity in the appointment of personnel. An emphasis on race is exclusive. Diversity, in contrast, promotes inclusivity (Swart 2010a:6).

Since 1994, the South African policy domain assumes that the military culture needs to mirror the societal culture. This is rooted, to a large extent, in the view that all things in the pre-1994 South Africa military was wrong and ought to be changed; thus, the need to "democratise" and "civilianise" the South African military since 1994.[9] This need for change, though, was often rooted in a lack of understanding of military uniqueness and the need for a unique military culture, described as the military's right to be different (Mileham 1998). The cultural ethos of the SANDF was dramatically influenced by government policies to address inequalities and structural challenges in the South African society. The issue of gender is a good example in this regard. There is an obvious tension between government policies on gender equality and military necessities in general and the demands of the warfighting domain in particular (Swart 2010b:6). Militaries around the globe give recognition to the fact that women are physically better suited for certain military jobs than men. The SANDF was required to open all positions in the military to women. That does not mean that women are necessarily physically and otherwise suited for all roles. The presence of women in the warfighting environment, and more specifically their effect on the ability of the military in this environment, consequently dramatically affects the ethos of the military. More specifically, the presence of women in the warfighting environment did not necessarily contribute to a more positive view of women in the SANDF and their position in society in general (Heinecken & Esterhuyse 2012).

4.   CONCLUSION

Militaries are always the products of their time and their societies. Comparing the military culture of the pre-1994 SADF with the post-1994 SANDF is not only difficult; it may actually be dangerous. They comprise two militaries that differ in societal context, organisation and mission. Since the democratisation in 1994, the military was transformed from one that was primarily responsible for warfighting into an institution that is primarily concerned, domestically, with the management of defence and, externally, with the management of peace. To ignore these realities would be irresponsible. Thus, the military culture of the SADF should be considered

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9   The need to democratise defence and to civilianise by means of, for example, the creation of a civilian Secretary of Defence, was one of the underlying messages of the 1995 White Paper on Defence.

within the context of the apartheid state, the use of conscription and ethnic-based units to man the military, and, most importantly, its warfighting mission. The military ethos of the SANDF, in contrast, should be seen against the background of a democratised society, a multi-racial, multi-ethnic all-volunteer personnel system and a responsibility to manage defence and keep the peace.

The military culture of the pre-1994 SADF was shaped by the strategic realities that confronted the apartheid state. This particularly concerned the higher-order political framework of apartheid, the threat perception of the reigning elite, and ideas of total onslaught that were seen as the best approach in dealing with both the black and the red dangers. At the same time, the military culture was influenced by the growing sense of isolation and the realities of international economic sanctions that affected the SADF's capability directly. At institutional level, the realities of white conscription and the use of black, ethnic units, a regimentalised reserve force and area-bound commando units influenced the development of a unique military ethos. The SADF was therefore an interesting combination of African, British and Afrikaner military traditions. Through priority of funding, professional military leadership and training and a relatively high tempo of operations, the SADF institutional ethos developed into a typically Western-style military force. From a civil–military perspective, the SADF was Huntingtonian by nature with efforts to both depoliticise and professionalise its members.

The post-1994 SANDF is a product of the negotiated revolution and the amalgamation of the different belligerent forces. Unlike the conscript-based SADF, the SANDF is an all-volunteer force, but without the structural flexibilities to implement an "up-or-out" personnel management system. From a cultural perspective, the SANDF is therefore plagued by personnel dysfunctionalities. This includes issues such as the role of unions, the position and role of race and women, the influence of previous forces, the appointment of personnel in specific posts and the need to ground the military in a meritocratic system. The introduction of a more penetrative approach to civil–military relations, the role and position of the ANC as a political party in the management of defence and the general isolation of the military from society had a direct impact on the ethos of the SANDF. At institutional level, the SANDF is increasingly faced with a disabling bureaucracy and an approach to leadership that is driven by the need for centralisation and consensus.

No other factor, though, affects the institutional culture of the SANDF like the disconnection between funding, missions and expectations. The lack of funding, in combination with a disabling bureaucracy (i.e. the inability to spend more money), makes it almost impossible for the SANDF to be operationally prepared for any mission.[10] Add to this recipe a government with unrealistic expectations about what

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10   The Army, for example, finds it difficult to sustain current peace mission deployments such as those in Burundi, the Sudan, and the DRC whilst the Navy is struggling to have one ship on station in anti-piracy patrols.

the military should be able to do and an inability to understand clearly what it is capable of, and the table is set for disequilibrium in the management of defence. In combination, these factors make it very difficult – if not impossible – for the SANDF to develop a military ethos rooted in a culture of military professionalism. The SANDF disbanded the Commando system and alienated many Afrikaners in the process. Because of the lack of funds for the reserve forces, the influence of the regiment-based reserve system on the SANDF is minimal. The SANDF also did not succeed in capturing the culture of the revolutionary forces through the creation of units based on the culture of these forces. One is looking in vain for the Albert Luthuli Detachment in the SANDF![11] Thus, it would not be wrong to argue that the SANDF is at present operating somewhat in a cultural void detached from the society it serves.

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11   A detachment is a small military unit that forms part of a larger military establishment. The anti-apartheid revolutionary armies often used the phrase to refer to their smaller military units.

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