



Policy Brief

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DRAFT SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENCE REVIEW 2012 The dichotomy between ambition and reality

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief provides an analysis of the draft South African Defence Review 2012 released for public comment on 12 April 2012. It finds that this document does not meet the requirements of a comprehensive defence policy and in particular does not provide guidance on the resolution of the impasse between policy and funding in which the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) finds itself. The draft pronounces on a long-term vision for the capabilities of the SANDF without any clear reasoning on how it got there, and fails to address the SANDF's short- to medium-term force development and employment priorities. It also fails to mainstream gender as a matter of high priority for the SANDF. The policy brief ends with recommendations about how these shortcomings should be corrected.

INTRODUCTION

On 12 April 2012 the South African Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Lindiwe Sisulu, released the draft South African Defence Review 2012 (Draft Defence Review) for public comment. This document was the result of the work of the Defence Review Committee, chaired by Roelf Meyer, a previous South African minister of defence, which was constituted by the minister in July 2011 to review current South African defence policy. At the same time the minister announced a public participation programme that would run from April to June 2012. As part of the public participation programme the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) organised and hosted an expert's roundtable on the Draft Defence Review on Tuesday, 24 April 2012 and a public seminar on the following day. The chairperson and members of the Defence Review Committee attended both these events. These meetings, together with an internal analysis of the draft by the ISS, inform this policy brief. Current South African defence policy is premised on the 1996 White Paper on Defence and the 1998 Defence Review. These policy documents were developed in very

participative processes in the early post-apartheid years and were internationally acclaimed for their transparency and comprehensive coverage of the subject of defence policy. Despite this, it soon became apparent that some of the premises on which these documents were based were overly optimistic and had not yet fully materialised. Internal developments related to law and order in South Africa and regional developments related to peace and stability on the African continent, as well as an ever-widening gap between approved defence policy and the annual defence budgets since 1998, have challenged some of the premises of these policies and placed stress on their implementation and on the functioning of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). Due to this, various actors have been calling for an update of defence policy for some years, but this has been slow in coming. Therefore, this new Draft Defence Review was welcomed with the expectation that it would address these discrepancies.

Unfortunately, the document falls short of these expectations and will require significant reworking to provide a policy framework in terms of which defence planners in South Africa can restructure and reorganise defence objectives and capabilities to be in line with the real demands of the strategic environment.

ANALYSIS

The major issues of concern in the current draft are:

- The failure to indicate the fiscal implications of the recommended policy framework
- The failure to motivate the proposed vision force design (end state) of the SANDF as presented in chapter 9 of the draft document
- The failure to present any clarity on the short- to medium-term priorities for the force development, preparation and employment of the SANDF
- The failure to mainstream gender into South African defence policy

Policy and budget

The first issue of concern in evaluating the Draft Defence Review is that of the basic logic of the resulting policy framework itself. The chairperson of the Defence Review Committee stated at the release of the draft on 12 April 2012 that it did not address force design or force structure, and that this and budgetary issues would be addressed in a later process.² This presents a problem, as the draft claims to 'present defence policy that is supportive of Government's priorities and strategic intent'³ and this is not possible without a clear understanding of the budgetary implications of such policy. Policy must be implementable to be of any value, and implementable policy has a price tag. The Minister of Defence at the launch of the Defence Review on 30 August 2011 said that

[n]ational defence policies ... entail ... the identification of priorities and different options for critical decisions on issues such as defence personnel and capability programmes within budgetary constraints and on the basis of the impact they will have on the overall national development of the country.⁴

Unfortunately, the budgetary aspects referred to by the minister do not appear in the draft document. The process for the development of this draft policy is presented as a 'mandate driven perspective',⁵ with fiscal considerations not taken into account. This is unrealistic, as any mandate that is not affordable remains a pipe dream. It would be better to use a 'mandate-driven but cost-constrained approach' to policy development, as this will result in implementable policy and an affordable and sustainable force design (capability statement) and structure. The pursuit of security is about risk avoidance, risk alleviation and risk combating, and as such a risk analysis should be included in security policy. Only in this way can the various tasks that can be deduced from the defence mandate of the SANDF be prioritised and options be generated. Policy decisions should be based on a clear understanding of their associated risks, alternative options and cost implications. The current draft does not provide this basis for policy decision making. The draft itself states that

affordability, likewise, can only be measured relative to both a specified affordability baseline (the known defence allocation) and the level of defence ambition. The highest level expression of balance is thus the balance between South Africa's national interests and ambitions, the defence capabilities required to support these and consequent alignment of the defence allocation.⁶

Despite this statement, this logic is absent in the draft. There is no such thing as 100 per cent security and therefore policy makers should be made aware of the

implications of their decisions as regards both risk and cost. The draft falls short of this, especially as there is no indication of the budgetary implications of the stated preferred capabilities in the draft.

It is therefore recommended that the Draft Defence Review be subjected to further study to consider various options for the future force design of the SANDF, and that the implications regarding the risks that these options entail and the sustainable cost of this design be clearly spelled out.

Future force design of the SANDF

The draft arrives at a statement of required defence capabilities and the level of defence effort in chapter 9. These are stated to be the vision for the next 30 years. This is actually presented in the form of a broad force design for the SANDF. There is, however, no clear indication in the draft as to the logic underlying this particular level of defence. For example, the stated requirement of one mechanised division, one motorised division, one squadron of multi-role fighter aircraft, two conventional submarines, and so forth is neither explained nor motivated in the document. It could easily be asked why these force levels should not be halved or doubled and, more so, why they are included in the first place. The draft takes cognisance of some of the major changes in the strategic environment since 1998, especially as they concern the development of the new African Peace and Security Architecture. At the continental level, this includes the African Union Peace and Security Council, the Common African Defence and Security Policy, the Continental Early Warning System, and the African Standby Force, and at the sub-regional Southern Africa Development Community level the Organ on Politics Defence and Security, the Mutual Defence Pact, and the Regional Standby Brigade. These are all well argued in the draft, as are the importance of defence diplomacy, collaborative defence, and confidence- and security-building measures. The draft commits South Africa to multilateral defence options and restates the country's defence strategy of (i) cooperation, (ii) prevention and (iii) the use of force as a last option, as defined in the 1996 White Paper on Defence. Unfortunately, these considerations are not brought to their logical conclusion in the definition of the primary mission and required future defence capabilities of the SANDF.

The draft seems to fall back on the previous concepts of the primary function of the SANDF being defence against external aggression and the need for deterrence based on the country's own capabilities. The draft states:

South Africa must be able to defend itself autonomously without having to rely on another country. The Defence Force will be maintained as a ... fighting force that can decisively and successfully defend South Africa's land, air, sea and cyber spaces, vital interests and strategic lines of communication.⁷

This seems to be in contradiction to the previous arguments in this section. It is therefore submitted that the primary function of the SANDF should be redefined to align it with the concepts of collaborative defence and security. The primary function of the SANDF should be to serve as an instrument for conflict prevention, conflict resolution and conflict intervention in the hands of government. This does not preclude the use of force as a measure of last resort.

The statement of a 30-year vision force design is in itself problematic. In its earlier chapters the draft refers to the issues of unpredictability and fluidity in the strategic environment. The simple fact that this policy update is necessary due to major changes in the strategic environment in the past 14 years (since the approval of the previous Defence Review) and the practise of carrying out defence reviews every four years in most modern democracies demonstrate the inadvisability of an approach basing South African defence policy on a 30-year vision. To define the SANDF for 30 years in the future and then to follow a set growth path to achieve this vision seems highly inadvisable. An approach based on short- and medium-term requirements parallel to a longer-term vision would allow for better flexibility and adaptation as the strategic environment changes over time.

It is therefore recommended that the long-term vision approach to the Draft Defence Review, as the only driver for the SANDF's force design, be reconsidered and that the real short- to medium-term requirements of the SANDF be given more prominence in the design logic. It is also recommended that the considerations mentioned in the draft regarding the nature of future conflict, collaborative security in Africa, and confidence and security building be factored into a restatement of the primary mission of the SANDF and as such into the future force design. Finally, as regards this section, it is recommended that the wording of the primary mission of the SANDF be reconsidered to bring it more into line with its real task, which is to serve as an instrument for conflict prevention, conflict resolution and conflict intervention in the hands of the government.

The short- to medium-term tasks and requirements of the SANDF

The draft fails to identify shorter-term priorities for the SANDF and their budgetary implications. This means that it does not address the current dilemma of the SANDF, namely that of a gross mismatch between defence policy (as it is being practised) and defence funding. This draft policy therefore does not resolve the short- to medium-term problems of the SANDF. Neither does it contain the required financial data to allow for meaningful decision making at the level of cabinet and parliament within the government's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. This is in contrast with the statement by the chairman of the Defence Review Committee at the launch of the review on 30 August that '[t]he Minister further requires us to have

both a short- and long-term focus. The short-term we understand to be the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and the long-term we understand to be the period after 2030.'⁸

In the short to medium term the SANDF will continue to be engaged in the important internal tasks of supporting the South African Police Service (SAPS) in the maintenance of law and order, and in the Defence Force's border safeguarding tasks. The latter will also extend to South Africa's maritime borders in the combating of piracy and other organised crime at sea. Externally, the SANDF will continue to be in demand for peace missions in Africa, as well as for support to the combating of maritime piracy around the coasts of the continent. The defence budget for 2012 states the specific strategic priorities over the medium term to include 'executing the border safeguarding function, enhancing the Defence Force's peacekeeping capability, and consolidating the Southern African Development Community's ... maritime security strategy'.⁹ These missions will require appropriate force development, force preparation and operational deployments of the SANDF. Unfortunately, the SANDF is not well equipped for these types of operations. It is therefore recommended that the Draft Defence Review pays much more attention to the short- to medium-term realities facing the SANDF to ensure that funding is redirected to its real needs. This includes the priority tasks of peace missions in Africa, support to the combating of maritime piracy around the coasts of Africa and South Africa, safeguarding the country's borders, and providing internal support to the SAPS in the maintenance of law and order.

Gender and the Draft Defence Review¹⁰

The 1996 White Paper on National Defence and the 1998 Defence Review are worldwide-acclaimed examples of best practice for mainstreaming gender into the defence sector. It is therefore unfortunate that the new Draft Defence Review only makes a few vague references to gender. For example, the draft notes that the 'Defence Force will strive to be seen as a representative and trusted non-partisan national asset',¹¹ and there are references to women-headed households, the feminisation of poverty¹² and gender-based violence.¹³ It also affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom¹⁴ and refers to the constitutional principle of non-racism and non-sexism.¹⁵

However, there are no references to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, gender equality, gender representation, gender sensitivity or gender responsiveness in the draft. Under the guise of being gender neutral, the document is arguably gender blind. Women's role as actors in development, peace and security, and in creating a representative, effective and efficient SANDF should be better emphasised. This would refute the perception that the SANDF has sufficiently addressed gender-related issues within the organisation (recruitment, retention,

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gender-sensitive policies, training, etc.) and that gender no longer warrants inclusion in a defence review meant to provide strategic direction for the next 30 years. The absence of specific references to the continued mainstreaming of gender and the creation of a Defence Force that promotes gender equality raises the question of how the achievements to date are to be consolidated and regression avoided.

The themes covered in this draft review have specific gendered impacts that need to be factored in. While the document is people and development oriented, the draft review remains encumbered by state-centric, patriarchal notions of security. A number of South Africa's peacekeepers have been implicated in gender-based violence and a culture of gender discrimination continues to persist within the SANDF (expressed in terms of sexual harassment, women not feeling that they have authority, etc.). It is therefore strongly recommended to mainstream gender into the review and to integrate it into the major issues discussed in the document.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Draft Defence Review should be subjected to further study to consider various options for the future force design of the SANDF, and the implications regarding the risks that these entail, as well as the sustainable cost of such designs, should be clearly spelled out.
- The long-term vision approach to the Draft Defence Review as the only driver of the SANDF's force design should be reconsidered and the real short- to medium-term requirements of the SANDF should be given more prominence in the design logic.
- The considerations mentioned in the draft regarding the nature of future conflict, collaborative security in Africa, and confidence and security building should be factored into a restatement of the primary mission of the SANDF and as such into the future force design.
- The wording of the primary mission of the SANDF should be reconsidered to bring it into line with its real tasks, namely to serve as an instrument for conflict prevention, conflict resolution and conflict intervention in the hands of government.
- The Draft Defence Review should pay much more attention to the short- to medium-term realities facing the SANDF to ensure that funding is redirected to the real needs of the Defence Force. This includes the priority tasks of participating in peace missions in Africa, supporting the combating of maritime piracy around the coasts of Africa and South Africa, safeguarding the country's borders, and providing

internal support to the SAPS in the maintenance of law and order.

- The Draft Defence Review should mainstream gender into defence policy and integrate it into the major issues discussed in the document.

CONCLUSION

The update of the 1998 Defence Review has been eagerly awaited and the release of the draft 2012 Defence Review was seen as a positive step to address the lack of progress with South Africa's defence policy. Unfortunately, the draft falls short of expectations and needs a fundamental reworking. The approach to policy taken in the draft, which ignores fiscal considerations and neglects to offer options and alternatives for consideration, is a regression in terms of what was achieved in the immediate post-apartheid era, as is the lack of gender mainstreaming in the draft. The lateness of the public participation phase of the review process is regrettable and probably a contributing factor to the draft 2012 Defence Review's many shortcomings.

NOTES

¹ Maj. Gen (retd) Len le Roux served in the SANDF, was an ISS office director and is now an independent security analyst.

² A media statement by Defence Review Committee chairperson Roelf Meyer at the release of the draft 2012 Defence Review for public comment at the CSIR, Pretoria, 12 April 2012.

³ Defence Review Committee, *South African Defence Review 2012: Defence, security, development*, draft document for public engagement, 12 April 2012, chap. 1, para. 3a.

⁴ Remarks by the minister of defence and military veterans, Lindiwe Sisulu, at the media launch of the South African Defence Review process, Imbizo Media Centre, Cape Town, 30 August 2011.

⁵ Defence Review Committee, *Work of the Defence Review Committee*, media release, 30 August 2011.

⁶ Defence Review Committee, *South African Defence Review 2012*, chap. 1, para. 28b.

⁷ Defence Review Committee, *South African Defence Review 2012*, chap. 6, para. 16.

⁸ Defence Review Committee, *Work of the Defence Review*.

⁹ Ministry of Finance, *National Treasury Budget 2012*, estimate of expenditure, vote 22, defence and military veterans, 2.

¹⁰ Contribution by Cheryl Hendricks, senior researcher, ISS.

¹¹ Defence Review Committee, *South African Defence Review 2012*, chap. 1, para. 32a.

¹² Defence Review Committee, *South African Defence Review 2012*, 52, 54.

¹³ Defence Review Committee, *South African Defence Review 2012*, 77, 78, 103.

¹⁴ Defence Review Committee, *South African Defence Review 2012*, 105.

¹⁵ Defence Review Committee, *South African Defence Review 2012*, 110.