

MILITARY FORCES AND NON-TRADITIONAL MILITARY ROLES: ASSESSING POST-COLD WAR DEVELOPMENTS AND CONSIDERING SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SANDF

Theo Neethling*

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, military forces are organised to fight on land, at sea and in the air. In this regard, the functions of military forces were emphasised, specifically in the conduct of war. Although such functions may still be a primary role of military forces, their functions have been broadened to include a range of other tasks: defence against external aggression; deterrence against various types of threat; coercion as a means of supporting diplomacy; and a protective structure for the operation of other instruments of foreign policy.¹

In this framework, defence thinkers of the developed world, particularly in the post-Second World War era, generally maintained that the primary role of military forces is to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations. In this vein, South Africa's constitutional arrangements provide for a defence force to defend and protect the country, its territorial integrity and its people. This can be regarded as the *raison d'être* for the maintenance and funding of military forces in general and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in particular. To this end, it is accepted that the primary responsibility of the SANDF is that of service in defence of South Africa for the protection of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

However, the functions of military forces have more recently been further broadened to include specific non-traditional military tasks or responsibilities during peacetime, often referred to as "secondary roles". These include assistance (also to other countries) in cases of natural disaster; participation in peace-support operations; support to police forces in upholding law and order; and a role in socio-

* Centre for Military Studies, Thaba Tswane.

¹ D Mortimer, "The determination of military power and potential" in L du Plessis and M Hough (eds), *Protecting sub-Saharan Africa: The military challenge*. Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1999, p. 14.

economic development. The latter two are specifically characteristic of developing countries.² Developments in this regard coincide with new manifestations of security problems in the international community since the end of the Cold War. It concerns a shift away from deterrence and defence against a massive and sophisticated attack from an ideologically committed opponent, to dealing with a multi-faceted array of regional or global security challenges by means of what is often described in the Western world as Operations Other Than War (OOTW).

In short, this article is an attempt to discuss the growing importance of non-traditional military roles in the post-Cold War era. Two issues are of special importance. The first concerns significant changes in the international security context during the 1990s. The second is the impact of the changed international security context on military forces since the end of the Cold War and the fact that militaries have been compelled to take up challenges that are not really military tasks. Finally, the article endeavours to assess the role of the SANDF pertaining to non-traditional military tasks and to reflect on calls that defence planners in South Africa need to make a new assessment of the role which secondary functions play in determining South Africa's defence architecture.

2. SECURITY THINKING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the post-World War II period, conflict and threats to security were confined to the international arena and to military aspects. Louw³ stated that "national security" could be defined as the condition of freedom from external physical threat which a nation state enjoys. He explained that although moral and ideological threats should be included, "it is really physical violence which is generally perceived as the ultimate leverage against a state and therefore as the real and tangible danger to its survival". Accordingly, the relative security enjoyed by a state derived from three conditions:

- The absence of an external threat due to the deterrent effect of the alliance system to which the state belonged.
- The existence of an international system of collective security of which the policing functions and ability to enforce security were real enough to deter an aggressor.
- The state's own capability to resist aggression, which was dependent upon its national security policy, i.e. the effectiveness with which it could mobilise, allocate and use its resources in a conflict situation.

² Ibid.

³ HH Louw, "Introduction to the national security concept" in HH Louw (ed.), *National security: A modern approach*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria; Institute for Strategic Studies, 1978, pp. 10-1.

In view of the above, the functions of government were outlined as the following:⁴

- To maintain the territorial integrity of the state and the political, economic and social order, to protect the lives and the property of its citizens and their organisations to increase the influence of the state.
- To identify major challenges and threats and the forms of appropriate action, both initiatory and responsive, to ensure adequate defence.
- To constantly maximise the capability (power) of a nation state to maintain itself through external action (e.g. alliance and tension-reducing diplomacy) and internal action (e.g. mobilisation of human and material resources) in order to increase its influence in international relationships.
- To participate in meaningful international action, with allies or international organisations to ensure the maintenance of world peace and the promotion of the values and welfare of all the peoples in the international community.

Accordingly, Dutton⁵ pointed out that the military was concerned with the employment of force of arms in the interest of national security, when, and to the extent that, this might be necessary. For the soldier, national security was not a generalised academic study, but a functional concept which lay at the roots of his/her own *raison d'être*. In this framework one gets to the point that the primary role of militaries was seen as defending and protecting a state, its territorial integrity and its sovereignty.

However, since the end of the Cold War the possibility of a nuclear or large-scale conventional war has no longer been dominant in the security thinking of especially the western world. Likewise, the perception of security no longer revolved around military concepts and blocks. "When the Cold War unraveled, so did our understanding of security itself,"⁶ Cocker wrote. Relative "stability" gave way to relative "instability", which comprised new threats and challenges (though many of them were not totally new concerns) such as resurgent ethnic, nationalist, religious and other factors relating to competition for control of the state; uncontrolled immigration; humanitarian disasters; arms and drug trafficking and various other manifestations of organised crime in transnational context.

⁴ HH Louw, "The nature of national security in the modern age" in HH Louw (ed.), *National security: A modern approach*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria; Institute for Strategic Studies, 1978, p. 22.

⁵ JR Dutton, "The military aspects of national security" in HH Louw (ed.), *National security: A modern approach*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria; Institute for Strategic Studies, 1978, p. 22.

⁶ C Cocker, "The changing nature of security" in W Ali et al. (eds), *Challenges of peace support: Into the 21st century*. Amman: Jordan Institute of Diplomacy, 1999, p. 16.

Against this background security policy in the western world was no longer solely threat-based. Also, the western world on average saw a 25 per cent cut in its forces, which was perfectly consistent with a marked reduction in the military dimension of security since 1989. Importantly, the commitment of military forces to a primary responsibility of securing or defending a state and its citizens against external attack also came under the spotlight.⁷ More specifically, questions were raised as regards the growing importance of the various other (secondary) functions of military forces, and the funding and maintenance of militaries with regard to these functions. But before this is addressed in more detail, a few notes on security challenges in the post-Cold War era are discussed below.

3. THE POST-COLD WAR SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

In the aftermath of the Cold War an array of less well-defined security dangers quickly assumed a new importance in military planning. Military thinkers everywhere became increasingly aware of the fact that while many security problems have strong military dimensions, a growing range of key security challenges blurs the distinctions among military, law enforcement and other civil agency responsibilities. Typical new international security problems include:⁸

- Insurgencies and separatist movements supported by drug trafficking or other crimes.
- Heavily armed criminal gangs and paramilitaries asserting control over substantial areas or enterprises.
- Illegal immigration and threats to the integrity of national borders.
- Black and grey-market arms trafficking and illegal trade in strategic materials.
- Severe industrial and natural disasters, environmental damage, famine and public health threats.

There were also other manifestations of non-state security threats that were relatively new, newly visible or of far greater concern than during the Cold War. These include: widespread population dislocations; ethnic and religious conflicts; epidemic health problems; famine; serious environmental degradation; evolving terrorist activities; and "informal" economic organisations that bypass or avoid state and regional economic systems.⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ GH Turbiville, "The changing security environment", *Military Review*, May-June 1997, p. 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

Furthermore, and most importantly, it must be realised that the potential for interstate war and conflict has dramatically decreased in the 1990s. For instance, the confrontation between India and Pakistan and between Ethiopia and Eritrea were the only recent serious interstate conflicts recorded - all the other being internal. At the same time, it is an indisputable fact that since the end of the Cold War there has been a steep increase in intrastate or civil conflicts in the international community - especially in Africa. Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Lesotho are cases in point. Many intrastate conflicts have proved that, when a state collapses as a result of internal conflict, serious turmoil can be experienced across an entire region. To this end, the international response was to apply preventive diplomacy and, in a number of cases, to conduct multinational peace-support operations.

In this framework, the focus of national security has generally shifted from order and stability concerns based exclusively on the nation state, towards security concerns on a broader scale. In other words, the physical survival and protection of the state against external threats and the maintenance of territorial integrity are not the only considerations. National security has been broadened to go beyond achieving an absence of war to encompass the pursuit of democracy, sustainable economic development and social justice in the reality of regional and continental interdependence.

Hence, South Africa too began to assess its national security in wider terms. Its defence and other related policies now clearly provide for a shift away from deterrence and defence against a massive and sophisticated attack from an ideologically-committed opponent, to dealing with a multifaceted array of regional or global problems. These include non-military threats in a regional context, such as the spreading of disease; the burden of refugees; cross-border trafficking in drugs, stolen goods and small arms; and environmental destruction - security threats that often manifest in a transnational context and which may impact negatively on the stability of South Africa. For South Africa security is now an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the process of governance; enjoy the protection of human rights; have access to resources and the basic necessities of life; and inhabit an environment which is not detrimental to their health and well-being. According to the Department of Defence, "(a)t the heart of this approach is a paramount concern with the security of people".¹⁰

¹⁰ Department of Defence, *Defence in a democracy: South African White Paper on Defence 1996*. Pretoria: Department of Defence; 1 Military Printing Regiment, 1998, pp. 1, 13.

Obviously, the changing strategic environment in the post-Cold War era had a significant impact on the philosophical foundations underlying the roles of military forces and their responsibilities in the realm of OOTW - especially as regards multinational security co-operation and involvement in peace-support operations. The following section expands on this in more detail.

4. THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF NON-TRADITIONAL MILITARY ROLES

Security requirements compel militaries to respond to challenges that are not really military tasks. For example, dealing with criminal manifestations such as transnational organised crime is fully part of the traditional role and function of police forces, but is a responsibility that many militaries have to face today. In this regard, many militaries are required to assist police forces in putting an effective lid on criminal activities such as drug and arms trafficking, illegal immigration and other security threats. In fact, certain limited policing responsibilities are imposed on military forces.¹¹ However, challenges in the field of international peace-keeping especially put non-traditional military tasks under the spotlight and impelled defence planners and analysts into new thinking on "what military forces are for", and, in fact, necessitated new thinking on defence planning.

In 1995, Fromm,¹² a senior officer in the US Army, stated that "[o]ur military leadership is now challenged to think more broadly than ever before. The controversial OOTW mission track is itself evidence of this need to move beyond the comfort zone of familiar thought patterns." His comments coincided with what had been set out in the 1993 US Army Field Manual (FM) concerning the Army's responsibilities in the field of OOTW. The inclusion of OOTW into the Army's operational doctrine was certainly a conspicuous change from previous manuals. Obviously, OOTW mission conduct was not something new to the US military, since the 1962 FM 100-5 contained a chapter titled, "Situations short of war". Yet, the 1993 FM 100-5 resonated with the global social, political and economic changes brought on by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the former Soviet Union.¹³ Specifically, it acknowledged the Army's responsibility for OOTW.¹⁴

¹¹ A Hills, "Criminality and policing in stability and support operations", *Military Review*, November-December 1999, pp. 19-20.

¹² P Fromm, "War and OOTW: Philosophical foundations", *Military Review*, September-October 1995, p. 57.

¹³ M McCormick, "The new FM 100-5: A return to operational art", *Military Review*, September-October 1997, p.5.

¹⁴ JB Hunt, "OOTW: A concept in flux", *Military Review*, September-October 1996, p.1.

However, the 1993 FM 100-5 fell short of clarifying the concept of OOTW. Thus OOTW remained a confusing and unsettled notion. To this end, the 1998 FM 100-5 maintains that the Army exists to "compel, reassure and support". It further asserts that, in order to accomplish these ends, Army forces conduct four basic categories of operations, namely offensive, defensive, stability and support operations.

Specifically, stability operations "apply military power to influence the political environment, facilitate diplomacy and disrupt specified illegal activities". Peace-keeping and peace-enforcement are listed under the broader terminology of peace operations in this category. According to JB Hunt, support operations "provide essential supplies and services to assist designated groups. They are conducted mainly to relieve suffering and assist civil authorities' response to crises." The terms "humanitarian assistance" and "disaster relief operations" are included under support operations.¹⁵

The changed strategic environment has also been under constant study in Britain since the end of the Cold War. M Codner writes that it was acknowledged that the threat of a major attack on the United Kingdom has dwindled. At the same time, it was envisaged that there might be calls for British military participation in "conflict control and the reduction of suffering". From a security point of view, it was also acknowledged that Britain's economic well-being was very dependent on international commerce and therefore on a stable and secure global trading environment.¹⁶

Against this background Inge¹⁷ remarks that the challenges facing the British military are dramatically different from those of the past. During the Cold War, the British forces faced a "well-defined threat" against which troops were organised and trained. Since then, the British military experienced "a whole range of possible operational scenarios, and have to be prepared for the unexpected". Apart from the importance of retaining the capability to fight at the highest levels of conflict, the British forces are also now providing for involvement in peace-keeping endeavours which are "much more complicated, much more messy and much more dangerous than perhaps we had realised in the past". To that end, Britain has servicemen and women in locations around the world "that we would not have even considered a few years ago".

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3; pp. 8-9.

¹⁶ M Codner, "The United Kingdom's Strategic Defence Review: Strategic options", *RUSI Journal*, August 1997, p. 45.

¹⁷ P Inge, "The roles and challenges of the British armed forces", *RUSI Journal*, February 1996, p. 3.

By the same token, McLachlan¹⁸ states that in the case of the Australian military, "[o]ur goal is not just to defend Australia, but also to be a positive force for enhancing the security of our entire region... It calls for a capacity to deploy and sustain forces throughout Australia and, if necessary, into our immediate region in the company of a coalition of like-minded players". It is therefore clear that in the 1990s militaries all over faced new challenges and especially a greater role in the realm of international and regional security co-operation.

As far as African militaries go, a number of countries have made substantial contributions to international peace-keeping operations since the end of the Cold War. In other words, they have utilised their military forces for secondary functions in terms of OOTW. Most notable are Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe.¹⁹ At the same time, it should also be noted that in most African states, the primary military focus is on internal order and security, i.e. support to police forces in upholding law and order.²⁰

Clearly, the above exemplifies a heavy emphasis on non-traditional military tasks and less emphasis on the traditional functions of military forces. Obviously, the SANDF could not escape the implications of these developments.

5. THE SANDF IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

The era of the 1960s to the 1980s saw the former South African Defence Force (SADF) operating internally and also undertaking cross border operations in southern Africa against liberation forces, especially in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, South West Africa/Namibia and Angola: The SADF was employed in operations against what was regarded by the then South African government as "a full scale external threat in all its facets". In the late 1960s, the structure of the SADF became strongly concerned with "unconventional warfare" since this type of warfare became prominent in the light of "mounting terrorist activity" in South West Africa/Namibia, Mozambique and Angola. At the same time, the SADF was also geared to engage in major mechanised operations (and did so in certain cases in Angola in the 1980s), while it also played an important role in "the suppression of urban and rural terrorism and assisting the SA Police in maintaining law and order".²¹

¹⁸ I McLachlan, "Australia's post-Cold War defence planning", *RUSI Journal*, February 1997, p. 9.

¹⁹ See for example M. Malan, "African capabilities for training for peacekeeping", *ISS Monograph*, 17, November 1999, pp. 1-116.

²⁰ Mortimer, p. 14.

²¹ South African Defence Force, *South African Defence Force Review. Marine Parade: Walker Ramus Trading Co., 1987, pp. 39, 89.*

However, the end of the Cold War and subsequent changes in the regional context brought an end to regional cross-border operations by the South African military. Moreover, transition to full democracy in South Africa coincided with the momentous integration of former adversarial forces into a new defence force at midnight on 26 April 1994. The new force, the SANDF, was to safeguard the values of the new constitutional order. Importantly, political changes in South Africa resulted in dramatic changes in the South African view of the regional strategic environment. The changing strategic landscape is well reflected in chapter three of the South African **White Paper on Defence** of 1996 and in chapter four of the **Defence Review** of 1998. These documents reflect the new thinking on security and defence that became evident in South Africa after the country's transition to full democratic rule. Significantly, chapter two of the **White Paper on Defence** explicitly mentions the fact that South Africa does not now, and will not in the future, have aggressive intentions towards any state, and that it is not confronted by an immediate conventional military threat. Also, it states that the RSA does not anticipate external military aggression in the short to medium term (\pm 5 years) and, in fact, is more and more expected to become involved in multinational peace-support operations on the continent.²²

Still, in accordance with western defence concepts,²³ article 200(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that "[t]he primary object of the SANDF is to defend and protect the Republic, its territorial integrity and its people in accordance with the Constitution and the principles of international law regulating the force".²⁴ Chapter four of the **White Paper on Defence** further makes it clear that the primary role of the SANDF is to defend South Africa against external military aggression. These sentiments are reiterated in chapter three of the **Defence Review** which furthermore declares that the size, design, structure and budget of the SANDF are determined mainly by its primary function. In other words, references to the primary function of the SANDF in these policy documents (as defence against external military aggression) are based on specific constitutional provisions in this regard.

²² See Department of Defence, **Defence in a democracy: South African White Paper on Defence 1996; South African Defence Review 1998**. Pretoria: Department of Defence; 1 Military Printing Regiment, 1998.

²³ R Williams, "Against meta-narratives?: The strengths and weaknesses of modernism within contemporary South African defence thinking", **Strategic Review for Southern Africa**, XX(1), May 1998, p. 23.

²⁴ Republic of South Africa, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. **Government Gazette**, 18 December 1996.

Against this background the **Defence Review** states that the SANDF must inter alia

- have an affordable and sustainable force structure appropriate to its peace-time role and capable of expanding timeously to meet future defence contingencies;
- maintain the necessary systems and expertise to ensure flexible and responsive defence for high-risk defence contingencies which may arise in the short term; and
- provide a conventional military deterrence, which demonstrates the capability and potential will of the state to defend South Africa against aggression.

The **White Paper on Defence** and the **Defence Review** also provide for additional responsibilities, namely that the SANDF may be employed in a range of secondary roles. These secondary roles or non-traditional functions include the following:

- Support to the SA Police Service (SAPS) in the maintenance of law and order.
- Search-and-rescue operations.
- Countering internal threats to the constitutional order.
- Border protection.
- Participation in peace-support operations.
- Protection of maritime and marine resources.
- Disaster relief and humanitarian assistance; and
- support to foreign policy initiatives.

Importantly, chapter three of the **Defence Review** makes it clear that the secondary functions of the SANDF are performed chiefly with its core defence capabilities. In fact, it is stressed in chapter four of the **White Paper** "that these are secondary functions" which "arise from the unique capability of the Defence Force".²⁵ In view of this, De Jager²⁶ rightly points out that "the contingencies determining the force design are consequently defined largely in terms of unilateral defence against various levels of military aggression against South Africa although a provision for defence against internal military threats to the constitution adds an important domestic dimension". It is furthermore explained that other tasks, such as border protection, regional military co-operation, participation in peace-support operations and support to the SAPS are regarded as secondary, and it is assumed that the ability to execute the primary defence tasks will enable the SANDF to execute

²⁵ See Department of Defence, **Defence in a democracy: South African White paper on Defence 1996; South African Defence Review 1998**. Pretoria: Department of Defence; 1 Military Printing Regiment, 1998.

²⁶ JM de Jager, "Rethinking South Africa's defence policy", **Unpublished Working Paper**, SA Defence Secretariat, 1998, p. 1.

these secondary tasks. In other words, the secondary tasks or OOTW should be executed by means of the collateral utility in the design for the primary tasks.²⁷

6. SANDF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

An assessment of SANDF operational activities in recent years indicates that the military has been heavily involved in secondary functions as a result of South Africa's firm commitment to respond to security concerns in wider terms. Such operations have rendered a highly visible contribution to security inside and outside the RSA. For example, the "intervention operation" in Lesotho by South African and Botswanan forces in September 1998 - South Africa's first multinational and combat deployment of the integrated SANDF - was conducted with a view to restoring stability in that country. This was clearly outlined in the "battle concept" of the operation, namely "[t]he deployment of forces in order to locate and identify destabilisers and destabiliser resources, to disarm and contain them and to strike where applicable with the necessary force to eliminate the threat".²⁸ Importantly, the military security situation in Lesotho in September 1998 prompted the Lesotho government to request the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to intervene in the situation. Similar operations in southern Africa or further afield may follow in due course and analysts generally agree that the SANDF is likely to be involved in such operations in the context of South Africa's increasing responsibility towards regional peace and security.

In addition, SANDF operational activities in the past years were focused on the following:

- Support to the SAPS.
- Assistance to other government departments.
- Local humanitarian assistance; and
- regional assistance.

In this context, the South African Army's (SAA) involvement in non-traditional military tasks has been exemplified by the deployment of troops in domestic areas of extreme instability, notably Richmond and the Cape Flats. Also, the SAA has played a significant role in the prevention of serious crimes with special reference to stock theft, criminal violence and attacks on farms in rural areas. Numerous

²⁷ L. le Roux, "Defining defence requirements: Force design considerations for the South African National Defence Force", *African Security Review*, 8(5), 1999, p. 59.

²⁸ R. Hartsliel, Presentation by Col. Robbie Hartsliel, Officer commanding *Operation Boleas*, Maseru, Lesotho, 2 October 1998.

operational actions were conducted in co-operation with the SAPS in respect of the following:

- Roadblocks.
- Vehicle control points.
- Foot patrols.
- Motorcycle patrols.
- Mounted patrols.
- Farm patrols.
- Urban patrols.
- National key point visits.
- Observation posts.
- Listening posts.
- Ambushes.
- Bus protection.
- Station protection; and
- cordon and search operations.

Similarly, the SA Air Force (SAAF) was extensively utilised to assist with crime prevention, dagga operations, border protection and related roles, while the SA Military Health Service (SAMHS) deployed numerous emergency care orderlies in the past years. Furthermore, the SAAF assisted in combating fires and provided air transport to governmental role-players for various purposes, while search and rescue missions were regularly carried out.

Members of the SANDF also assisted several other government departments, for example the Customs and Excise section of the Department of Home Affairs, and helped to protect the RSA's borders against illegal crossing and the smuggling of drugs, arms and contraband. Another example of assistance to other departments relates to diplomatic support to the Department of Foreign Affairs, especially by the SAAF and the SAN. It is well known that in May 1997, one of the SAN's combat support vessels, the SAS **Outeniqua**, deployed to Pointe Noire in the Democratic Republic of the Congo - the venue for the historic talks between President Laurent Kabila and ex-President Mobutu Sese Seko.

In terms of regional assistance the SANDF is rendering its full co-operation within the SADC and its Interstate Defence and Security Committee in various fields. In 1997, for example, humanitarian assistance was given to Tanzania to help with the recovery of casualties from a sunken ferry in Lake Victoria. During the heavy snowfalls in Lesotho the SAMHS and the SAAF rendered vital assistance to people trapped in the Lesotho highlands. In response to an approach from the Royal Swazi

Police, the SAAF assisted them in tracking down illegal dagga fields in remote Swazi rural areas.²⁹

In 2000, the SANDF's involvement in a regional assistance role was especially exemplified by **Operation Lichi** in Mozambique. Not only was the SAAF involved in the location/relocation of persons trapped by heavy flooding in certain areas in Mozambique, but also in the delivery of essential supplies to flood victims. In this respect, the SAAF worked side-by-side with SAMHS members who provided medical treatment to Mozambicans who had been rescued. Figures indicate that on 17 March 2000, 143 933 people were rescued by means of air operations, while 960 tons of food and medical supplies were delivered in the area of operations. It is also interesting to note that **Operation Lichi** concerned the following contributions from the SAAF in February 2000.³⁰

- 7 helicopters plus flying and support crews.
- 4 fixed-wing aircraft plus flying and support crews.
- 1 Task Force Headquarters Team; and
- 2 Mobile Air Operation Teams.

Practically speaking, it is therefore in the non-traditional military arena - the secondary functions - that the SANDF has been deployed since 1994, although the missions were executed with the collateral utility derived from the primary force design. In the light of these realities some commentators have raised arguments that defence planners need to make a new assessment of the role which secondary functions play in determining South Africa's future defence architecture. Arguments in this respect are also driven by the fact that reduced military spending and a dwindling defence budget have been the order of the day in South Africa in the past decade. The defence budget is presently set at 1,5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product which, according to Le Roux,³¹ produces the dilemma of a substantial discrepancy between the requirements emanating from national policy and the capability of the SANDF to meet such requirements.

7. DISCOURSE ON FORCE PLANNING IN SOUTH AFRICA

In accordance with the premise that the SANDF should defend South Africa against external military aggression, the point has often been raised since 1994 that the SANDF should confine itself to its primary function and desist from involving

²⁹ See Department of Defence, **Annual report 1997**. Pretoria: Defence Headquarters; and Department of Defence, **Annual report 1998/99**. Pretoria: Defence Headquarters.

³⁰ Department of Defence, "Op LICHI - Flood aid in Mozambique", **Bulletin 26/2000**, 22 March 2000. Internet site: www.mil.za/news&events/news/bulletins/bulletins2000/26bulletin2000.htm.

³¹ Le Roux, p. 63.

itself in various secondary functions on an ongoing basis.³² It is, for instance, contended that the internal deployment of the SANDF, specifically the SAA, is putting heavy pressure on the resources of the Full-time Force, and that the SAPS should be taken to task regarding their primary function. In terms of this argument, the SANDF should remain focused on the following:³³

- To maintain the security of South Africa, which is to neutralise any military threat against the RSA, as well as to safeguard its constitution.
- Participation in compliance with international obligations.

More specifically, South Africa should inter alia be able to deploy a balanced, effective conventional war-fighting system and have the capability to conduct military operations beyond its borders. In addition, it is believed that "South Africa cannot afford to be perceived as weakened, or not willing to defend itself or its allies. The truth lies in the fact that if you are 'the biggest kid on the block' no one messes with you or your friends." Advocates of this (more traditional) view - mainly ex-SADF officers - rest their arguments squarely on the following statement by George Washington: "To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving the peace."³⁴

An opposing school of thought, which has been articulating its viewpoints since 1997, argues that there is an obsession with the primary function in force planning, and that it is wrong to adopt an attitude of "we design for the primary function and we execute the secondary functions with the collateral utility derived from the primary force design".³⁵ This school maintains that it is primarily in the secondary functions arena that most militaries have tended to be deployed in recent years and that the South African military of the future will be increasingly utilised for non-traditional roles or secondary functions. This will especially relate to regional security, peace support operations and a variety of internal stability tasks. For example, it is assumed by this school of thought that assistance to the SAPS is likely to remain a feature of SANDF activities for some time - although it is clearly accepted that combating crime is mainly a police matter and that the role of the military in policing should be restricted to the provision of support.

³² CH Bennett, "Crime and security", *African Armed Forces Journal*, May 1998, p. 12.

³³ L Scheepers, "The South African Defence Force of the future; asset or monument: The responsibility of South Africa towards a volatile continent", *African Armed Forces Journal*, September 1998, p. 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁵ See for example R Williams, "Against meta-narratives?: The strengths and weaknesses of modernism within contemporary South African defence thinking", *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, XX(1), May 1998, pp. 1-40.

Arguments that greater recognition of the importance of the secondary functions needs to be reflected in defence planning seem to have gained support in recent times. For example, it has been reported that a senior SANDF General at Defence Headquarters, Maj. Gen Len le Roux, publicly stated that South Africa's emphasis on the primary function of the military "was too narrow", and that it was inappropriate when taking a long-term view on the demands that would be placed on the SANDF. In this context, he expressed the opinion that a redefinition of the primary function of the SANDF was imperative. According to him, defence against external aggression implied a conventional focus on equipment, operations close to and around one's borders, internal lines of communication and the relative proximity of support structures. "Peace operations and other operations in compliance with international obligations, on the other hand, have different demands, including protracted deployments over vast distances." They also required high mobility in the air and at sea, long-range logistical support and an ability to work with other national forces and to operate in a different geographic area, climate and terrain.³⁶

Furthermore, from a threat perspective, Williams³⁷ asserts that when conflicts in Africa turn into interstate conflicts, two phenomena are immediately apparent:

- The incidence of such interstate conflict occurs primarily at the level of implicit and explicit support by neighbouring countries for dissident movements operating in these neighbouring countries.
- When such conflict occurs, rarely does it assume the form of conventional, high technology interstate rivalry.

Thus the determination of roles, missions and tasks, and the planning and design of force structures for militaries in the African context, is or should be a very different conceptual and practical matter to planning for classic threats in the European sense of the word.

In addition to this, De Jager³⁸ asserts that the approach of focusing on the primary function and assuming that this will satisfy secondary requirements may be good for developed countries with large defence capabilities, but may not be valid for less developed countries. It is pointed out, for example, that Britain considers it necessary to maintain a peacetime navy of around 16 submarines, 3 ASW carriers, 2 assault ships, 46 destroyers and frigates, and 50 patrol craft and mine-hunters. The assignment of a number of vessels to peace-keeping tasks is likely to represent

³⁶ B Ngqiyaza, "Military must be proactive: SANDF General says current approach to functions of forces is too narrow", *Business Day*, 15 August 2000, p. 5.

³⁷ Williams, p. 30.

³⁸ De Jager, pp. 6-7.

a relatively small fraction of the capability the Royal Navy requires for its peacetime defence role. In the case of South Africa, as a smaller entity, the SA Navy would require a significant portion of its relatively small core peacetime force to respond to calls for assistance by neighbouring states. Similar arguments can be applied to land and air capabilities.

It is furthermore argued that under the primary function logic the SANDF is not only suffering the steady erosion of its conventional capabilities, but that it has probably reached a point where these capabilities can only be maintained at the expense of domestic deployments in support of the SAPS, border protection, and the ability to conduct peace-support operations or related peace-keeping tasks. The view is accordingly taken that the small likelihood of an external military threat has consistently undermined the credibility of a force design motivated by the need for defence against external aggression. Focusing on the primary function is thus not enabling the execution of secondary tasks, which are precisely the tasks that the SANDF is currently performing and will be called upon to perform in the foreseeable future.

Thus it is generally advocated that defence planners need to take a fresh look at the role which the secondary functions play and will play in future in determining force design, equipment purchase and training requirements. Furthermore, it is suggested that, although the SANDF will continue to be maintained for the preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty, it will have to consider a cheaper, lighter and less technology-intensive profile. According to this school of thought, many of the assumptions upon which current South African force designs are based, are redolent of a bygone period and the legacy of an old (and Western-oriented) mindset. It boils down to the point that the technological capabilities and related contours of the SANDF will have to be attuned to changed circumstances and the economic requirements of the country. In this vein, it has been reported that a former member of the SADF and well-known defence analyst, Brig. Gen. Bill Sass, explicitly voiced the opinion that the time has arrived that South Africa has to admit that a defence force "based on the African model" would be better suited to local and regional requirements, i.e. "a force comprising well-trained and disciplined troops and an air and water wing".³⁹

Against this background it is clear that the logic and rationality of some of the key aspects of (conventional) defence thinking in South Africa have been contested in recent times. Based on certain "environmental factors" and the growing importance of the non-traditional military tasks, it is today strongly advocated that there is a

³⁹ E Gibson, "Soldate voel niemand sien na hul belange om", *Beeld*, 11 October 2000, p. 15.

need for a shift towards a force design that will be, in the words of Williams,⁴⁰ "increasingly suited to African contingencies and less towards a more Eurocentric model". This boils down to the point that South Africa (like Argentina and Brazil) will possibly have to disenthral itself of the notion that the SANDF should be a First World defence force for simple financial and operational reasons.⁴¹ Practically speaking, this relates to considerations concerning the requirement for certain capabilities, for example heavy armour vs. light and/or motorised infantry, or fighter aircraft vs. light air force capabilities (that could be utilised during border control operations, peace-keeping endeavours, and humanitarian and disaster relief missions), for instance.

8. CONCLUSION

It has been pointed out in this article that the changing international strategic environment and new thinking on security in the aftermath of the Cold War has had a significant impact on the philosophical foundations underlying the roles of military forces and their responsibilities in the realm of OOTW. Today, many military forces are compelled to deal with security challenges that are not really military tasks and governments all over are utilising their militaries in the secondary function domain.

The end of the Cold War and the transition to full democracy in South Africa also resulted in significant changes in the focus of the South African military. Today, the SANDF is heavily involved in non-traditional military tasks, although these are executed with the collateral utility derived from the primary force design. In the light of the need to design for changing realities it would seem that critics of the status quo can rightfully argue that the SANDF needs to make a new assessment of the role which secondary functions play in determining defence planning, force design, equipment purchase and training requirements.

When taking a long-term view of the demands that are expected to be placed on the SANDF, analysts generally agree that there will be growing pressure on South Africa to play an active role in multinational peace-keeping efforts on the continent. Africa is the continent most plagued by conflict and South Africa will sooner or later be involved in international peace-keeping endeavours in the southern African region and even further afield. It should also be reiterated that the SANDF, like other African militaries, carries huge responsibilities in helping to maintain internal order and security. Yet the SANDF, like its counterparts on the African continent, is seriously constrained by budgetary limitations. In this regard,

⁴⁰ Williams, p. 37.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

the SANDF is seemingly not in the same league as militaries in the developed world, which can follow an approach of focusing on the primary function, and assuming that this will satisfy secondary requirements. Therefore, defence planners and other role-players will have to consider whether the SANDF has the budget, the equipment (in terms of inventory size and capabilities) and the personnel to respond to future requirements in this regard.

However, this should not mean any termination of the concept of what militaries were historically designed for. It might be argued that, irrespective of the low frequency of interstate wars in the current global order, the impact of external military aggression is so severe that defence against such aggression should remain a primary objective of the SANDF. The challenge is to accomplish a greater "balancing" of primary and secondary functions in South African defence planning and outlook. To this end, it would seem that the arguments in favour of rethinking South Africa's defence policy should be seriously considered.