From Defence to Development

Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa

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In May 1996, parliament ratified the *White Paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa*. This was the culmination of a yearlong process of consulting parliamentary defence committees, political parties and civil society interest groups with the view to forging a national consensus on defence matters (preface to the *Draft White Paper on National Defence*, 21 June 1995).

The *White Paper* covers the following topics: the transformation of defence policy; civil-military relations; the internal and external strategic environment; regional security; the primary and secondary functions of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF); human resource issues, including integration, demobilisation and affirmative action; budgetary considerations; arms control and the defence industry; and land and the environment.

The *White Paper* marks a fundamental break from the aggressive and repressive strategies of the National Party government over several decades. It seeks to bring defence policy into line with the new democratic dispensation, Bill of Rights and strategic environment in South Africa, and with international law on armed conflict. It also seeks to reverse the high level of state militarisation which characterised the apartheid era.

Militarisation and demilitarisation can be measured by the size, and the increase or decrease over time, of a country’s armed forces, defence budget and weapons holdings. Yet these quantitative factors are, at least in part, a logical consequence of the extent to which that country is engaged in internal and external conflict. They may reflect, but they do not describe or explain, the degree to which government relies on force to solve problems and manage conflict.

Militarisation and demilitarisation can also be assessed in terms of political and social processes, relationships and values (Cock, 1989). For example, Andreski identifies the following phenomena as indicators of militarism:
First, . . . an aggressive foreign policy, based on a readiness to resort to war; second, the preponderance of the military in the state, the extreme case being that of military rule; third, subservience of the whole society to the needs of the army which may involve a recasting of social life in accordance with the pattern of military organisation; and fourth, an ideology which promotes military ideas (cited in Cock, 1989:3).

These issues are examined below, at the level of national policy and the state, by comparing the previous government’s approach to security and defence with the positions adopted in the *White Paper*. Five themes of the *White Paper* are considered: transformation; national security policy; regional security; defence posture and functions; and civil-military relations.

The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the relationship between defence policy and practice. It is argued that substantial progress has been made towards state demilitarisation, but that significant exceptions exist in a number of areas, most notably that of arms exports.

**Transformation**

The overarching theme of the *White Paper* is the transformation of defence policy and the SANDF. This imperative arises from four sets of factors: the history of the South African Defence Force (SADF) as an instrument of repression under apartheid; the advent of democracy and the adoption of a Constitution which enshrines fundamental rights; the new strategic environment after the ending of minority rule and the Cold War; and government’s commitment to alleviating poverty and socio-economic inequality.

The *White Paper* presents the following principles of defence in a democracy as the framework for transformation.

- National security shall be sought primarily through efforts to meet the political, economic, social and cultural rights and needs of South Africa’s people, and through efforts to promote and maintain regional security.
- South Africa shall pursue peaceful relations with other states. It will seek a high level of political, economic and military co-operation with southern African states in particular.
- South Africa shall adhere to international law on armed conflict and to all international treaties to which it is party.
- The SANDF shall have a primarily defensive orientation and posture.
- South Africa is committed to the international goals of arms control and disarmament. It shall participate in, and seek to strengthen,
international and regional efforts to contain and prevent the proliferation of small arms, conventional armaments and weapons of mass destruction.

- South Africa’s force levels, armaments and military expenditure shall be determined by defence policy which derives from an analysis of the external and internal security environment, which takes account of the social and economic imperatives of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), and which is approved by parliament.
- The SANDF shall be a balanced, modern, affordable and technologically advanced military force, capable of executing its tasks effectively and efficiently.
- The functions and responsibilities of the SANDF shall be determined by the Constitution and the Defence Act.
- The primary role of the SANDF shall be to defend South Africa against external military aggression. Deployment in an internal policing capacity shall be limited to exceptional circumstances and subject to parliamentary approval and safeguards.
- The SANDF shall be subordinate and fully accountable to parliament and the executive.
- The SANDF shall operate strictly within the parameters of the Constitution, domestic legislation and international humanitarian law. It shall respect human rights and the democratic political process.
- Defence policy and military activities shall be sufficiently transparent to ensure meaningful parliamentary and public scrutiny and debate, in so far as this does not endanger the lives of military personnel or jeopardise the success of military operations.
- The SANDF shall not further or prejudice party political interests.
- The SANDF shall develop a non-racial, non-sexist and non-discriminatory institutional culture as required by the Constitution.
- The composition of the SANDF shall broadly reflect the composition of South Africa. To this end, affirmative action and equal opportunity programmes will be introduced.
- The SANDF shall respect the rights and dignity of its members within the normal constraints of military discipline and training. (Department of Defence, 1996:2(11.1-11.16))

The transformation agenda is radical in its content and orientation. Most of the principles listed above stand in direct contrast to military policy and practice under the previous government. The agenda is also radical in its scope. The implementation of these principles requires a fundamental reorientation of defence posture, doctrine and operations; military training, education and institutional culture; defence expenditure, procurement and exports; civil-military relations; and human resource policy.
Many of the principles are explicitly anti-militarist. The only suggestion of a contrary tendency is the reference to the SANDF as a technologically advanced military force. This phrase was included in the interim Constitution of 1993 at the insistence of the SADF. It was dropped from the final Constitution of 1996 and replaced in defence policy documents by the term technologically appropriate.

**National security policy**

The foremost goal of security policy under apartheid was to defend the racially exclusive state and maintain the system of minority rule. The principal strategy was repression through military and paramilitary means. While the liberation movements and internal anti-
apartheid groups were regarded as the major threats to security, the targets of state violence included large sections of the civilian population in South Africa, Namibia and Angola (Cock & Nathan, 1989; Cawthra, 1986).

Elsewhere in the world, security policy was shaped largely by the conditions of the Cold War. For close on four decades the international system was characterised by acute tension between rival ideological blocs and the prospect of another major war in Europe; in this context, the debate around security focused on states and military stability (Booth, 1994). The primary response to perceived insecurity was the threat of force in the North and the use of force in many regions of the South.

In contrast to the above, the White Paper emphasises the security of people and the non-military dimensions of security:

In the new South Africa national security is no longer viewed as a predominantly military and police problem. It has been broadened to incorporate political, economic, social and environmental matters. At the heart of this new approach is a paramount concern with the security of people.

Security is 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 fundamental 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.

At national level the objectives of security policy therefore encompass the consolidation of democracy; the achievement of social justice, economic development and a safe environment; and a substantial reduction in the level of crime, violence and political instability . . . (Department of Defence, 1996:3(1-3)).

Two critical assumptions underlie this holistic perspective. First, state security is not necessarily synonymous with the security of people; in much of the world the main threat to citizens is their own government (Thomas, 1991). Second, non-military problems like poverty, oppression and environmental degradation present grave threats to the security of people; if these problems are inadequately addressed, they may lead to violent conflict and threaten the security of the state (Booth, 1994; Buzan, 1991; Kampala Document, 1991).

The new approach to security bears a superficial resemblance to the apartheid doctrine of Total Strategy, which similarly stressed the political, social and economic dimensions of security (Swilling & Phillips, 1989). In substance, however, the two models are diametrically opposed. The apartheid model sought to militarise all aspects of national policy, while the new approach seeks to demilitarise the
concept of security.

This distinction has significant implications for strategy and the distribution of state resources. The White Paper argues that the greatest threats to the South African people are underdevelopment, various socio-economic problems and violent crime, rather than the prospect of external aggression. Accordingly, one of government’s policy priorities is the RDP (Department of Defence, 1996:2(5-6)).

The RDP is the principal long-term means of promoting the well-being and security of citizens and, thereby, the stability of the country. There is consequently a compelling need to reallocate state resources to the RDP. The challenge is to rationalise the SANDF and contain military spending without undermining the country’s core defence capability in the short- or long-term . . . (2(6-7)).

The White Paper states explicitly that the new approach to security does not imply an expanded role for the armed forces. Although the SANDF may be employed in a range of secondary tasks, its primary function is defence against external aggression (2(8)).

The SANDF therefore remains an important security instrument of last resort but it is no longer the dominant security institution. The responsibility for ensuring the security of South Africa’s people is now shared by many government departments and ultimately vests in Parliament (2(9)).

In summary, the White Paper adopts a broad approach to security and a narrow approach to defence. The combined effect is to downgrade the status of the armed forces in the state’s definition of security, formulation of strategy and allocation of funds. Whereas previously security had virtually the same meaning as defence, the latter is now seen as a discrete subset of the former.

**Regional security**

From the late 1970s, Pretoria’s regional policy was predicated on, and exacerbated, antagonistic relations with most neighbouring states. These states were subjected to an intense programme of destabilisation, leading to thousands of deaths, massive economic destruction, a regional arms race and a greater resolve by the international community to end apartheid. The net result was perpetual insecurity for the states and people of South and southern Africa (Hanlon, 1986).

The destabilisation campaign was not solely a product of apartheid. It also reflected, at a deeper conceptual level, the Cold War perspective that international relations are inescapably conflictual. In
early 1994, as political tensions in southern Africa began to thaw, SADF officers continued to argue that states do not have allies, they only have interests and that the international system is based on the law of the jungle (author’s interview with SADF officers, Pretoria, March 1994).

The Palme Commission reports on disarmament and security issues provide compelling motivation for an alternative, non-adversarial model of common security. The commission stressed that countries have become increasingly interdependent in the modern technological age, and that common problems transcend national borders as never before. States can no longer protect their citizens through unilateral military means. They share an interest in joint survival and should begin to organise their security policies in co-operation with each other (Palme Commission, 1984, 1989).

Common security is not based on idealistic assumptions about the international system. It does not deny that inter-state relations are characterised by competing interests and the risk of armed hostilities. Rather, by emphasising the interdependence of states and the potential for military and political co-operation, it seeks to manage such competition and risk without resorting to the use or threat of force.

With the ending of apartheid and the Cold War, the South African government has embraced this perspective.

For political, strategic and geographic reasons, defence co-operation with other Southern African states is a priority. South Africa
will seek to strengthen the security and defence forums of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Following trends in other parts of the world, South Africa will encourage the development of a multilateral common security approach in Southern Africa. In essence, the SADC states should shape their political, security and defence policies in co-operation with each other . . . (Department of Defence, 1996:4(6.4; 12)).

The *White Paper* argues that this approach is essential for three reasons. First, many of the domestic threats to the SADC countries are shared problems and impact negatively on the stability of their neighbours. Second, it is possible that inter-state disputes could emerge over refugees, trade, natural resources and previously suppressed territorial claims. Third, since the subcontinent is politically volatile and its national and regional institutions are relatively weak, internal conflicts could give rise to cross-border tensions (4(13-15)).

Common security arrangements would have many advantages in this context. They could facilitate defence co-operation, the sharing of resources and intelligence, and the early warning of potential crises; resolve inter-state conflict by peaceful means; co-ordinate peace support operations; negotiate security agreements; and implement confidence- and security-building measures which provide for greater transparency in military matters in order to promote regional confidence and stability (4(16-25)).

While the *White Paper* naturally focuses on the military dimensions of common security, it insists that defence co-operation is not the central vehicle for tackling the security problems afflicting the region.

Regional instability and underdevelopment can only be addressed meaningfully through political reform, socio-economic development and inter-state co-operation in these spheres. Similarly, the prevention and management of inter- and intra-state conflict are primarily a political and not a military matter.

. . . Domestic peace and stability will not be achieved in a context of regional instability and poverty. It is therefore in South Africa’s long-term security interests to pursue mutually beneficial relations with other SADC states and to promote reconstruction and development throughout the region (4(11; 29)).

Over the past five years, aggregate force levels, weapons holdings and defence spending in southern Africa have declined (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996:311). The *White Paper* assumes that further cutbacks are desirable and possible through the conclusion of multilateral treaties on disarmament and conventional arms control (Department of Defence, 1996: 4(26)).

The *White Paper* acknowledges that South Africa has a particular
responsibility in this regard because of its relative military strength on the subcontinent. Lower force levels and weapons holdings might stimulate a broader process of disarmament in Southern Africa, and the adoption of a defensive and non-threatening posture would contribute to building confidence and positive relationships (4(27-8)).

**Defence posture and functions**

As noted earlier, from the late 1970s South Africa’s foreign posture and military doctrine became increasingly offensive. The SADF occupied northern Namibia and southern Angola, and engaged repeatedly in cross-border raids and pre-emptive strikes against Zambia, Mozambique, Angola and Botswana.

In contrast, the White Paper provides that the SANDF shall have a primarily defensive orientation and posture (2 (11.4)); that the SANDF shall not contravene the law on aggression (2 (13)); that South Africa does not now, and will not in the future, have aggressive intentions towards any state (4(3)); and that South Africa will only turn to military means when deterrence and non-violent strategies have failed (5(6)).

Governments have an inherent right and responsibility to ensure the protection of the state and its people against external military threats. South Africa will employ the following principal strategies to this end:

*Political, economic and military co-operation with other states.* In this context, a common security regime, regional defence co-operation and confidence-building measures in southern Africa are particularly important.

*The prevention, management and resolution of conflict through non-violent means.* Conflict resolution, in the form of diplomacy, mediation or arbitration, may take place on a bilateral basis or under the auspices of an international or regional body.

*The deployment of the defence force.* The use or threat of force against external military aggression is a legitimate measure of last resort when political solutions have been exhausted. (5(5-5.3))

In preparing the White Paper, the Department of Defence grappled with the dilemma of determining the appropriate size and features of the armed forces in the absence of a conventional threat. Since the SANDF is unlikely to be deployed against external aggression in the foreseeable future, one option was to design the force around its main secondary tasks: domestic support of the police; regional defence co-operation; and international peace operations. The White Paper rejects this option, insisting that the size, design, structure and budget...
of the SANDF will be determined chiefly by its cardinal function of defence against aggression (5 (3)). This position is based on a number of considerations, including a concern about perpetuating the militarisation of the apartheid era.

The government is disinclined to employ the SANDF in socio-economic development. Such employment blurs the distinction between the military and civilian spheres; it contributes to the militarisation of civil society; [and] it undermines the preparedness and capabilities of the force with respect to its primary function (5(30)).

Similarly, the White Paper maintains that it is inappropriate for armed forces in a democracy to be utilised in a domestic policing capacity on a permanent or semi-permanent basis.

Armed forces are not trained, orientated or equipped for deployment against civilians. They are typically geared to employ maximum force against an external military aggressor.

Ongoing employment in a law and order function invariably leads to the defence force becoming increasingly involved in non-military activities.

Efforts to apply military solutions to political problems are inherently limited and invariably lead to acts of repression (5(14.1; 14.2; 14.6)).

The dilemma was resolved conceptually by the notion of a core force, defined as a balanced and sustainable nucleus which is able to deal with a range of small-scale contingencies of a short-term nature and which maintains the core capabilities required for expanding to appropriate force levels within a realistic warning period should the threat situation deteriorate significantly. The SANDF should be downsized and rightsized to this end (5(7-8)).

This core force approach takes account of government spending priorities and the fact that the self-defence problem is likely to be limited in the short- to medium-term. It does not require a large standing force. Instead, the SANDF will comprise a relatively small regular force and a sufficiently large part-time force (5(9)).

The main purpose of the Defence Review, which was initiated after the completion of the White Paper and remains under way at the time of writing, is to provide greater detail on the size, structure, weaponry, equipment and other features of the core force.
Civil-military relations

From the late 1970s, the South African state became increasingly militarised as SADF officers were drawn into prominent and sometimes dominant positions in the State Security Council and the National Security Management System. In the mid-1980s, defence analysts concluded that a silent coup had taken place. Apart from the fact that soldiers had no constitutional or electoral mandate to play a role in government, their presence in these structures contributed to a preoccupation with military solutions to the political and social problems of apartheid (Cock & Nathan, 1989; Grundy, 1988; Frankel, 1984).

Civil-military relations, defined here as the distribution of power and influence between the armed forces and the civilian authority, are a critical issue in most societies because of the military's capacity for organised violence. This capacity may be intended to thwart external aggression, but it can also be used to subvert the political process and present an internal threat to government and citizens. The extreme scenario is a coup d'état.

Democratic states control their armed forces through a variety of legal, executive and parliamentary mechanisms. The governing principle is civil supremacy over the armed forces. In other words, the military is subordinate and accountable to the elected and duly appointed civilian bodies. In countries like South Africa which have undergone a transition from authoritarian rule, the formation and consolidation of democracy are scarcely possible if soldiers do not accept this formal arrangement.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of May 1996 embraces the principle of civil supremacy by stipulating a clear hierarchy of authority on defence matters. The Chief of the SANDF enjoys executive military command of the armed forces; this command is exercised according to the directions of the Minister of Defence and subject to the authority of the President (as Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Force); and the minister is in turn accountable to cabinet and parliament.

Parliament has a range of formal powers in respect of military affairs. It formulates, amends and ratifies defence legislation; it approves the defence budget; and it reviews, and may overturn, a decision by the President to deploy the SANDF. The parliamentary defence committee has powers of investigation, recommendation and supervision over the armed forces.

During the apartheid era, most of the functions of the Department of Defence were performed by the SADF. The Defence Amendment Act of 1995 establishes a new, civilian Defence Secretariat. The White Paper states that two guidelines will be used to determine the respective roles of this body and defence headquarters: first, civilians for-
mulate policy and the military executes policy; and second, civilians are responsible for the political dimensions of defence. This breakdown does not prevent officers from contributing to policy formulation on the basis of their functional expertise (Department of Defence, 1996: 3(26)).

The White Paper notes further that the Secretary for Defence will perform such duties and functions as may be necessary for democratic and civilian management of the defence function and to enhance parliamentary and ministerial control over the SANDF. To this end, the Secretary will monitor compliance with directions issued to the Chief of the SANDF by the President or the Minister (3(24)).

Whereas in democratic societies the pinnacle of the hierarchy in civil-military relations is the law, in authoritarian states the armed forces typically stand above the law. At the height of resistance to apartheid in the mid-1980s, for example, state of emergency regulations granted security personnel indemnity from civil and criminal prosecution for any act done in good faith; official tolerance of misconduct by these personnel led a local newspaper to assert that the term law enforcement officer no longer applies to the security forces and their government (Nathan, 1989a:75).

In contrast, the new Constitution provides that no Act of parliament authorising the declaration of a state of emergency, and no legislation enacted or other action taken in consequence of such declaration, may permit or authorise the indemnification of the state or any person in respect of any unlawful act (Section 37(5)(a)).

The chapter on security in the Constitution is at pains to emphasise the rule of law: the security services must act, and must teach and require their members to act, in accordance with the Constitution and the law, including customary international law (Section 199(5)); no member of any security service may obey a manifestly illegal command (Section 199(6)); and the primary object of the defence force is to defend and protect the Republic, in accordance with the Constitution and the principles of international law regulating the use of force (Section 200(2)).

The White Paper expands on the requirement that soldiers must be taught to act in accordance with the Constitution. To promote awareness and respect among military personnel for the core values of a democratic South Africa, the Minister will oversee the design and implementation of a civic education programme on defence in a democracy (Department of Defence, 1996: 3(35-6)). The programme will cover the following subjects: the key elements of the political process in a democracy; the constitutional provisions on fundamental rights and defence; the significance of the Constitution as supreme law; the principles of democratic civil-military relations; international law on armed conflict; and respect for multicultural diversity and gender equality (3(37)). During 1996, a ministerial task group prepared
Curricula on these topics for presentation in the defence force in 1997.

The programme will be integrated into all aspects of military education and training, applied to the military context through lectures, simulated exercises and case studies, and oriented towards the translation of taught values into lived values. The Minister recognises that the programme will have no value if misconduct is in any way sanctioned by the military or civilian authority. The institutional culture of the SANDF will only be imbued with respect for human rights and the rule of law if its members are subject to disciplinary action in the event of abuses (3(39; 40)).

Finally, government appreciates that parliamentary oversight would be frustrated or rendered ineffectual in the absence of transparency on defence matters.

A measure of secrecy will undoubtedly be necessary in order to safeguard national security interests, the lives of military personnel and the integrity of military operations. However, the governing constitutional principle is freedom of information. Exceptions to this principle will be limited, specific and justifiable in a democratic society, and will be dealt with in legislation (3(7)).

The relationship between policy and practice

The previous discussion explored five themes of the White Paper with the view to illustrating the anti-militarist character of South Africa’s new policy on security and defence. An obvious question arises from this exercise: To what extent has the policy been realised in practice?

The conduct of government invariably diverges from formal policy. This may be due to expedience on the part of Ministers who pursue interests at the expense of declared norms and values. It may also be due to opposition from civil servants, particularly where major policy reforms follow a transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. If state employees of the former regime retain their posts, they will inevitably resist change, whether for reasons of habit or conviction.

These conditions prevail in South Africa in all areas of public life. In the defence arena, the gap between policy and practice is evident especially in relation to transparency; affirmative action for women and black soldiers; the return of SANDF-controlled land to communities which were dispossessed under apartheid; and arms exports.

The White Paper on Defence provides that South Africa will not export armaments to countries which systematically violate human rights and fundamental freedoms; and it will avoid arms transfers which are likely to contribute to the escalation of regional conflicts and regional instability, and negatively influence the balance of power (8(16; 17)). Yet government has sold, or indicated a willingness to sell, military equipment to Rwanda, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Malaysia, Congo and Indonesia.
THE ROOIVALK HELICOPTER

Gunvant Govindjee

The Rooivalk order is at odds with the SANDF’s professed defensive posture and the aim of scrapping offensive weapons. It is a legacy of apartheid that will place an unnecessary burden on scarce financial resources. Like the corvettes, it is a project conceived in the apartheid era and brought to fruition in the democratic era. However, unlike the corvettes, no arguments can be made for the Rooivalk assuming secondary functions such as search-and-rescue or conservation. The Rooivalk is an attack helicopter only useful in war. At a cost of R876-million for 12 helicopters, this is a diversion of scarce resources that could be better spent on meeting basic needs. Furthermore, in the context of a shrinking international arms market and competition from other manufacturers of attack helicopters, it is doubtful whether the Rooivalk will find substantial export markets.

The Rooivalk is based on the French AS 330 Puma. It is a helicopter designed for attack with a weapons system consisting of a chin-mounted cannon turret that can be armed with four hundred 20 mm rounds; eight ZT-35, laser-guided anti-tank missiles; and four V3C Darter infrared homing air-to-air missiles.

During the intensification of the Angolan war in the early 1980s, the SADF identified the need for an attack helicopter. The French, who had historically supplied helicopters, were not prepared to break the United Nations arms embargo against South Africa. Armscor therefore decided to produce its own attack helicopter. The project was driven by strategic considerations rather than budgetary constraints. A total of R1,7 billion was spent on research and development costs (Sunday Independent, 28 April 1996).

With the end of South Africa’s military involvement in Angola, and subsequent defence cuts, the Rooivalk programme was temporarily halted. However, reported export interest and discussions with possible development partners led to the revival of the programme as a venture predominantly funded by Atlas Aviation (now renamed Denel Aviation).

By the beginning of 1996, despite its display at international air shows in Dubai and Malaysia, and an aggressive marketing campaign costing millions of rands, no overseas orders had been received. The arms industry therefore lobbied extensively for the South African Air Force (SAAF) to buy 12 Rooivalk helicopters at a cost of R876 million to give the aircraft a semblance of prestige and to promote its marketability overseas. The first delivery to the air force is due in 1998 and the last in 2001.

It is unclear why South Africa needs to purchase the Rooivalk given that there is no foreseeable military threat and that it cannot be used for secondary functions. The Chief of the SAAF, Lieutenant-General James Kriel, initially opposed the order because he did not deem the Rooivalk essential in view of more pressing priorities such as the replacement of the Impala jet trainers and Alouette helicopters. General Kriel is reported to have held the view that the Rooivalk will send an unnecessarily aggressive message if used either inside South Africa or externally (Sunday Independent, 28 April 1996). Major-General Ian Khama, chief of the Botswanan defence force, has already used the Rooivalk deal as justification for increased
spending on tanks and armoured cars. There have been questions from a military perspective whether it makes sense to invest vast sums in single weapon systems given the vulnerability of helicopters to ground fire, evidenced in Afghanistan with the Hind helicopter (Macksey & Woodhouse, 1992:153).

For the South African taxpayer, the Rooivalk will be costly. Added to the purchase cost of R73 million for each helicopter are maintenance and flying costs. Pilot training is expected to cost more than R5 million per pilot. Critics of the project have described it as Mossgas with rotary wings (Sunday Independent, 28 April 1996).

One of the key arguments in favour of this project is that the Rooivalk will generate foreign exchange and create jobs. However, although more than 50 South African companies will be involved, Denel has admitted that almost 40 per cent of the project will be manufactured overseas. Denel claims that the Rooivalk programme will generate 70 000 jobs, but others have disputed this, arguing that less than a few hundred jobs will be created and translate into a cost of more than R1 million a job (Sunday Independent, 28 April 1996).

It is not clear whether there is an overseas market for the Rooivalk in the context of a shrinking arms market and competition from other attack helicopter manufacturers. The Rooivalk faces competition from the Russian Hind, the Franco-German Tiger and the United States Apache. Unlike the Rooivalk, the performance of these helicopters has been battle-tested. There has been interest in the Rooivalk from Malaysia. In December 1995, Denel signed a memorandum of understanding with Malaysia s Airod Company to manufacture and market the Rooivalk jointly. However, it has been reported that the United States has exerted pressure on Malaysia to rescind the agreement so that it can sell its Apache helicopters (The Star, 11 October 1996). Should other states, especially those in the Middle East with close ties to the United States, show an interest in buying the Rooivalk, it is likely that they will face similar if not stronger pressure.
In terms of civil-military relations, institutional transformation has been retarded by a number of factors. The transfer of functions from military headquarters to the Defence Secretariat has been slow and fractious; the Secretariat is staffed largely by military officers; the leadership of the SANDF is dominated by former SADF personnel; and the Minister, known for his hawkish views, is accused of being led by his generals.

Notwithstanding these problems, it would be overstating the case to suggest that the White Paper is little more than a declaration of good intentions. Tangible progress has been made towards implementing the principles and strategies outlined earlier. The achievements to date may fall short of some normative ideal, but they are substantial when compared with the militarisation of the past.

The current agenda of the anti-militarist lobby is an interesting indication of progress. In the mid-1980s, activists and academics focused on the militarisation of national policy, the state and civil society through the doctrine of Total Strategy, the National Security Management System, the deployment of troops in black townships, school cadets and compulsory conscription. A decade later, the focus has narrowed to the ethical and socio-economic dimensions of the defence budget; the armaments industry; arms transfers; the production and export of land-mines; and demobilisation.

The issue of greatest public concern is arguably the proposed purchase of major weapons systems like corvettes, submarines and attack helicopters. While the Minister insists that such acquisition is necessary to replace obsolete equipment and maintain core defence capabilities, others believe that the systems are extravagant in the light of fiscal constraints and the poverty of the majority of citizens.

Given the conflicting interests and perspectives on defence and development, the debate around guns versus butter is unlikely to be resolved. There are no objective criteria for determining how much is enough. Prior to 1994, anti-militarists proposed that defence spending should not exceed 2 per cent of GDP, but they changed their minds once spending dropped to 1.8 per cent of GDP. The SANDF’s stance on the proposal has similarly changed, in the opposite direction.

Despite the subjective nature of this debate, the key quantitative indicators confirm significant downsizing. Between 1989 and 1996 the defence budget was reduced by 51 per cent in real terms, the capital budget declined by 85 per cent, and military spending as a percentage of total government expenditure fell from 15.3 per cent to 5.8 per cent.1 Following the integration of armies and an envisaged process of demobilisation and rationalisation, the number of active military personnel is expected to stabilise at 75 000 (The Star, 17 August 1995), down from 106 400 in 1985 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996:311).

1. These figures were supplied by Peter Batchelor, senior researcher at the Centre for Conflict Resolution, University of Cape Town.
Another sign of progress is the changing nature of public discourse on military matters. In the 1980s, opposition to militarisation was regarded as treasonous; activists were vilified and imprisoned, and their meetings and publications were often banned (Nathan, 1989b). Today, criticism of defence policy is not only legitimate but frequently effective. Public pressure played no small part in cabinet's decisions to suspend the purchase of corvettes in June 1995; to ban anti-personnel land-mines in February 1997; and to cancel an arms sales contract with Rwanda in November 1996.

More striking still is the participatory nature of the process of defence policy formulation, once the preserve of military officers. In June 1995, the Minister published the first draft of the White Paper on Defence with an invitation to parliament and the public to comment thereon. The subsequent draft incorporated proposals from political parties, non-governmental organisations, academics and the public. A further three drafts were produced, prior to finalisation in May 1996, to accommodate the views of the parliamentary defence committee.

In conclusion, South Africa has become considerably less militarised since 1989, largely as a result of the improved national and regional security environments following the end of apartheid and the Cold War. This tendency has been reinforced by the adoption of an anti-militarist paradigm for understanding and managing the security and defence functions of government.
The controversy over the proposed corvette deal sharply highlighted the guns versus butter debate. In 1996, there was public outrage at the proposal of spending R1.6-billion on four corvettes. Street demonstrations in front of parliament demanded houses before corvettes. Teachers and nurses demanded salary increases before warships. In June 1995, the Minister of Defence, Joe Modise, announced that the purchase had been delayed because of budget constraints and the lack of national consensus (The Argus, 22 June 1995).

South African admirals complained about the neglect of the navy during the P. W. Botha era and budgetary cuts. The navy argued that their three French-built Daphne submarines and nine Israeli-designed strikecraft were obsolete and unsuitable for South African maritime conditions. Naval officers reasoned that new frigates were critical to the navy's survival.

In June 1993, Armscor called for tenders from 40 naval shipyards around the world. When the United Nations arms embargo was revoked, it announced a shortlist of five shipyards in Denmark, Germany, France, Britain and Spain.

The justification for purchasing corvettes rested on two arguments. First, that corvettes are essential for the defence of South Africa's ports, coastline and strategic sea route in times of conflict; and second, that in times of peace their job would be to guard South Africa against drug- and gun-runners, protect sea fisheries and other marine resources against plunderers, and in pollution control (Deputy Minister Kasrils, cited in Cape Times, 25 October 1994). The controversy over Spanish poaching of Canadian fishing resources provided a useful backdrop for this argument.

In terms of the first argument, the ministry failed to convince the public on the matter of perceived enemies. Deputy Minister Kasrils argued that our immediate enemy is unpreparedness (Mail & Guardian, 12-18 May 1995).

In terms of the second argument of peace-time use there was little critical debate on whether coastguard functions are best performed by the navy and the type of equipment best suited to this role. Some environmentalists argued that purchasing satellite systems, smaller strikecraft, helicopters and other equipment would be more suitable than corvettes to carry out coastguard functions. The Department of Sea Fisheries suggested that five, medium-sized fast patrol boats, costing one-tenth of the corvettes, would adequately protect South Africa's marine resources (The Argus, 28 April 1995). Marine conservationists also pointed out that the key poaching problem in South African waters was near-shore poaching by South Africans a matter about which corvettes could do nothing.

The Deputy Minister highlighted that one of the major causes of war is conflict over scarce resources and that the corvettes could prevent this from arising. He seemed to overlook the contradiction that pouring resources into preparation for war means that there are fewer resources for meeting basic needs, and that unmet needs potentially heighten social conflict.

Proponents of the deal argued that, because of counter-trade offers, the deal was pure butter. The counter-trade proposals gave the impression that the
corvettes would be cost-free, and generate new jobs and export opportunities. For example, the Spanish promised to invest R4 billion, to create 20 000 jobs, to double their coal purchases, and to build massive new fish-processing factories along the coasts to empower disadvantaged communities. The fishing industry countered that there are not enough fish in South African waters to supply the proposed factories, which, if built, would result in the collapse and closure of existing industry (personal communication with Eckart Kramer, chairperson of the Deep Sea Trawlers Association, June 1995). The British offered a R3,2 billion counter-trade package which included investing R1,5 billion in power stations to generate low-cost electricity. Yet it is known that South Africa currently has an electricity-generation overcapacity and that there is no need for additional capacity. Aspects of the British counter-trade deal were problematic. The Yarrow shipyard is a wholly owned subsidiary of Britain’s largest armaments contractor, General Electric Corporation (GEC). A R500 million long-term partnership with Kentron was proposed. Kentron, a subsidiary of Denel, supplies close-range missiles, remotely piloted aircraft and avionics systems to the military market. Much of Kentron’s technology is suspected to have been pirated or stolen from the United States, where Armscor, Kentron and other South African companies were indicted on 67 counts of conspiracy, fraud, money laundering and tax evasion. Further provisions suggested that GEC would co-opt South Africa into manufacturing British weapons and components under licence for export to politically sensitive regions such as the Middle East and Indonesia.

There was insufficient public information, debate and assessment of these offers. Armscor initially failed to consult the ministers responsible for the RDP, Trade and Industry, and Finance. On 9 May 1996, a briefing of parliament’s defence committee on tendering for the corvette programme was closed to the media at the request of the defence force and Armscor. There were few details on how counter-trade would work.

At the time of writing, it seems that the navy’s request will be granted and that South Africa will spend almost R2 billion on warships that are unlikely to be used for the purpose for which they are designed: to fight war. In the context of limited resources, choices have to be made about their allocation. Despite extensive arguments for the corvettes, many remain unconvinced that spending R1,69 billion in the context of no enemy and dire social needs is an appropriate choice.