

# DECISIONS, DECISIONS

## South Africa's foray into regional peace operations



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### INTRODUCTION

The conditions that gave rise to the civil wars of the past decade, and those that resulted from them, called for a more holistic approach to intervention that went beyond military and security priorities to address issues of governance, legitimacy, political and social inclusiveness, and economic equity. It has been widely argued that international assistance to war-torn societies will have to extend way beyond the initial intervention if such issues are to be resolved and the host society made resilient to new rounds of violent conflict.

On the other hand, events in Somalia and Rwanda during the early 1990s, and the more recent crises in West Africa and the Great Lakes region, illustrate that there is also an urgent and continuing need for developing effective methods for rapid and effective intervention in African conflicts. Indeed, after a thorough analysis of the lessons from multi-functional peacekeeping during the 1990s, a UN panel of experts recently declared that "the United Nations has bitterly and repeatedly discovered over the last decade, [that] no amount of good intentions can substitute for the fundamental ability to project credible force if complex peacekeeping, in particular, is to succeed."<sup>1</sup>

A number of other 'lessons learnt' seminars conducted in the wake of the complex peacekeeping interventions of the 1990s also reflect consensus on one absolutely key prerequisite for mission success: the need for a realistic and well-defined mandate, supported by the necessary means or resources for its accomplishment. It is in this new enlightened era of peacekeeping that South Africa has declared itself willing to contribute to peace operations under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU, formerly the OAU), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, recognising the need for a comprehensive approach to

peace missions, South Africa acknowledges the value of providing military, police and civilian assistance for common international efforts to keep the peace when properly authorised by international and domestic authorities to do so.

There are currently about 900 South African servicemen and servicewomen deployed on peace missions. Another 1,268 will be leaving shortly to meet the requirements of the next phase (Phase III) of the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). An as yet unspecified additional amount will be deployed to Burundi under the auspices of the AU; probably no less than a company of 200. While the White Paper on South African Participation in Peace Missions provides comprehensive policy guidelines for deployment, after four years of experience in peace missions it is time to update the document. This assessment was recently echoed by a member of the Department of Defence (DoD) who stated that while the paper is a "...progressive document...it had aged."<sup>3</sup> In this context, lessons learnt must lead to the refinement of current practices and procedures, rather than policy changes. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) should obviously take the lead in such a process, but the

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inclusion of all responsible government institutions would ensure that they share a common understanding of the value and challenges involved in participating in any particular mission. Given the envisaged deepening of the military's commitment to peace operations, the government must decide where best to place its resources; which missions hold a clear national and foreign policy interest; and which missions have a strong chance of success.

Since the decision regarding whether or not to participate is a political and foreign policy one, any decision to deploy on a peace mission must be made via an established, co-ordinated structure. While, in theory, such a structure does exist, in practice, very little emphasis is placed on consultation and co-

ordination between responsible government institutions. Government departments, in particular foreign affairs and defence, must scrupulously enforce inter-agency co-operation with respect to information sharing and joint strategic planning, from early warning through to conflict management and peace-building. However, this will entail more than making an effort at the operational level; it will require buy-in at the political and strategic levels.

This paper first provides a brief overview of the most salient aspects of the White Paper on Peace Missions and then examines recent deployments of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in a peace support role, with specific reference to the decision-making process. The aim is to measure past practice against the policy guidelines for such deployment, and to suggest ways to close the gaps between policy and practice.

### WHAT THE WHITE PAPER SAYS ABOUT PEACE MISSIONS

The adoption by Parliament of the White Paper on South African Participation in Peace Missions in October 1999 represented the culmination of nearly two years of consultative deliberations that informed the drafting of the policy document. The process of formulating the policy guidelines was open, and drafts of the White Paper were made available to diplomats who studied the document with great interest. South Africa's regional partners were generally impressed by the guidelines, and took note of the inclusive and collaborative approach.

The White Paper recognises that the changing security environment requires a multi-disciplinary approach to conflict resolution, incorporating the "political, economic, social, cultural and personal security...[and] that appropriate responses...must include a focus on effective governance, robust democracies and ongoing economic and social development."<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, it was agreed that "Contemporary peace missions require a combination of political, military police, and civilian elements, and South Africa may contribute to one, more or all of these elements in one or more missions."<sup>5</sup> In this context, the SANDF is tasked to "formalise its minimum potential contribution to international peace missions through an appropriate readiness system".<sup>6</sup> With respect to the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Safety and Security is mandated to create a suitable readiness system including a "standby roster, selection procedures, and appropriate training opportunities."<sup>7</sup> On civilian experts, the White Paper outlines the need for a civilian standby roster that will firm up the nature and scope of the potential contribution of South African citizens as experts on missions.

With no short-term solutions or 'quick fixes' for many of the conflicts on the continent, South Africa will have

to carefully choose which resources to deploy, where these resources are most required, and which environment best reflects its national interests. This will allow not only for a multi-disciplinary approach, but also for contributions to be spread across different fields and areas of expertise, thus splitting the burden across various government departments.

The White Paper clearly states that any decision to participate in a peace mission is a shared responsibility and should only be taken after extensive interdepartmental consultation led by the DFA.

This principle dictates that participation in peace missions is never the prerogative of one state department or one set of actors alone. The key players in authorising such participation are Parliament, the President's Office, the Department of Foreign Affairs, diverse civilian state departments, the Department of Defence, and the intelligence community...the Department of Foreign Affairs will be the lead department in co-ordinating such participation.<sup>8</sup>

The role of the Legislature is also stressed, particularly in relation to the need for public support for South African deployments in peace operations, where a public information function for the Presidency is also envisaged: "Parliament plays a critical role in securing approval for South African participation in international peace missions...Parliament must be responsive to the opinions of the broad electorate"<sup>9</sup> In this context, the White Paper also highlights the important role of civil society, and states that Parliament must be informed of all decisions related to peace mission deployments as, according to the paper, the final decision rests with Parliament.

In all cases, in terms of the Constitution, Parliament is empowered to review the President's decision regarding such deployment. Prior to tabling a proposal in parliament for ratifying the participation of a South African military contingent in a particular peace support operation The President will promptly and in appropriate detail inform Parliament...as to the reasons for the employment; the place where the force is to be employed; the number of persons involved; and the expected duration of the employment.<sup>10</sup>

Procedurally, the White Paper states that: "[I]n terms of the Constitution...[t]he President, acting on advice from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence, will decide in principle whether or not to authorise the deployment of the required military forces." It continues: "This should be done on the basis of a Cabinet memorandum jointly prepared and submitted by the minister of foreign affairs and the appropriate Ministry and/or Ministries concerned and

approved by the Cabinet.<sup>11</sup> At the national level, there are thus a number of constitutional and top-level procedural arrangements to be followed, which involve informal and formal information exchanges, diplomatic notes, cabinet memoranda, presidential minutes and reports to Parliament. Thus, decisions on peace missions involve the executive, the legislature, and several state departments.

The White Paper therefore recommends the establishment of a peace mission co-ordinating office within the Department of Foreign Affairs. Cabinet has approved the creation of such a body, called the National Office for the Co-ordination of Peace Missions (NOCPM), which is to act as the national contact point for all matters relating to South Africa's participation in peace missions. To date, however, decisions continue to be taken at the level of the Presidency with little or no prior consultation or input from other levels of government, state departments, civil society or Parliament. This has led to inter-departmental confusion, poor pre-deployment planning and preparation, media criticism, and a general lack of public enthusiasm for South African participation in peace missions.

#### **PRE-WHITE PAPER DECISION-MAKING: SADC OPERATIONS IN DRC AND LESOTHO**

The regional response to the war that resurfaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in August 1998 highlights past practices of engaging in missions with confused mandates decided via a convoluted decision-making process at the highest level. While the then-president of SA and chairman of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Nelson Mandela, stressed the need for dialogue and a negotiated settlement to the conflict, the appointed chairman of the SADC Organ, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, was quick to send his military force to defend rebel leader Laurent Kabila's regime. Moreover, as Angola was at the time fighting its own rebels on the DRC's territory, it soon followed Zimbabwe's example, as did neighbouring Namibia. The intervention of these three SADC states in the affairs of a fourth member state was endorsed, *post-facto*, at a meeting of SADC defence ministers in Harare on 18 August 1998.

In the wake of the Harare meeting of defence ministers, Mugabe claimed that the 14 countries belonging to SADC had come to a 'unanimous' decision to help Kabila, instead of President Mobutu Sese Seko. Mandela publicly reprimanded Mugabe for his pre-emptive decision, and called upon SADC countries to strive for a peaceful settlement. An emergency summit of SADC leaders was convened in Pretoria on 23 August 1998. In this context, the

leaders present decided to confirm their recognition of the legitimacy of the DRC government and called for an immediate ceasefire, to be followed by political dialogue on a peaceful settlement to the crisis.

On 3 September, barely two weeks later, President Mandela surprised observers by announcing at a press conference that SADC had unanimously supported the military intervention by its member states in the DRC.<sup>12</sup> At the 18<sup>th</sup> SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Mauritius on 13 and 14 September 1998, the leaders "welcomed initiatives by SADC and its Member States intended to assist in the restoration of peace, security and stability in DRC, in particular the Victoria Falls and Pretoria initiatives." Importantly, the SADC leaders "commended the Governments of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe for timeously providing troops to assist the Government and people of the DRC".<sup>13</sup>

Shortly afterwards, military forces from at least 10 countries and three sub-regions of Africa began mobilising for battle in the eastern DRC.<sup>14</sup> However, South African media attention was soon diverted from the potential horrors of an imminent inter-regional armed conflagration by another SADC attempt at conflict resolution. During the Mauritius summit, President Mandela also asked Mozambican President, Joaquim Chissano, to mediate further in the Lesotho unrest.<sup>15</sup>

On 22 September 1998, a 600-strong South African military task force entered Lesotho to assist the government in restoring law and order following election-related unrest. Although official SANDF communications stressed that this was a combined military task force, consisting of elements of the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) and the SANDF, it was not until nightfall on that day that about 200 BDF troops arrived in Maseru. This was after the SANDF had been engaged throughout the day in combat operations against the Royal Lesotho Defence Force (RLDF).<sup>16</sup> Amidst the chaos, unruly civilians took to the streets of Maseru in an orgy of looting and arson, which the intervening troops could do little to stop.

With downtown Maseru in ruins, the South African Government insisted that the military intervention was not an invasion, but rather a response to a written invitation by Lesotho's Prime Minister and Head of Government, Pakalitha Mosisili. The invitation to send troops was allegedly also extended to Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The South African government was also at pains to insist that the intervention was requested by Lesotho in accordance with SADC agreements, and was thus undertaken under the auspices of SADC.<sup>17</sup> It is hard to imagine how this was translated into a SADC mandate for a

Decisions on peace missions involve the executive, the legislature, and several state departments.

peace operation that resembled a military invasion and seven-month occupation of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

A meeting between South Africa's Safety and Security Minister, Sydney Mufamadi, and 'representatives' from Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe on 21 September 1998 had reportedly "confirmed the SADC mandate that action, including military intervention, would be taken in the event of a coup in Lesotho".<sup>18</sup> While the situation in Lesotho may have approximated a coup or imminent coup, the only authoritative SADC pronouncement on the situation had been the SADC Summit's expression of concern "at the civil disturbances and loss of life following the recent elections in Lesotho", and of praise for the "mediation initiative led by the South African Government, which resulted in the setting up of a SADC Committee of Experts to investigate the validity or otherwise of allegations that the elections were fraudulent."<sup>19</sup>

### LESSONS LEARNT FROM OPERATION BOLEAS

As far as Operation Boleas in Lesotho is concerned, the SANDF claimed that the forces were assigned with a limited mandate, which was to conduct a military intervention operation to establish control over the border between South Africa and Lesotho, to protect South African assets and to stabilise Maseru in order to create a safe environment in which Lesotho's problems could be negotiated.<sup>20</sup> In particular, the mission of the Combined Task Force was "to intervene militarily in Lesotho to prevent any further anarchy and to create a stable environment for the restoration of law and order".<sup>21</sup> The concept of operations was described as "[t]he deployment of forces in order to locate and identify destabilisers and destabiliser resources [*sic*], to disarm and contain them and to strike where applicable with the necessary force to eliminate the threat."<sup>22</sup> The envisaged state of affairs was a stable environment in Lesotho, including the restoration of law and order to enable negotiations to take place between the political parties in Lesotho.<sup>23</sup>

The undertaking was labelled as a 'SADC force' after a series of phone calls between the relevant heads of state.<sup>24</sup> The intervention was immediately questioned, and some observers claimed that the operation went beyond precedent in international law. The only argument which seemed to have clear legal precedence was that South Africa had intervened to protect certain South African interests, such as the Katse Dam water scheme.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, this implies that a case of propping up a shaky regime that was unable to represent Lesotho could not be regarded as a proper response in terms of international law.<sup>26</sup> It was further pointed out that SADC had no clear guidelines

regarding military responses to internal conflicts in SADC member countries.<sup>27</sup>

The SANDF maintained that there was not only a proper SADC mandate, but also a virtual moral obligation on behalf of South Africa and Botswana to intervene in Lesotho.<sup>28</sup> The decision was based on, and justified by, the fact that SADC was directly approached by the prime minister of Lesotho, Mr Pakalitha Mosisili, who requested intervention;<sup>29</sup> that the intervention was based on agreements reached in SADC; that all attempts at peacefully resolving the dispute had failed; and that South Africa had intervened to protect certain South African interests such as the Katse Dam water scheme. It was also stated that the Lesotho government was democratically elected (despite certain irregularities during the election process) and that it was increasingly reliant upon South Africa to play a role in regional peacekeeping efforts.<sup>30</sup> It was further suggested that the decision to intervene had signalled to ambitious elements in the military forces in the region that the political aspirations of any military faction in a SADC member state would not be tolerated, and added that South Africa's commitment to this policy was also a commitment to development in the region.<sup>31</sup>

Operation Boleas was conducted in the full glare of the media, and reporters played a pivotal role in interpreting news and events surrounding the operation. In fact, the South African government blamed the media for their assessment of the Lesotho intervention and alleged that the media were guilty of manipulating the truth. The SANDF publicly stated that the 'psychological and media war' had been lost "at all levels".<sup>32</sup> As regards to media liaison, the SANDF admitted that there was a lack of clear strategic guidelines; that there was no cohesive corporate communication strategy; and that external communication tended to be reactive rather than proactive.<sup>33</sup> In his dealings with the media, the force commander, Colonel Robbie Hartsliet, also admitted that the South African political leadership was hard pressed to explain properly the objectives of the mission. He noted that better communication could have tempered some of the reporters' criticism and negative reflections.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the challenges related to communications, much of the public criticism of the intervention revolved around the decision-making process itself, rather than the conduct of operations. The misapprehension and unease was based on the fact that the (then) minister of safety and security, Sydney Mufamadi, instead of the (former) minister of foreign affairs, Alfred Nzo, was given the task of dealing with the turmoil in Lesotho. Similarly, the fact that Acting President Mangosuthu Buthelezi, in the absence of

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(former) President Nelson Mandela and (then) Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, took the decision to intervene, was likewise questioned and widely criticised.<sup>35</sup> This was aggravated by the fact that a number of informal allegations had been made by prominent government representatives claiming that they were either not briefed or inadequately informed of the plans for the Lesotho intervention. Some parliamentarians and the chairs of key parliamentary committees were similarly angered by their exclusion from the decision-making process.<sup>36</sup> Certain reporters also maintained that a military solution was opted for despite the fact that efforts by the South African government to find a negotiated political settlement in Lesotho had not been fully exhausted.<sup>37</sup> Such claims were especially roused by the opposition parties in Lesotho, who assertively whipped up suspicion about the motives for the intervention.<sup>38</sup>

From a narrow military perspective, Operation Boleas was arguably a success as the military objectives of the mandate were accomplished. The operation succeeded in stabilising the security situation in Lesotho, which enabled the political parties to resume negotiations on the issue of governance. Furthermore, the operation safeguarded South Africa's interests and succeeded in securing strategic installations from being taken over or destroyed, although it did not succeed in preventing and controlling the destruction and looting of property in central Maseru.

Critics of Boleas may therefore be silenced with the argument that 'the ends justified the means', but this would not be possible in a mission that fails or is perceived to fail, or which results in more serious loss of life than that incurred by the SANDF in Lesotho.

#### **DECISION-MAKING IN CURRENT OPERATIONS: BURUNDI AND THE DRC**

The two most recent SANDF peacekeeping deployments to Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) illustrate the decision-making process after the release of the White Paper on Peace Missions. While moderate success from the Lesotho operation did not dampen the South African commitment to maintain international peace and security on the continent, it did little to ensure that mandated co-ordination took place to ensure that missions were selected based on clearly defined foreign policy priorities. The White Paper highlights that 'the level and size of South African contribution to any particular peace mission will depend on how closely the mission relates to our national interests'.<sup>39</sup> As South Africa began to test the waters with modest deployments to the UN Mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea (UNMEE), the Organisation of African Unity Liaison Mission for Ethiopia/Eritrea (OLMEE)<sup>40</sup>, and the UN

Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), the deployment of the first formed unit of South African soldiers took place in support of the ceasefire agreement in Burundi.

While the first deployment to Burundi was a collaborative effort between government officials, such a process has not been the standard practice for all peace mission deployments. For example, the recent political decision to deploy additional military commitments to Burundi was taken without any prior consultation with relevant government institutions. During this time, a similar sized deployment for MONUC was also agreed upon. In this case, however, consultation was undertaken between various departments. Thus, two completely separate tracks were used to decide whether national interests converged with available military resources and capacities. Rather than decide which mission—MONUC or Burundi—fit more closely with South Africa's foreign policy interests, it was decided to deploy to both missions at considerable cost to an over-stretched SANDF. Clearly, the decision-making process for participation in the DRC and the first Burundi deployment are better models for future South African decision-making. The government cannot rely on the SANDF's capacity to deploy anywhere at any time, and must therefore weigh the strategic issues around the relationship against likely costs and prospective gains.

Admittedly, the political stakes and strategic interests invested in certain missions are, in and of themselves, a *raison d'être* to circumvent any established co-ordinating process. For example, there exist several strategic interests underpinning the deployment to Burundi, as opposed to the DRC. These interests include investments made by former South African President Nelson Mandela, who brokered the initial power-sharing agreement, and by Deputy President Zuma, who is the current facilitator of peace process. Additionally, as current chair of the AU, President Mbeki, played a key role in the decision to deploy the AU-led mission to Burundi. In this context, the pressure to remain engaged and committed by dedicating resources in support of the mission in Burundi resulted in a commitment to deploy the SANDF to the AU-led mission prior to the undertaking of any consultative process. Strong political concerns, however, should not allow one department or office to make a final decision prior to a full and transparent debate.

#### **The AU mission in Burundi**

The SANDF first deployed troops to Burundi in November of 2001 to provide a small VIP close protection force for parliamentarians, while the rest of

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the deployed battalion served as support for the force in case of renewed hostilities.<sup>41</sup> While the process for this deployment worked well, there was no mechanism in place to enable a periodic reassessment of the 'value-added' of the resources deployed. This would have been essential for the Burundi mission as military planners have had to reduce timelines for troop rotation from six<sup>42</sup> to four months. As SANDF Chief General Nyanda stated: "For Burundi, with greater volatility, coupled with an underdeveloped infrastructure leading to boredom, we have found the best duration to be four months."<sup>43</sup> Therefore, unless there remains a clear value, and compelling reasons for South Africa to maintain 700 troops in the mission area, the numbers could and should have been reassessed (and potentially decreased) at the time of each rotation.

South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma recently announced a second deployment of SANDF forces to Burundi, under the aegis of the African Union (AU). As explained earlier, strong political motives underpinned the original decision to deploy to Burundi, motives that sparked the resolve for commitment of military resources prior to any consultation among relevant institutions. The most recent AU Communiqué on the deployment of the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB)<sup>44</sup> states that the mission is mandated to, amongst other things, oversee the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreements. The biggest operational challenge will be to meet the mandate requirement for AMIB to: "Secure identified assembly and disengagement areas [and] facilitate safe passage for the Parties during planned movements to designated assembly areas."<sup>45</sup>

While AMIB is authorised and deployed under the auspices of the AU, South Africa played a key role in drafting the mandate and will have to carry the burden of responsibility for the successful implementation thereof. According to the mandate:

The mission will be composed of military and limited civilian components under a Head of Mission established under the auspices of the African Union (AU). The Peacekeeping Force shall comprise forces from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, (1 x Battalion + 2 additional Companies and other elements); The Republic of Mozambique, (1 x Strengthened Company + other elements); The Republic of South Africa, (1 x Battalion + other elements). The Republic of South Africa, will appoint the Force Commander, while Ethiopia, will appoint the Deputy Force Commander.

South Africa is thus providing the Force Commander (Major General Siphso Binda) and is designated as lead nation for the mission. This implies a unique responsibility for the conduct of the mission and its ultimate success or failure, because the AU is forced to delegate those functions that would normally be covered by the UN DPKO to South Africa (implicitly, to SANDF Joint Operations).

The Constitutive Act of the African Union provides for the deployment of peace operations carried out with due consideration for the functions of the UN in accordance with its goals and principles. The AU's Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is responsible for co-ordinating the actions of participating states in carrying out peacekeeping operations under an AU mandate. However, the Central Organ does not have the institutional capacity to organise the military aspects of AMIB's mandate, including such things as the concept of operations, force generation, and command, control and communications. Moreover, the AU does not have sufficient financial and logistical equipment to launch, let alone monitor and sustain, a peacekeeping operation.<sup>46</sup> In fact, the AU Communiqué could only 'renew its appeal' to AU member states and the UN to provide the required financial and logistical support, and call for the creation of a special account through which voluntary contributions can be received.<sup>47</sup>

This lack of capacity, and the need for it to be provided by South Africa, is clearly reflected elsewhere in the AMIB mandate, which specifies that:

The Lead Nation in conjunction with the mandating authority is to provide guidance on financing, logistic support and sustenance of the mission. Based on the Lead Nation's guidance, a detailed concept will be developed during further planning. ... The Lead Nation will issue further Guidelines for the African Mission. These guidelines will cover inter alia, issues emanating from the mandate, concept of operations, mission structure, command and control, administration and logistics, health care, equipment requirements ... [and so on].<sup>48</sup>

South Africa has thus set itself up to take full credit for the success or failure of the mission. With continued ceasefire violations by signatory parties and the Forces for National Liberation (FNL) still outside the peace process, AMIB has a very modestly authorised strength. It can be expected that various parties will attempt to forcefully limit and impede the freedom of movement that AMIB will require, if it is to observe, monitor and verify the implementation of this (partial) ceasefire. Lessons of the past have consistently demonstrated that without firm consent from all parties, fighting will continue and troops sent to keep and/or enforce the peace can easily become part of the problem, rather than the solution. The common wisdom that has emerged from a succession of failed interventions during the 1990s is the fact that, if an intervention force is to be effective, it must be credible (and willing) and perceived as such. The credibility of the operation has, in turn, reflected the belligerent parties' assessment of the force's capability to accomplish the mission.<sup>49</sup> Recently, the Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD), one of the signatories to the ceasefire, released a statement noting that as

they had not been consulted regarding the constitution of the African mission, not only would they not consent to their presence, but the African forces would in fact be considered 'peace disruptors' in Burundi.<sup>50</sup>

There are also some concerns that the other national forces to be deployed alongside South Africa (Mozambique and Ethiopia) will not have the actual resources and capacity to provide the necessary mobility and interoperability required for a mission of this nature.

While there is a clear strategic and national incentive to participate in a regional peacekeeping mission in Burundi and to operationalise the role of the AU in peace and security, the deployment of troops, whether under the UN or the AU, must be decided according to agreed-upon procedures and with a clear understanding of the inherent risks such a mission entails. In this context, consultation between all relevant departments is essential in order to determine whether the mission, and South Africa's participation, is sustainable, whether it fits within foreign policy priorities, and what the exit criteria is to be based upon (a replacement by other forces, peace-builders, the completion of the DD&R tasks, etc). Without first identifying these conditions, the government and SANDF may have placed themselves in a very precarious position, a position that could ultimately undermine popular support at home, thus limiting future participation in peacekeeping operations.<sup>51</sup>

Consent from parties on the ground, therefore, should also be matched by consent by all responsible departments at home, and consent from the population writ large. In reality, it appears that civil servants, military planners and representatives of parliament were excluded from the decision to participate in the Burundi mission, and reportedly only learnt about it "on the television".<sup>52</sup> In a recent meeting of the Defence Joint Committee, Adv. Schmidt of the Democratic Party expressed concern over the fact that Parliament "is by-passed in peace-keeping missions", and wondered "why the procedure set out in the White Paper was not being followed."<sup>53</sup> More precisely, Mr Diale of the ANC noted that "when the Burundi mission was commissioned members only learnt of the development through the media in which case the media knew more about deployment to peace missions than Parliamentarians."<sup>54</sup> It is also the media who will know first about the successes and failures of the missions, and who will be eagerly reporting on instances of armed resistance to AMIB and any casualties sustained in the process.

### The UN mission in the DRC

The first South African deployment of 150 technical personnel to the United Nations Mission in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in April 2001 can be considered a success, or a model to be imitated, in terms of process and co-ordination. The decision-making followed a pattern that saw the initial informal request from the UN passed on to South Africa's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, which was then forwarded on to the DFA and the DoD. The former was then tasked to examine the foreign policy implications, and the latter to conduct a feasibility study. Once the DFA confirmed the national interests related to the mission, and the DoD established that the SANDF had the capacity to undertake the mission, the Minister of Defence notified the Minister of Foreign Affairs, whom both agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the SANDF deploy in support of the mission. To complete the final step in the authorisation and co-ordination process, the DFA prepared a Cabinet memo, which was presented to Cabinet. Only once approval from all responsible institutions was reached could the DFA instruct the Permanent Mission to the UN to advise the UN DPKO of South Africa's willingness to participate in the mission.

## The deployment of troops must be decided according to agreed-upon procedures

The practical experience gained with this deployment created a mechanism that enabled consultation and co-ordination between relevant departments. This facilitated decision-making when, in early 2003, a request for additional forces came through via the Permanent Mission to the UN. Although the process for deploying the first SANDF contingent to MONUC (as outlined above) was followed, it was not without its challenges: the actual request from the UN DPKO remained caught up inside the DFA for an extended period of time, causing a delay in the formal acknowledgement of intent to deploy. Thus, without an official decision, the SA Permanent Mission to the UN was unable to answer the informal UN request, hence delaying the UN's ability to prepare the SANDF for the mission. In the interim, the SANDF contingent remained in limbo at the Tempe base in Bloemfontein, waiting for confirmation to deploy to a mission they understood to have already been approved and agreed.

Informing the UN of such decisions as soon as possible is important, as the 'deployment chain of events' is only set in motion at the UN level through a series of informal approaches and informal responses. This has become standard UN practice, in order not to embarrass any country unwilling to deploy in response to a DPKO request, as well as to ensure that the UN does not officially receive a 'no' answer. Therefore, until countries have notified the UN DPKO Military Planning Service of their intention, any concept of operations for a potential mission remains just a concept until actual troops are committed. In fact, many missions remain understaffed as a result of poor participation from many member states. Moreover, while this is true for most UN missions, it is especially

acute in the African missions. To better plan and prepare for potential contribution to peace missions, the UN created a "Standby Arrangements System" in November 1995<sup>55</sup> aimed at placing the UN Secretariat in a better position to determine the resources available to meet peace mission requirements. The UNSAS calls for individual UN member states to identify the forces and other capabilities it has available, as well as the readiness of such assets for operational deployment. However, UNSAS is based on the principle that member states still retain the prerogative to decline a request to use any or all of the items listed for any particular mission. Despite the fact that the UNSAS remains largely a symbolic arrangement that does not provide an accurate indication of what is and is not available for actual missions, South Africa would do well to follow the lead of many other African states who have gained a degree of prominence at UN DPKO by signing up to the system.

The problem of soliciting timely and suitable troop contributions has plagued the UN Mission in the DRC since its inception, and it continues to do so. As the UN secretary-general noted in his June 2002 report:

A major problem facing MONUC as it prepares for the main task of phase III<sup>56</sup> is the lack of a capable force for this challenging task. The Mission's strategy depends on the creation of a climate of confidence and security in the east, for which the deployment of a robust contingent is essential. In the continuing absence of a country willing to provide a force with the necessary capacity, phase III of the Mission's deployment remains, for the present, delayed.<sup>57</sup>

South Africa's (eventual) decision to provide 1,268 additional troops to the mission was therefore a most welcome one for the UN. When considering other countries' reluctance to contribute, and indeed the delay in the South African response, it is worthwhile to highlight that MONUC is one of the most complex UN peacekeeping missions currently deployed, spanning a country 33 times larger than Sierra Leone,<sup>58</sup> but with less than half the authorised number of peacekeepers deployed in that country.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the poor roads and infrastructure in the DRC mean that air transportation, including strategic lift and helicopter units, are critical to the mission, not to mention medical evacuation facilities. These costs can only increase as the size and composition of the MONUC force progresses into the next phase of operations. Moreover, the most recent secretary-general's report on MONUC recommends the force to increase its military and police strength<sup>60</sup> to meet new tasks, including the demobilisation, disarmament, repatriation, reintegration, or resettlement (DDRRR) of

armed groups, including non-state armed elements. In sum, all these logistical and personnel costs can only increase as the MONUC force progresses into the next phase of the operation.<sup>61</sup>

The UN will consequently need to sustain two headquarters, as well as establish and support mobile cantonment sites. In the absence of a withdrawal plan for foreign forces, and aware of the lawlessness in many remote areas, the security gap that would be created in the areas to be evacuated by foreign forces is of great concern to the UN. In this context, the UN's revised concept of operations for the DRC also envisages that the *de facto* authorities in place at the time of such withdrawals continue to provide for civil administration and the maintenance of law and order until longer-term arrangements can be established. It is also recognised that local police have been neglected for years in terms of training, resources and equipment, and many have been corrupted through insufficient and irregular salaries.

The MONUC mission is obviously not one for the faint hearted. There are rumours of massacres, cannibalism and ethnic cleansing in the eastern Ituri region, compounded by recent attacks against its forces in three locations in the North Kivu Province, and anti-MONUC demonstrations accompanied by looting equipment from buildings that housed MONUC observers.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, as the UN was only successful in obtaining 4,414 of the recommended 5,537 personnel for the first two phases of MONUC, it is not necessarily a foregone conclusion that the UN will be able to reach its target of 8,700 peacekeepers required to implement the next phase of the mission mandate. Despite these concerns, however, South Africa has agreed to deploy a reinforced battalion to be based in the new forward HQ to be established in the east as a means of spearheading the DDRRR component of the mission. However, as Uganda asserts that it will withdraw from the Bunia area in the near future, South Africa may be requested to fill the void in the east, rather than spearhead the DDRRR process in Kindu, as originally planned. Recently the director responsible for budgets in the DoD took note of the enormity of the task facing the SANDF in establishing the forward HQ by stating that "South Africa would probably have to deploy an additional battalion for the MONUC operation, but did not have the funds for this."<sup>63</sup>

Notwithstanding the bleak outlook, MONUC has made significant progress on the ground. It is therefore fair to conclude that if the situation in the east is controlled, if the secretary-general is allocated sufficient resources, and with professional and well-trained troop contributors like South Africa, the military mission does have a reasonable chance of

Many missions remain understaffed as a result of poor participation from many member states



success. Importantly, the political risks of failure are far less for South Africa in MONUC than in AMIB. If MONUC fails, this will be seen as a UN failure. If there are major military setbacks (as experienced by UNAMSIL in May 2000 when some 500 peacekeepers were taken hostage), there is a chance that the UN will be able to throw significantly more weight behind MONUC, as it did to save face in its mission in Sierra Leone. However, if the military situation starts turning bad for AMIB, it will be up to South Africa to mobilise reinforcements, or to accept failure and evacuate the mission. The stakes are simply much higher in Burundi than in the DRC, hence the great need to keep decisions above-board and as transparent as possible.

### LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE BURUNDI AND DRC MISSIONS

While the words 'African solutions to African problems' remains the motto of the West—and of many Africans—this is partially based on the reluctance of most traditional peacekeepers to get engaged in multi-dimensional missions that have mandates that include or potentially include elements of peace enforcement as well as peace-building. These types of missions often require a long-term commitment and have no simple exit strategy. There is obviously no easy exit to the Burundi or MONUC mission, and the potential for mission creep and armed resistance to the peacekeepers remains very high.

With the exception of the need to establish a procedure to periodically re-evaluate the value-added and foreign policy relevance of South Africa's participation in any given peace mission, it is, as yet, too early to draw any lessons from either of these missions. With respect to the DRC deployment, while far from perfect, the experience did enable the SANDF (Joint Operations) to develop a standard concept for step-by-step deployment for UN operations and to establish a functional sustainment system to support members deployed on UN operations. The importance of the comfort and welfare of deployed personnel was soon brought home, which had an effect on the next period of deployment, for example: additional technical support staff were added, more emphasis was placed on leisure time utilisation; higher levels of preparedness were provided for personnel; and the prominence of the value of home support was realised. Lessons from the DFA, however, are not easy to define as more often than not they are informed of issues after the fact, which means that information is filtered from the top down, leaving the DFA, and the NOCPM, marginalised and out of the loop.

Closer and earlier co-ordination between the SANDF and the DFA on the one hand, and the UN and AU on the other, could also be accomplished through the deployment of military attachés (or liaisons). In fact,

many of the 90 troop-contributing UN member states have deployed an experienced military advisor to their permanent diplomatic missions in New York. While South Africa already has seasoned diplomats in the Permanent Mission to the UN, recent negotiations with the AU on the Burundi deployment highlighted the need for sound technical advice and early liaison with military planners at the DoD. The challenge, however, will be in selecting the best candidate, as such positions are highly coveted and are not necessarily filled by the most knowledgeable and experienced candidate.

Finance is a key aspect in the process of deploying peacekeepers. Peacekeeping can be an expensive business, and thus a major challenge facing the DoD is to secure the necessary finances to fund the levels of military participation in peace missions envisaged in the White Paper. The DoD's budget director, Mr Rautie Rautenbach, recently informed Parliamentarians that there is "normally no budgetary provision for peace missions"<sup>64</sup>, and the "DoD had a deficit of R200 million that had been occasioned by peace-keeping expeditions".<sup>65</sup> There is a perception, he added, "that when the President signs for deployments, there is money automatically available, but this is not true."<sup>66</sup>

According to the White Paper, the DFA officials should "take the lead in securing finances for South African participation in specific peace missions",<sup>67</sup> and the Department of Finance, upon instruction from the president or deputy president, can authorise the necessary funds. However, it remains up to the DoD to decide how it will budget for the additional costs of participating in peace missions, including pre- and post-deployment related costs. The DoD will therefore have to determine as best it can its national annual budget before the start of the financial year (March 31), pursuant to Section 27 of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) No. 1 of 1999. Additional costs can be

The stakes are simply much higher in Burundi than in the DRC

defrayed under Section 16 'Use of funds in emergency situations', which was in fact the mechanism used to finance the cost of deploying the first SANDF mission to Burundi. Additionally, under Section 30 of the PFMA, a minister may table an adjustments budget when necessary as a result of "significant, unforeseeable, economic and financial events."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, while the DoD cannot plan for contingencies in its budget submission, the PFMA does provide a precedent to return to Parliament to secure additional costs incurred for peace mission deployments.

Peacekeeping soldiers are paid by their own governments according to their own national rank and salary scale. Countries volunteering uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations are reimbursed by the UN at a flat rate of about \$1,000

per soldier per month. The UN also reimburses countries for the use of contingent-owned equipment. But reimbursements to these countries are often deferred because of cash shortages caused by member states' failure to pay their dues.<sup>69</sup> The government and SANDF, however, must also consider the secondary consequences of increased participation in peace missions. With a current force of approximately 70,000 South Africa should calculate that for every one peacekeeper deployed, three to four must be stationed in their home country in order to prepare to replace deployed troops, undertake new training, take rest/leave, and assist with the training of new recruits.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the goal to field between four and six battalions for peace operations by the year 2004, as stated by the Chief of the South African National Defence Force,<sup>71</sup> should be balanced against the risk of a high operational tempo and poor quality of life for those participating in peace missions.

While there may not be a lack of eager 'volunteers',<sup>72</sup> simultaneous operations have stretched many nations' armed forces and have resulted in some troops being repeatedly deployed overseas with only short breaks at home. Very high levels of operational commitment place significant pressures on individual servicemen and women and their families. This can result in high attrition rates and low recruitment levels, and ultimately in a draw-down from existing and future peacekeeping commitments. Moreover, military specialists, such as engineers, logisticians, medical staff, communications officers, to name a few, have skills that are extremely sought after in the private sector, which pays significantly better than the military. As such, great care should be taken to ensure SANDF personnel stay in the forces, and do not leave as a result of a high level of rotation in and out of peace missions.

Despite the fact that the White Paper acknowledges that the decision-making process "will be refined with growing experience of deploying on international service"<sup>73</sup>, it remains that the politicisation of the larger deployments<sup>74</sup> has isolated decision-making at the strategic level. While it is fair to conclude that a large deployment of military personnel is indeed a political issue, the decision to deploy is one that requires close co-ordination between various government departments, and should not reside with any one office in particular, including that of the president.

However, current practices highlight that more often than not decisions are made at the highest levels, with little, if any, consultation through the existing structures established to facilitate the co-ordinated execution of South Africa's participation in international peace missions, let alone elected members of Parliament who represent tax-paying citizens who have a right to know. It is clear that some contingent deployments have been better co-ordinated than others. However, a more consistent approach to decisions, deployments, and re-deployments,

including an active public information strategy, would greatly benefit both the SANDF and the government. The past four years have demonstrated that the South African government has the experience and know-how required to plan and prepare for complex peace missions. It also demonstrates that the government has yet to follow its own recommendation to refine its process, which would dictate that lessons from past missions be incorporated, and that best practices be identified and applied, to the decision-making process for future deployments.

## POLICE CONTRIBUTIONS

While this paper has focused on South Africa's military contributions to peace missions, the multi-functional nature and composition of such operations has long been recognised in UN circles. It is now also becoming prominent at the continental and regional levels in Africa. For example, according to the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union:

In order to enable the Peace and Security Council to perform its responsibilities with respect to the deployment of peace support missions and intervention pursuant to article 4 (h) and (j) of the Constitutive Act<sup>75</sup>, an African Standby Force shall be established. Such Force shall be composed of standby multidisciplinary contingents, with civilian and military components in their countries of origin and ready for rapid deployment at appropriate notice.<sup>76</sup>

Member states are charged with the responsibility to establish ready standby contingents of military forces, police officers, and civilians for participation in peace missions decided on by the Peace and Security Council or intervention authorised by the Assembly. As current chair of the AU, South Africa should be able to lead by example in all aspects of capacity creation for effective AU peace missions—including the police and civilian elements<sup>77</sup> thereof.

Police play an increasingly important role in the transition from peacekeeping to peace building. The UN has urgent need of high quality officers for peace missions—so much, in fact, that the demand far outweighs the supply—as peace missions expand and are tasked to assist with the return of civil society. Police on peace missions include generalist constables, narcotics specialists, human rights and major crimes investigators, forensic identification specialists, trainers and supervisors. By the end of March 2003, there were some 5,251<sup>78</sup> UN police officers deployed on peace missions worldwide. Nineteen African countries contributed 10% of these officers. It is interesting to note that the top African troop contributing countries (Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana) are also significant police contributing countries. Moreover, four SADC countries are contributing a total of 141 police officers to the UN.

According to the White Paper, the Department of Safety and Security has an obligation to contribute, in a structured way, police officers for service in international peace missions. In some ways, this is simpler than the expectations placed on the SANDF, because as yet there has been no regional dimension to CIVPOL deployments. This means that Safety and Security does not (as yet) have to agonise over possible CIVPOL contributions to SADC or AU operations. On the other hand, because police officers are a scarce commodity in a crime-ridden nation, there are significant challenges to deploying even a few SAPS officers abroad on peace missions.

For example, during the year 2000, UN Headquarters requested South Africa provide just two CIVPOL officers for the UNAMSIL mission in Sierra Leone. This request was refused by the Department of Safety and Security, despite the fact that the White Paper notes that "international obligations and domestic needs can be balanced by preparing a limited number of experienced SAPS personnel for deployment in support of peace missions."<sup>79</sup> While this figure could be as few as 20 or as many as 100, and many SAPS officers have undergone peacekeeping training, the SAPS have yet to deploy a single police officer to a peace mission. The reasons for this could be that it is difficult to deploy policemen abroad when there is a clear lack of security at home. However, the White Paper rightly emphasises the fact that:

less than 0,01% of the 136,000 SAPS personnel would be eligible for service in peace missions. This size of contribution should be acceptable to even the most critical elements of the South African public—especially if it is emphasised that the experience gained on peace missions will undoubtedly contribute to the overall professionalism, human rights awareness, and service orientation of the SAPS. ...Participation in international missions will provide select South African police officers the opportunity to operate in a foreign culture and to be exposed to unique policing problems, as they daily confront cultural and ethical issues. Although the SAPS will lose the officer for a short period of time, the skills acquired and refined abroad will, in the long run, compliment what the officer has already learned in South Africa.<sup>80</sup>

Progress by the UN DPKO (Civilian Police Division) in the development of a rapidly deployable civilian police component during the start-up phase of a peace operation is one of the principal cornerstones in the refinement of the UN's 'post-Brahimi' overall rule of law strategy. The Division has thus begun to specify the profiles of civilian police officers, and this profile is changing with a move increasingly toward a model of police operations that focuses on advising and

mentoring local police services (rather than simply monitoring and reporting on their performance and conduct). While this is a method of peacekeeping that will require fewer civilian police officers, it will demand much more highly-skilled ones than previous missions have called for. South Africa needs to balance and complement its growing troop contributions to UN and regional peace operations by providing such police officers for UN service.

In order to gain support for SAPS participation in peace missions, public awareness must be built regarding the significance of South Africa's potential CIVPOL contributions, and of the nature and scope thereof; especially the fact that numbers envisaged are so small that this can have no discernible impact on the overall capacity of the SAPS for local crime prevention and law enforcement. Importantly, awareness and understanding of the CIVPOL task must be established within the Department of Safety and Security before public opinion can be positively influenced. There is a clear need for a departmental workshop to explain the whole notion of CIVPOL and international assistance with policing transitions from war to peace and assisting with criminal justice reform to top-level officials, so that they can understand exactly what it is that the White Paper and the UN requires of them.

## Many SAPS officers have undergone peacekeeping training

### **PUBLIC SUPPORT AND GOVERNMENT CO-ORDINATION**

The media is a feature that all armed forces have to deal with in the post-Cold War security environment. For militaries like the SANDF, the 'CNN effect' is not something that disappears at the end of hostilities, only to reappear when conflict is once again on the horizon. In a democracy, the government can only employ the military if they have the backing of both the public and the media. This reality is also tempered by a growing public apathy towards the military. The SANDF does not feature prominently on the South African political agenda any more, besides the occasional reference to the necessity of employing the SANDF in the fight against crime and the importance of the SANDF being representative of the broader South African public. Without conscription, with a very small defence budget and no clear perception of an external threat, the SANDF has been relegated to almost peripheral status.

Insofar as the SANDF has received coverage during the past few years, the general image portrayed by the media is not a positive one. Reports have focused on incidents of racial tension, indiscipline, and poor operational readiness (including the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the SANDF). There has also been uneasiness on the part of the SANDF to engage with the media. The problem for the SANDF at present is

that too much media emphasis is placed on what went wrong and too little emphasis is placed on what the SANDF is doing and doing right (one of the outstanding lessons learnt during Operation Boleas). Conversely, there should also be recognition within the SANDF that the use of military power can be controversial, as everything the military does is political in nature. This goes hand in hand with the recognition by the media that a civilian undertakes the oversight of the DoD with overall responsibility for the Ministry of Defence. It is this civilian leadership that formulates policy and tries to control the flow of information in the SANDF.

The media is probably the only medium through which the SANDF can mobilise domestic support for such missions, but convincing media practitioners requires credibility, which requires military officers who are accustomed to saying it the way it is, providing as much available information as possible, and being equipped to answer questions at any time. In other words, to succeed, a proactive public information strategy is required that provides free and open access to the media with completely accurate and timely information.

The White Paper clearly states that "an extensive media campaign should be launched prior to the deployment of a national military contingent for service in international peace support operations, to ensure that the requisite levels of popular and political support are sustained for the operation."<sup>81</sup> The White Paper further notes that the Office of the President will spearhead such a campaign, though in consultation with the relevant parties. It is assumed that the SANDF will be one of 'the relevant parties' in such a campaign. The public has a right to know about SANDF participation in peace missions, but more importantly, the government has a responsibility to keep the public informed.

As already noted, South African participation in peace missions is an extension of the country's foreign policy and as such should therefore be co-ordinated by all relevant government institutions. As South Africa's contributions continue to expand and deepen, they need to be showcased to the home constituency and to the international and regional diplomatic community if maximum foreign policy mileage is to be achieved. According to the White Paper, Parliament holds ultimate responsibility for the SANDF and SAPS deployment on peace missions. In reality, however, the real authority and power lies with the president, and the role of Parliament seems to be more one of legitimising deployments after the fact. Notwithstanding how decisions are taken in practice, the president should take the responsibility to ensure Parliament is promptly informed on all issues related to South Africa's participation in peace missions.

### South African participation in peace missions is an extension of the country's foreign policy

At the operational level, the National Office for the Co-ordination of Peace Missions (NOCPM) is in principle the office responsible for all South Africa's peacekeeping deployments. Mandated as the co-ordinating structure, the NOCPM is tasked to work out the details with the diplomats, public servants, as well as police and military officials in various government departments. However, the office remains understaffed and sidelined. Currently, the NOCPM consists of three full-time staff members out of a suggested number of ten, which should include secondments from the SANDF, the DoD, SAPS, as well as from intelligence and any other relevant department. The office should also be fully operational with computers, fax machines, a situation room and secure communication links. However, responsibility for establishing and maintaining the Office, and the funding and functioning thereof, will require recognition at the higher levels of government and require dedicated staff members in all departments committed to inter-departmental co-operation.

The approval by Parliament of the White Paper has provided the go-ahead for the relevant departments to budget for support to the NOCPM, as well as for actual secondment of departmental personnel and equipment on peace missions. Thus, responsibility also lies with officials from within government to provide the Office with the required resources. If adequately staffed, the NOCPM could serve as the focal point for all South Africa's peace mission

deployments as it would be in a position to obtain early and valuable information regarding peace missions in which South Africa is (or is considering) participating—from inception, to deployment and sustainment. This would further enable South Africa to "make a careful appraisal of the political and strategic environment within which peace missions are to be launched and the principles governing South African participation in such efforts."<sup>82</sup>

With timely and reliable intelligence provided to the NOCPM by diplomatic envoys and the military regarding the situation on the ground, South Africa could further decide that rather than deploy military or police forces, efforts would be better served in conflict mediation through the good offices of the President, or by appointing a diplomatic envoy. Thus, information should be co-ordinated via the NOCPM, who would subsequently share the information with other departments and contacts within various offices. Weekly meetings at the NOCPM between relevant officials should become a standard operating procedure, thus encouraging joint decision-making, and further ensuring a co-ordinated response is made to the president and Parliament.

## CONCLUSION

Like any regional heavyweight, South Africa will be damned if it does act and damned if it doesn't act to resolve regional conflicts. Whilst South Africa is playing a more robust role in the region, it is also true that many conflicts are just not amenable to resolution though peacemaking or peacekeeping interventions. Some conflicts simply have to run their course until war fatigue makes mediation and compliance with the terms of peace agreements a more rational option than the continued prosecution of political aims by violent means.

South Africa's recent engagements in UN and regional peace missions have undoubtedly enhanced the country's image in the eyes of the international community, which is increasingly unwilling to send its own troops to bolster peace and security in Africa. This role will also provide more weight to South Africa's opinions and views on the continent as well as in the international realm. But success in peacekeeping does not just happen through the mere act of volunteering contributions; it comes from carefully selecting which missions best reflect South Africa's national interests, and which missions it can make a qualitative contribution to. Therefore, the decision to determine which mission to support requires consultation, co-ordination, and co-operation. It also takes support from the general population, and once this support is removed, it is difficult to regain. South Africa must remain committed to ensure that deployments are based on clear international mandates, have clear entry and exit strategies, and a reasonable chance of success prior to engaging in a peace mission—especially with respect to the intractable and complex missions found on the African continent.

The Brahimi Report states that:

There are many tasks which the UN's peacekeeping forces should not be asked to undertake, and many places they should not go. But when the UN does send its forces to uphold the peace, they must be prepared to confront the lingering forces of war and violence with the ability and determination to defeat them.<sup>83</sup>

South Africa's increased deployment to Burundi will certainly test the depth of its capacity to confront an on-going crisis. The political and military risks are great, and the need to project credible force via a robust force posture is essential. It remains, however, that peacekeepers are only there to create a space where peace can be built. Therefore, unless the mission is able to identify the sources of the conflict, the prospect of negotiating and implementing a

sustainable peace is next to impossible. Peacekeeping forces are often faced with resolving the side-effects of war, including the deliberate targeting of civilians, population displacements, and the economic factors such as illicit trafficking in narcotics and other high-value commodities. It is therefore in South Africa's interest to ensure it obtains all the available up-to-date information in order to be better equipped to deal with any eventuality. Moreover with no real consent from the parties on the ground, the UN has decided it can not or should not undertake to deploy blue helmets to this particular mission. It is thus an important test of the AU's ability to resolve conflicts on the continent. However, the AU and South Africa should be aware that their role will very likely degenerate into that of a peace enforcer, not a peacekeeper. While the distinction may sound minute, in practical terms it is the difference between projecting credible force and using force.

South Africa needs to capitalise on its recent experiences in peace missions through reforms that allow for the incorporation of best practices in its ability to plan, launch, manage, support and close peacekeeping operations, and to make adjustments wherever necessary. Moreover, while assimilating lessons learnt is an important step, simply *collecting* lessons is not sufficient. The real value in establishing such a capacity is in its implementation. South Africa needs to ensure that it is able to determine what lessons need to be transmitted and to do so in a systematic manner. Once again, such planning would require clear communication channels between all those responsible

Many conflicts are just not amenable to resolution though peacemaking or peacekeeping interventions

for decision-making, and regular meetings between officials at all stages of a conflict, to prevent, mitigate, or resolve tensions. Moreover, mitigating complex crises requires more than just military resources. While there is no lack of a need for well-trained, professional and qualified military troops, other expertise is required to deal with broader security issues, such as crime and justice. In this context, the roles of civilian experts and police are essential in the reconstruction of a country emerging from conflict. The value of diplomats as negotiators and mediators in the sphere of conflict prevention is another area that South Africa is in a prime position to provide strong leadership on in Africa. Therefore, in order to maximise the positive impact of South Africa's contributions, more consideration should be given to the sharing of responsibilities across the civil-military spheres, thus enabling a more holistic and co-ordinated approach to the pursuit of peace and security.

Notwithstanding recent measures to establish a central co-ordinating body, the lack of an effective co-ordination mechanism means that decision-making remains more of a transaction, rather than a process. Concerned departments and co-ordinating bodies,

such as the NOCPM, should be appropriately resourced and fully engaged in all discussions related to the deployment of South African assets to peace missions. Trained staff should be at the negotiating table and active in the preparation of a mandate and concept of operations. Moreover, on-going dialogue should be encouraged between all concerned actors in South Africa, as well as those representing South Africa at the UN and AU. Such a dialogue should be regular and on-going throughout the mission. It is essential to establish a review mechanism that would regularly re-evaluate the SANDF's participation in order to ensure that commitments are not open-ended. This approach should be specifically integrated into existing peacekeeping deployment guidelines and standard operating procedures.

The necessity of drafting the White Paper was borne from a very real need for policy guidelines on how to select which mission to undertake based on the large number of requests for South African participation in a complex array of peace initiatives. Despite this, however, few of the guidelines have been followed, and a thorough update is required to re-evaluate many of the extant recommendations, incorporate the best practices and to validate the lessons of the past four years. The Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Defence recently agreed that White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions could do with "some refinement"<sup>184</sup> to ensure continued effective participation in peace missions. Areas identified requiring updating include "early warning on a political level, regional and sub-regional mandates, clear liaison channels and a domestic mandate and budget."<sup>185</sup> Thus the intention is not to review or shift policy, but rather to incorporate the experience gained on peace missions and integrate the new structures set in place since the White Paper was approved in 1999. Thus, the NOCPM should take the lead in establishing a working group responsible to review and update the White Paper as soon as possible in order that South African contributions remain relevant, in line with foreign policy priorities, and in full consultation within government, parliament, and the public.

It is clear that the current decision-making process regarding peace mission deployments needs to be made more transparent, and new approaches are required to integrate lessons learnt. What is now urgently needed to convert policy guidelines into action is 'buy in', and a sense of ownership of the (revised) White Paper by the relevant Parliamentary Committees, ministers and directors general. There is a great need to avoid entrenching the current uncoordinated and ad-hoc approach to peace mission deployments, which, ultimately, is not sustainable. If the Burundi mission fails, South Africa could be held responsible and faced with picking up the pieces. The challenge now lies in accepting the deployment as a *fait accompli*, whilst working together to mitigate any unforeseen events. This will take close co-operation

and co-ordination between many, both within and outside South Africa. If successful, increased participation and leadership in peace missions could "provide disproportionately large positive results."<sup>186</sup>

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- 33 SANDF, Internet site <[www.mil.za/SANDF/Current%20Ops/Boleas/Boleas-6.htm](http://www.mil.za/SANDF/Current%20Ops/Boleas/Boleas-6.htm)>, op cit.
- 34 A Stofberg, 'SA moet mag nou steun', op cit, p 9.
- 35 D Geldenhuys, *Vrae oor ingryping in Lesotho bly in die lug hang*, Rapport, 18 October 1998, Johannesburg, p 13.
- 36 R Williams, *Challenges for South and Southern Africa: Towards non-consensual peace missions?* Paper presented at a Conference, From peacekeeping to complex emergencies? Peace missions in Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 25 March 1999, p 16.
- 37 S Friedman, *Force will not solve Africa's problems*, Business Day, 5 October 1998, Johannesburg, p 13.
- 38 P Fabricius, op cit, p 14.
- 39 White Paper, op cit, p 3.
- 40 South Africa has also contributed small numbers of observers to missions in Angola and Bosnia.
- 41 Approximately 60 of the 700 are used for VIP protection, the other 640 are there to provide force protection.
- 42 While South African contributions could last for years, the SANDF rotates its personnel every six months.
- 43 S Nyanda, "The South African National Defence Force and Peace Missions in Africa", paper presented at the Africa Dialogue Series, University of Pretoria, 27 February 2003.
- 44 Communiqué of the Ninety First Ordinary Session of the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution at the Ambassadorial Level, Addis Ababa, 02 April 2003.
- 45 Ibid, paragraph 5.iii.
- 46 While some states have agreed to materially and financially support this deployment, there can be no guarantee that this support is sustainable and therefore, should donor fatigue set in, a small number of countries will have the ability to undertake the financial and logistical burden.
- 47 AU Communiqué, op cit.

- 48 Ibid, paragraphs 5.viii; 5.x.
- 49 Examining several peace support operations over the past nine years that 'exemplify success', Daniel and Hayes conclude that: "*The common thread throughout these examples is the quick deployment of robust forces which, possibly through shock effect, implicitly if not explicitly deliver the message that they mean business*". D.C.F. Daniel and B.C. Hayes, *Securing observance of UN Mandates through the Employment of Military Forces*, US Naval War College, Newport, RI, 1995. UNITAF, Operation Turquoise, Provide Comfort and Uphold Democracy are cited as operations that succeeded in successfully inducing co-operation from belligerents.
- 50 For more information, go to: [www.burundi-info.com](http://www.burundi-info.com) (14 March 2003).
- 51 According to the 1996 South African White Paper on Defence, public awareness and parliamentary debate are important conditions for involvement in peace missions. <[www.gov.za/whitepaper/1996/defencwp.htm](http://www.gov.za/whitepaper/1996/defencwp.htm)>.
- 52 Private conversation with a member of the team responsible for deploying the SANDF to Burundi.
- 53 The Parliamentary Monitoring Group, op cit.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 For more information, go to the United Nations website, <[www.un.org/Depts/dpko/rapid/sba.html](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/rapid/sba.html)>, (04 April 2003).
- 56 The general objective of phase III is to disarm, demobilise, repatriate, reintegrate or resettle armed groups in the DRC, and to hand over mass killers, perpetrators of crimes against humanity and other war criminals. According to UN planners, it would take at least an additional four reinforced infantry battalions of high quality to make a meaningful start to phase III operations.
- 57 UN Security Council, Eleventh Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2002/621, 5 June 2002, para 27, <[www.un.org/documents/](http://www.un.org/documents/)>, (07 April 2003).
- 58 This being said, MONUC's area of operations does not cover the whole country.
- 59 UNAMSIL's authorised strength was capped at 17,500 troops.
- 60 S/2003/211, 21 February 2003, <[www.un.org/documents/](http://www.un.org/documents/)>, (March 28 2003), authorises MONUC to increase the number of peacekeepers from 5,537 to 8, 700. Also see S/RES/1445 (2002), <[www.un.org/documents/](http://www.un.org/documents/)>, (28 March 2003).
- 61 The cost of MONUC from 1 July 2002-30 June 2003 is \$608.3 million (gross); the cost of UNAMSIL for the same period is \$699.8 million (gross). See <[www.un.org/documents/](http://www.un.org/documents/)> (28 March 2003).
- 62 For more information, see <[www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org)> or <[www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)>, (04 April 2003).
- 63 The Parliamentary Monitoring Group, op cit.
- 64 The Parliamentary Monitoring Group, op cit.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 White Paper, op cit, p 21.
- 68 See The Public finance Management Act No. 1 of 1999, <[www.treasury.gov.za](http://www.treasury.gov.za)>, (04 April 2003).
- 69 Past practice, however, indicates that the UN is often unable to immediately reimburse troop contributors as a result of US Congress withholding dues to the UN. Due to their reduced level of contribution to both the peacekeeping and regular budget, as dictated by the Helms-Burton Act, the US has been able to pay off most of its arrears. As of January 2003, US dues amounted to approx \$536 million. Seven other major contributors (Japan, Spain, Brazil, RoK, Netherlands, China, Argentina) owed \$449 million. For more go to the Global Policy Forum, <[www.globalpolicy.igc.org/finance/index.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.igc.org/finance/index.htm)>, (04 April 2003).
- 70 This figure should also take into account the high number of troops that can not be deployed as a result of prevalence of HIV/AIDS infection in the SANDF.
- 71 S Nyanda for the Africa Dialogue Series, op cit.
- 72 The White Paper notes the principle of 'volunteerism' on Section 6.5. This ambiguity should be cleared up, as by definition, military personnel do not volunteer for international service.
- 73 Ibid, p 26.
- 74 This includes Operation Boleas in Lesotho, as well as the SANDF deployment to the Congo and Burundi in 2003. Smaller deployments to Ethiopia-Eritrea and Burundi (2000) were not so politicised.
- 75 Article 4 h and j provide, respectively, for the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the assembly in respect of grave circumstances, and for the right of Member States to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security.
- 76 OAU Secretariat, Draft Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, June 2002, Article 13 (1).
- 77 While the White Paper recognises the importance of civilians in peace missions, it is difficult (if not impossible) to keep track of how many South Africans (or any other nationality, for that matter) are currently working for international organisations in an expert capacity. There are various reasons for this, but the primary one is that the UN or any other international or non-governmental organisation



- may directly hire civilian experts without  
advising any home institution or office.
- 78 Monthly Summary of Contributions, 31 March  
2003, <[www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.  
shtml](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml)>, (11 April 2003).
- 79 White Paper, op cit, p 18.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ibid, p 21.
- 82 White Paper, op cit, p 4.
- 83 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace  
Operations, op cit, p 10, (11 April 2003).
- 84 The Parliamentary Monitoring Group, op cit.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 S Nyanda for the Africa Dialogue Series, op cit.

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## About this paper

This paper first provides a brief overview of the most salient aspects of the White Paper on Peace Missions and then examines recent deployments of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in a peace support role, with specific reference to the decision-making process. The aim is to measure past practice against the policy guidelines for such deployment, and to suggest ways to close the gaps between policy and practice.

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