



# **Eradicating African Wars: From political ambitions to military leadership and constructive military forces**

*Francois Vreÿ*

## **Abstract**

As the Cold War and its military emphasis paled towards the late 20th century, the use of military forces to conduct multiple missions below the threshold of war tended to marginalise destructive war fighting as a policy option. In some ways it appears that war fighting in its traditional mode seems to render increasingly limited benefits in a strategic environment no longer all that conducive to military coercion. More recently African political leaders also began to craft security policies and arrangements that called for military forces that could operate in a more constructive and cooperative manner below the threshold of competitive war fighting. In some way, the African Union even envisages warless

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\* Francois Vreÿ is lecturer in Military Strategy at the Faculty of Military Science, Stellenbosch University.

futures where war is no longer an option. Avoiding a potential disequilibrium between the aforementioned political outlooks and executive military establishments is an important leadership responsibility. Closing this potential void is now growing more crucial in the light of the emergent African defence architecture to support political ambitions of eradicating African wars. However, the military contribution to terminate wars on the African strategic landscape is dependent upon a military leadership that is able to interface political ambitions judiciously with military shifts towards less destructive mission profiles. The conceptual shift at the political level has to be matched with organisational and material adjustments at the military level, which will not be devoid of difficulties.

## 1. Introduction

The idea that war made the state and the state made war (Tilly 1975:42) entered perhaps its own cold spell when the state and military security became severely criticised and even ridiculed towards the late twentieth century. New security thinking, from Europe in particular, demonstrated the foolishness of persisting with a dominant state-military security nexus, and aversion grew to the use of armed coercion. This growing aversion to military force in the wake of the Cold War created conceptual room to reconsider two important domains for using armed coercion. Firstly, there was the question whether the use of the military instrument should be allowed to persist, and secondly, the one about ways in which it is to be used if the practice of war is indeed to continue. The latter consideration incidentally also coincided with the appearance of *The Transformation of War* by Van Creveld (1991), which in no uncertain way upheld the conception that the paradigm of interstate war has served its purpose and that alternatives should be considered.

The security debate and the resultant ideas for reviewing whether, or in which ways armed forces are to be used in future, display a prominent Western profile. However, the impact of these potentially paradigmatic shifts for using the military policy instrument did not leave a region like Africa unaffected. Although not precisely in step with, but rather a victim of the sudden events

depicting the collapse of the Cold War that even surprised most First Tier countries, African decision makers nonetheless began to reconsider the role and place of military forces in pursuit of African security. With the establishment of the African Union (AU) during the second half of 2002, the integration of the military instrument with African political ambitions assumed more clarity and became a discernible feature on the African strategic landscape.

The arguments proposed in this article explain that the perceptual shifts concerning the use of African military forces are to be solidified by more concrete, but difficult organisational adjustments and material support. To this end, four matters of the envisaged change in the mission profile of African military forces are explored. As an introduction three different theories on the use of war are briefly portrayed, followed by an outline of political ambitions for achieving a more prosperous African continent. Secondly, the focus falls on increasing dependence upon military support of emergent political ambitions, as well as the challenge it poses for military leadership. Thirdly, a politico-military integrationist approach is sketched to juxtapose political ambitions to more constructive military establishments as instruments of defence diplomacy. In conclusion, certain difficulties are pointed out that are considered to obstruct the perceived political optimism for comprehensively adjusting the mission profile of African armed forces.

## **2. Three Conceptions for Using Military Forces**

The use of military forces for political purposes may be viewed along different, but not immutable pathways. One alternative is to use the Clausewitzian and Sun Tsu frameworks. The Clausewitzian outlook is often alleged to portray the more destructive use of war to support political objectives (Raitasalo & Sipilä 2004:239-240). It is argued that Sun Tsu, on the other hand, promotes an outlook that the skill is to employ initiatives that limit or even preclude the use of military forces as an instrument of diplomacy. This difference is often expressed by saying that Sun Tsu is more ambitious than Clausewitz in reconsidering the use of war (Handel 1996:17). As opposed to Clausewitz, Sun Tsu is less inclined to accentuate the destructive use of military forces, but

rather emphasises achieving the least costly victories (Handel 1996:19). For Sun Tsu the avoidance of victory through military destruction is important, for he rather encourages higher order politico-strategic dynamics that ameliorate the destructive use of war (Handel 1996:31).

A third possibility is to no longer consider war as an option. The destructiveness of war is a central problem when considering its use at the dawn of the 21st century, and a renewed emphasis is placed on the view that warfare is outdated. *The Future of War* (Ayoob 2000) commemorates earlier as well as recent works to terminate the use of war. In essence the publication acknowledges the writings of Bloch on future war<sup>1</sup> and once again turns the spotlight upon the deep destruction wrought by war and the necessity of considering alternatives to this practice. Bloch argued that the use of war in its destructive format could not continue indefinitely. However, its devastating impact upon people persists, and as the 20th century matured, it merely shifted from interstate to the intrastate domain. At the dawn of the 21st century intrastate wars proliferated and, as in the case of Africa, wrought a new wave of destruction upon post-Cold War African societies. This sad state of affairs forms the rationale for the AU to use African military forces in new and more ambitious ways to pursue a future devoid of war.

According to the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the preferred alternative is to eradicate war from Africa, or bury it as deeply as possible in the enigma of policy options. If employed at an early stage, a competitive war-fighting profile is not required, but rather the use of more constructive, cooperative and preventative modes of military action (African Union 2002:5). This preference corresponds with the notion to move away from the force upon force paradigm of Clausewitz (Raitasalo & Sipila 2004:240) and the more traditional theories on the use of military forces as fighting entities. Subsequently the burden now falls upon African military leaders to nudge the war-fighting profile of African military establishments closer to continental political

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1 Originally published in Russian as Bliokh, 1898, *The Future of War in its Technical, Economic and Political Relations*, St Petersburg, Efron.

initiatives that call for military forces which are able to operate effectively below the threshold of war. Military forces, however, are known for being resistant to deep changes to their roles and missions, and this raises questions about the tenability of a shift in the mission profile of African armed forces.

### **3. Probing the Paradigm: Political Ambitions for a Safe and Prosperous African Continent**

Seeking a future amidst a spectrum of futures, ranging from those characterised by optimism to those characterised by pessimism, is an acknowledged way to think and set about pursuing a preferred future. One salient feature of this pursuit is to avoid or tone down the impact of destructive military events – a matter that featured prominently in the early thinking of futurists (Clarke 1970b:273). H.G. Wells is but one futurist who at the turn of the 19th century quite accurately depicted destructive future military means, such as tanks, aircraft and atomic bombs, and warned society about these. War demonstrated that human choice could send nations down a future path of war and destruction or one of peace and prosperity (Clarke 1970a:172).

More recently, McGwire (2002:15) outlined the shift between pessimism and optimism by moving international relations from an Adversarial National Security Paradigm (ANSP) with strong military overtones to an optimistic Cooperative Global Security Paradigm (CGSP) representing a desired future paradigm for humanity. The shift between these two paradigms illustrates a desired migration from interstate competition to cooperation, where states do not compete for security, and where military coercion is subdued, or if required, becomes a multilateral and consensus-driven option. The latter outlook underpins much of contemporary African thinking about pathways towards the future through newly established AU institutions with their collective profiles (African Union 2002:4) that are closely attuned to the United Nations (UN) and its quest for international peace and order (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001:13).

The fundamental tenets of the African Renaissance (AR), the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development

(NEPAD), and the expectations of African leaders at the recent G-8 Conferences<sup>2</sup> contain undeniable notions, preferences and expectations of African aspirations. Even though Ayooob (2000:158) argues that state making in Third World countries, such as those in Africa, and conflict seem to correlate, the accent of African leaders is upon eradicating this presumed nexus. This optimism remains pitted against a contemporary backdrop of conflict that continues to scar African political ambitions and highlights the need for political access to appropriately structured military measures.

Pessimistic outlooks on the African strategic environment represent a much-criticised portrayal of the continent (Prins 2002:186).<sup>3</sup> Morbid viewpoints from outside the continent are nowadays increasingly countered by more optimistic continental plans, programmes, partnerships and regional bodies that are operating from within Africa (Nathan 2005:363). Although African leaders tend to increasingly portray continental futures as optimistic, new styled conflicts on the continent tarnish this optimism. Kaldor (2000:58) describes these new styled conflicts as new wars – depicting a mixture of wars, massive human rights abuses and organised crime where civilians, not another army, become the target. This reality was acknowledged at the formal establishment of the Peace and Security Council in Addis Ababa during 2004 when the long list of conflicts and civil wars on the continent was reviewed (Konare 2005).

To bring about the desired change towards the vision of future peace, stability and prosperity, military-styled conflict on the African continent has to be terminated and prevented from returning. This need necessitates a legitimate coercive instrument to support continental arrangements in the event of diplomatic alternatives failing. Collective political mindsets need to be matched at the military level to sustain the political ambitions emanating from the AU leadership. A Common Defence and Security Policy, an African Standby Force (Cilliers & Malan 2005) and the SADC<sup>4</sup> Mutual Defence Pact (Lekota

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2 G8 Summits, at Evian, France, June 2003 and Gleneagles, Scotland, July 2005.

3 See Meredith 2005 for an updated view in this regard.

4 Southern African Development Community.

2003, Ngoma 2005) are illustrative of emergent African defence arrangements for supporting the envisaged collective political futures. This matches international practice and coincides with the call for cooperative ventures as proposed by McGwire, and the UN drive for security through a collective responsibility to prevent, react and assist in rebuilding societies ravaged by war (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001:xi).

Military support for the political aspirations of the African political leadership may be achieved by diversifying African military forces for different future needs by exploiting the ability of military establishments to adjust (Kummel 2003:427). One way is to recast African military establishments to assume an increasing responsibility to protect or prevent, rather than to be merely geared for destructive intervention (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001:11). In essence, the contributory profile of African military establishments towards a peaceful, stable and safe Africa should be raised.

#### **4. Challenging the War-fighting Paradigm: Some Indicators of the Need For Change**

The growing aversion of the AU to the crude use of military force is not unique and may be traced to a number of theories that oppose the use of armed forces for the purpose of war. Earlier arrangements, such as the League of Nations (Prins & Tromp 2000:10), The Hague Peace Conference of May 1899, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and 1977, and the UN Charter after the Second World War, all constitute efforts to terminate the scourge of war (Prins & Tromp 2000:62-63). Kaldor (2000:55) agrees with the moderating influence of these earlier arrangements and sees it extended in the current transnationalisation of military forces that further limits the potential to wage war. The undesirability of war is also illustrated by views such as the following; that war is counter-productive to the quest for prosperity, that there is a need for a reformed international system that opposes the use of war (Kaysen 2000:441), that war is an outdated practice, and that endism theories on democratic victory and the end of war should be promoted.<sup>5</sup> Such one-sidedness, however, propagates the views that military

coercion is only destructive, that is has to be avoided and even outlawed, and that its eradication is the pathway to perpetual peace (Prins 2002:119). Conceiving of military forces as either destructive policy instruments or as burdensome if war is absent, no longer fits the early 21st century strategic landscape – which includes Africa.

As illustrated in the Clausewitz – Sun Tsu comparison by Handel (1996:19), military coercion should not be forced into a conceptual straitjacket by depicting it only in terms of a destructive military war-fighting profile. Prins (2002:xxii) for example, accentuates the changing character of war that now faces policy making, while Dandekker (2003) highlights the need for new mission profiles and more flexible forces to assist decision makers. Furthermore, the rising responsibility to protect via prevention, intervention and rebuilding (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001:xii-xiii) and growing calls for multilateral decisions and multinational use of military coercion are bound to further ameliorate the biased destructive slant of the military interventionist debate (Anan 2005). As a result, conceptual room is created to consider the more constructive use of military means to which the AU alluded (Konare 2005) and which is perhaps enshrined in the view of Kaldor (2000:55) that military forces should now be geared for international law enforcement to defend civilians from new types of warfare where they emerge.

Military alternatives are relevant and, contrary to general thinking, military institutions are more adaptable than realised (Kummel 2003:426). This adaptability is tested when the security paradigm is shifted away from a dominant destructive profile and military institutions have to reconfigure their roles to cope with goal displacement (Moskos 1998:514). Raitasalo and Sipila (2004:249) point out the blurred boundaries between ‘war and other new uses of military force’ that characterised the challenge raised by Moskos. New missions were merely added to existing ones, but eventually demanded a more definite demarcation – even if it meant deeply challenging the existing paradigm

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5 See Thompson 1998 as well as Prins, G. 2002 on the writings of Kant and changes in the use of war.



of organised violence by national armed forces upon another actor.

Although viewed as preferable, alternatives for pursuing peaceful and prosperous African futures are not tied up only in non-military ventures. This is visible in the growing use of defence diplomacy by the AU, which raises the profile of African military forces as a means to resolve conflicts on the continent. These forces are to conform with the new needs expressed by their political heads. And according to Cilliers and Malan (2005:2), elaborate but slow-grinding processes were put in place during 2003 to establish continental military means for conducting defence diplomacy, and moves that could be conceptualised as shifting the use of armed force below the threshold of war.

The African alternative could bring about an appropriate paradigm shift for using military coercion by considering the fundamental drivers or conditions that are contained in the general indicators offered by McGwire (2002:8-9).

- An impulse for change: Shared fears and a common vision of an alternative – for example the vision of the African Renaissance and its embracement by the AU.
- The removal of obstacles for changes as envisaged by the NEPAD programme and the collective AU structures that promote a recasting of roles and profiles of African military forces.
- An engine of change as reflected by the rising cadre of new African leaders willing to use the AU and its array of bodies to carve out a new future for Africa and to include African military establishments in this process.
- A precipitating cause or event such as the end of the Cold War that removed its constrictive overlay from Africa, the rise of international terror that challenged the war-fighting paradigm for armed forces or the 2003 Gulf War that enforced a rethink of using military forces in a changing strategic landscape.

Conceptually, the employment of military forces in the zone lingering between barrack life and that of traditional war fighting is immature. Nonetheless, eradicating war in its destructive and illegitimate format (African Union 2003 Ch. 1, Par. 1) as well as upholding defence diplomacy as a legitimate and cooperative policy instrument (Nyanda 2000) have both migrated into this inter-zone

between soft politics and the hard reality of war-fighting. The conceptual shifts implied by this migration represent a tough call for future military leaders for they have to adjust African military forces to deal with multiple mission environments for stamping out war and preventing it from returning.

## **5. From Political Ambitions to Defence Diplomacy**

In order to remain in step with shifting political initiatives, current African military leaders are responsible for tailoring the preparation, utilisation, and command of future African military institutions. African military forces are to be employed in a myriad of forms across the continent and can no longer merely draw upon haphazard combinations of national military capabilities (Cilliers & Malan 2005:2, De Coning 2004:20-21). This implies a diffusion of changes that will narrow down the void between political ambitions and an appropriate military policy instrument to support such ambitions.

Guiding African military institutions towards more constructive policy instruments to support political initiatives with more than war fighting, remains a deep challenge. One crucial domain is that of military leadership, which may affect or distort the required adjustments. If ignored, the desired shift from national to cooperative and from destructive to constructive military institutions is jeopardised. Illustrative of the shifts required from modern armed forces is the visionary argument by Moskos that even legitimate military forces have to be adjusted to a potential future warless society (as foreseen by the AU) and thus be kept in step with political change (Moskos 1994:138). Diversifying and adjusting, according to this outlook, is perhaps the primary matter with which African military leaders now have to grapple.

The UN is currently refining its interventionist roles for dealing with complex emergencies (Thakur 2003). The responsibility to protect through a ladder of prevention, intervention and reconstruction tie in and also direct the future use of military forces without resort to war fighting (Anan 2005). From an AU outlook the preference is that all states shall eventually adhere to the parameters stipulated by such a responsibility ladder, a matter reinforced by the shared UN-AU vision to establish and maintain peace and stability on the

African continent (Nathan 2005:365). This nexus performs a legitimising role for how the AU envisages its own alternatives of employing the military policy instrument.

Since 2002 the AU set in place conspicuous continental and regional arrangements to deal with complex emergencies and brutal internal conflicts impeding its African agenda (Schumer 2004:13). The military contribution to these arrangements is to be satisfied from within the continent by African military establishments, as these entities are now moved to the forefront of AU initiatives to tone down armed conflicts across the continent. National as well as sub-regional capacities and their designated policies form part of the AU outlook as all capabilities are ultimately to be collated into some overarching collective capability (Lekota 2003). This reflects a desired future of cooperative and interoperable military entities that are to adhere to higher order arrangements for conducting their missions (Thakur 2003).

Effectively, a deliberate AU effort is in process to establish a continental military mechanism to deal with an expanded spectrum of future military contingencies in a preventative or reactive way. This mental resolve took shape as continental experts on defence gathered in South Africa on 27 March 2003 to formulate a Common African Defence Policy (CADP) that paved the way for the preventative alternative to become the preferred option.<sup>6</sup> Future military missions to emanate from this politico-military arrangement are to include collective opposition to external military threats to the continent in order to prevent interstate conflicts and minimise intrastate conflicts, improved defence cooperation, collective defence capabilities, and military preparedness towards achieving the above feature in the AU outlook (Department of Foreign Affairs 2003: Art. 3). Military leaders are now called upon to set up and maintain military capabilities across the continent, including the African Standby Force as the heart of these military arrangements (Mbeki 2003).

The AU Commission on a Common African Defence and Security Policy

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6 The Common African Defence and Security Policy was adopted on 28 February, 2004 (Schumer 2004:6).

(CADSP) acknowledges the complexities of forging a common defence and security policy to direct legitimate future military coercion (African Union 2003: Part 3, Par. 33). Much of this is located at the politico-strategic level and is, therefore, not solely a military concern. Military leaders, however, will be expected to make it work via appropriate structures in the typical policy-strategy-structure hierarchy and put into effect the surge of diverse requests now flooding African military capacities.

## **6. Closing the Politico-military Divide: The Military Leadership Imperative**

Military leadership may be viewed as a process which orchestrates men and material towards performing their missions in war. Should the context or character of how political decision makers prefer to use military forces change, military leaders will be obliged to remain in step by adjusting their institutions accordingly. This is the reality now facing African political and military leaders.

African defence leaders now have to contend with a multilayered configuration of military demands and affairs located at the national, sub-regional and regional levels that straddle the war-peace divide (Schumer 2004:3, De Coning 2004:21). Collective military structures need to assimilate this emergent pattern that supposes a military capacity to execute decisions deriving from the African political hierarchy.<sup>7</sup> Emergent collective military entities, such as the African Standby Force and its regional brigades, are envisaged to fill this potential void, but they have to be managed and ultimately commanded to play their roles (Anan 2005, Cilliers & Malan 2005:2). This calls for reconciling military leaders with the array of post-modern influences impacting upon their operating domain (Moskos 2000:2-3) and for encouraging them to begin employing new mission profiles.

As of yet, the African outlook on using military forces has little to do with

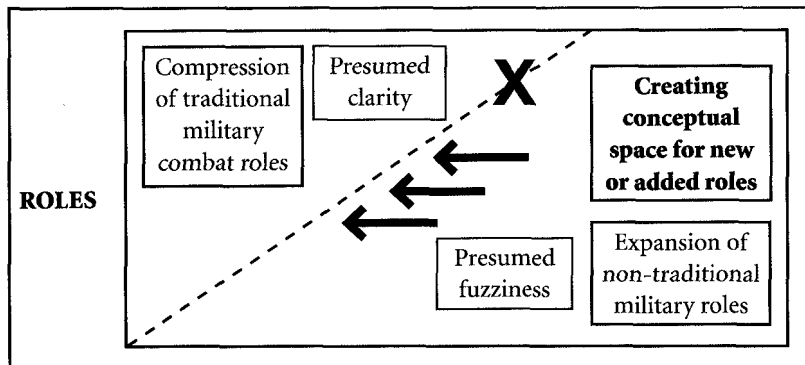
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7 See the next section.

refining and conducting warfare in a sophisticated manner, but more to do with preventing or terminating war by recasting legitimate military coercion accordingly. If fighting future wars in Africa is indeed deemed a luxury (Nyanda 2000:10) that depletes scarce public funding (Lekota 2001) and something to be eradicated (Mbeki 2003), military leadership becomes the filter through which desired changes are promoted. As these changes are diffused into military forces, the character of these forces is modified, and military leaders have to control this diffusion and its embracement or rejection.

Blurred borders between preferred military roles and imposed or encroaching non-military or add-on roles constitute a real challenge to those having to lead future military forces (Gray 2000:58). The hard military and softer security realms cluttering this domain are bound to be uprooted further by the pattern illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Traditional and Non-Traditional Military Roles**



Source: Own compilation

The frequency and extent to which political decision makers adjust the diagonal bar X in Figure 1 up or down, place some strain upon military leaders to support political decisions by means of appropriate military forces. This illustrates current AU practice to which the military leadership needs to respond. However, as argued by Gray, politics might be the guiding intelligence, but it is not necessarily clear and concise about what is expected from the military

leadership. Accordingly, political conceptions and the military response are rarely smooth and in a state of complete interface (Gray 2000:59).

## **7. Military Leadership: Supporting Political Integration with Military Interoperability**

As societies advance through different stages of development and are influenced by waves of change, they take their military institutions along (Toffler & Toffler 1997:xx). In this regard, the quest by African leaders for a united Africa and for systematically crafting continental arrangements and institutions to pursue common interests cannot be ignored – particularly not by the military leadership.

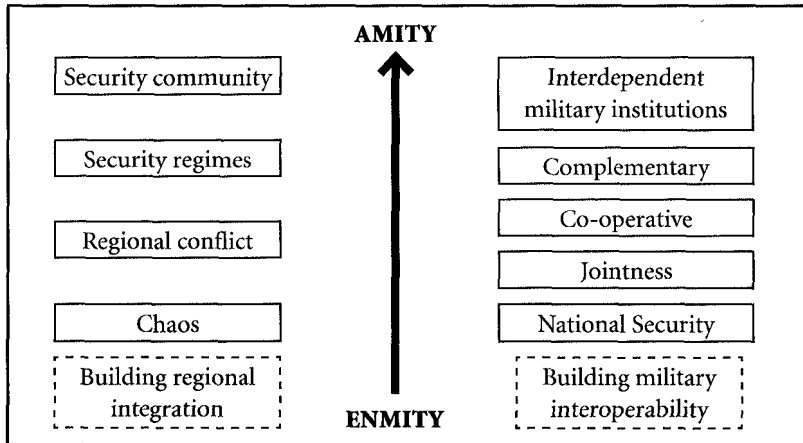
From a theoretical perspective, military institutions adjust in order to remain relevant to what society expects of them (Kuhlman 2003:419) and in Africa this is now paralleled by continental political ambitions which expect African military establishments to keep in step. As African futures of common peace, prosperity and cooperation mature, military institutions need to mature accordingly and these require them be more than mere national war-fighting institutions. Failure to adapt leads to outdated and meaningless instruments of policy and, as experienced in Africa, problem-militaries (Gompert et al 2004:7). The August 2005 coup in Mauritania and the country's expulsion from the AU only serve to underline the need for professional military forces.

As African political initiatives progress along a continuum delimited by amity and enmity, African societies migrate from competitive relations making for chaos and insecurity, towards cooperative order and security above the state-level (Buzan 1991:218). Military entities have to adjust alongside this enmity-amity migration with military leadership being responsible for transforming national war-fighting modes into modes of cooperation in an extended mission spectrum. Peace missions, policing functions, preventative and reconstructive roles by future African military establishments represent intermittent alternatives towards eradicating African wars. The responsibility of African military leaders has now been turned into integrative and collective routes towards a cooperative and interoperable military architecture (AU 2002:18).

Integrative and collective pathways towards African security dovetail with the UN's quest for multilateralism in all interventionist type activities (Thakur 2003). South African Defence Policy and its Military Strategy, for example, commit the South African National Defence Force to a cooperative Southern African and African futures paradigm.<sup>8</sup> African defence forces are also tied to a cooperative future posture in matters of common security as their governments become signatory to the African Union and the Peace and Security Council (AU 2002:18). This assumption, however, holds certain real dangers as briefly outlined in the last section of the paper.

Cooperative political ways and means are steadily institutionalised and are changing the overall profile of African military affairs. As African security becomes swept up in AU-driven adjustments, African defence institutions have to set in place their own programmes of adjustment. One way of illustrating this is to juxtapose political and military pathways forward, as illustrated in Figure 2 (Huysamen 2003).<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 2: From Enmity to Amity: Political and Military Adjustments**



Source: Compiled from Buzan 1991:218 and Huysamen 2003

8 The 2004/05 Defence Review shifted South African defence commitments to the extent that support to the AU and peace missions in Africa now feature as an integral part of its primary role.

Decisions at national level and above determine the shift towards or away from regional integration, a greater or lesser role for military institutions, future military interoperability and subsequently the command of particular force mixtures or packaged forces. Although vulnerable to criticism based upon sovereignty (as acknowledged by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty report on this matter) and being reactive in kind, this nonetheless represents some future certainty for military leaders (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001:12).

Figure 2 illustrates that future African commanders are to be prepared for more than incremental tactical and technical military shifts that normally characterise military change. This politico-military interface is prone to introduce an extended paradigm shift and calls for competent military leaders to solidify it. As opposed to technological-doctrinal type changes, deeper structural and cultural changes are confronting African military decision-makers. The move towards a Common Defence and Security Policy and an African Standby Force located as regional standby brigades to operate in the zone straddling the politico-military domain shift the military option closer to that of a constructive political tool (Stoppard 2003; African Union 2002:22-23).

## **8. Shifting the African Military Paradigm: Fact or Fiction?**

The extent to which a competitive outlook attracts support often implies the demise of existing outlooks and their supporters. It is difficult for such competing outlooks to even co-exist for a period of time before one eventually ascends to dominance. Once this transpires, researchers and supporters could adhere to the new paradigm and concentrate upon refining it (Kuhn 1970:19-20). This is, however, not a *fait accompli* as adherents to the *status quo* will defend it or

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9 The illustration of steps towards military interoperability is with reference to Col C. Huysamen of the Directorate Strategy (SANDF) and his ideas of interoperability as a strategic tool.



introduce their own adjustments to counter anomalies. The resultant anomaly is either addressed or it assumes crisis proportions and draws increasing attention in order to resolve the crisis or it defies new approaches and remains a problem in the field (Kuhn 1970:82-83,84).

Considering the warnings by Kuhn (1972), recasting African military institutions into a desired cooperative future profile is in no way a brief or simplistic venture. Several entrapments threaten the pathway of military change whilst both radical embracement and intransigence hold dangers of their own. Attempting any deep changes to the mission profiles of African military forces would need to contend with the theory that posits such changes to be long and incremental, rather than deep and rapid. It is furthermore quite possible that expecting all African militaries to migrate successfully may be unduly optimistic.

Different African countries need to adjust their military institutions towards new military futures of cooperation and legitimacy, but they are bound to move at different rates and arrive at the desired outcome at different times (Owens 2002:58). Gagliano (2002) for example projects the time line towards future interoperability for African military forces along a pathway touching upon 2040, whilst the ASF is envisaged to be in place by 2010-2015 to execute the full scope of future missions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004; De Coning 2004:21). These time lines correspond with the theory depicting long time frames for military transformations as an extended period of change is at hand. (Demchak & Allen 2001:110) and the changes argued here challenge established thinking on how to use African military forces.

Effecting the required shifts demand from senior military leadership an intellectual brightness to individually or collectively lead the way. Gaining control over promotions and advancing careers of officers supporting the new paradigm of war, victory and missions are crucial. This allows leeway to those judged as competent and experienced to promote and institute innovations and deep change (Rosen 1991:20-21). A core of military leaders supporting the military adjustments required by African politicians is prone to effect, over time, the required military changes. Selection and promotion plays a crucial role to merge political ambitions and military support. This is more important than personal and party-political loyalties of officers.

Since the inception of the AU (2002) and the Peace and Security Council (2004), political calls for conducting expanded defence diplomacy rose sharply.<sup>10</sup> Contrasting the *status quo* with future expectations implies changes to African strategic culture – a phenomenon often judged immune to rapid change. Strategic culture relates to states having distinct, consistent and persistent patterns of thinking about employing military force, and to different states reacting differently to realities of the strategic environment (Isaacson 1999:19). Heikka (2002:6) calls attention to ‘the perceptions, beliefs, ideas, and norms that guide national security elites in their task of setting strategic priorities for the hard core of a state’s foreign and security policy’. It is of importance, however, that strategic cultures do not apply across state boundaries and that they change slowly, so that rapid political shifts are rarely accompanied by rapid military shifts (Heikka, 2002:6). A strategic gap is quite inevitable, but managing it is a traditional burden for military leaders. The current generation of African commanders would therefore be responsible to close this void.

Merely embracing new political demands without considering the disruptive impact upon orderly and effective military institutions is dangerous. Enforced military adjustments are known for their disruptive effects and political leadership is normally insensitive to this, with reigning political ambitions often tempered by the military quest to maintain orderly militaries (Evans 2001:7). Expecting from African military forces to rapidly fill national, sub-regional and continental political expectations hold the potential of disruption. In the case of Africa the orderliness and effectiveness of the military institutions on which the AU depends are perhaps questionable from the outset. At most only certain African military establishments are bound to make the transition required by the political leadership.

A further obstacle resides in the costs of adjusting military forces. According to Cilliers and Malan (2005:6,16) Africa has a limited capacity to

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10 Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, Ivory Coast, Darfur, Somalia and Liberia are but some examples where the AU called upon African military establishments to support diplomatic initiatives.

employ and fund military missions to address African complex emergencies and this is the major obstacle to move from political vision to the goal of peace and prosperity. Not only conceptual factors, but also material factors such as technology and resources feature when military forces need to be adjusted towards new missions (Raitasalo & Sipila, 2000:246). It could be argued that the conceptual-material nexus is bound to represent the deepest challenge to African political ambitions for it is political endeavours that acquire and allocate resources for military leadership to employ. This employment presupposes military forces sufficiently adjusted to assume more constructive roles to eradicate African wars. Furthermore, any dramatic shift of the functioning of a military establishment to assume new roles and to adjust its organisational and doctrinal profile is not only difficult, but capital intensive as well. Developed countries such as Britain, France and Germany that struggle to finance the adjustment of their military establishments to also conduct non-traditional roles or so-called Projects for Peace, demonstrate the difficulty of this adjustment. The process of military change is thus expensive and difficult and it, therefore, moves forward at a very slow pace (Unterseher 1999).

Political expectations that all countries would summarily partake in continental and regional arrangements to afford political initiatives with a malleable military clout, are questionable. National priorities do not necessarily match continental demands upon military forces. This is demonstrated in southern Africa where states are careful to commit themselves. In fact, a schism runs through the responses to the envisaged plan of establishing some cooperative military capacity (Nathan 2005:366-367). African solidarity and isolation is a powerful feature of continental political relations (Nathan 2005:368) and the shift of military forces towards continental agendas is vulnerable to such political ploys. Elevating the military profile also does not sit comfortably with the professed holistic security approach towards human security and could well resemble an expensive exercise in military re-engineering of African military culture.

## 9. Conclusion

The departing argument of this article contrasted the alternatives of using armed force either in a destructive or in a more constructive mode, as often ascribed to Clausewitzian dictums and those of Sun Tzu respectively. As the Cold War faded the use of military forces below the threshold of war fighting increasingly featured as a necessary, but underdeveloped or even neglected alternative. Currently this alternative for the comprehensive use of armed forces below the threshold of war, or not using them at all, competes with the established competitive war-fighting paradigm forged by the Cold War. Subsequently, maintaining the status quo or moving towards a new paradigm that acknowledges a new conception of war, appropriate organisational adjustments and redirected material resources, became crucial.

War fighting is not an unavoidable straitjacket for the future use of military forces and the view is held that they could be adjusted to an extent not always realised. Using military forces below the war-fighting threshold has now become the preferred practice of the AU. Staying in line with the UN and its quest for international peace, the AU set one of its foremost objectives as the eradication of war from the African landscape, but not through the use of the war-fighting qualities of African military forces. In this regard, the AU imposed upon military leaders the responsibility to adjust the profile of African military forces to support the ambition of peace and security with more constructive military initiatives. This preference reflects a move away from the Clausewitzian dictums towards those posited by Sun Tzu and recently reiterated by Moskos, Dandekker, Prins, Tromp, Raitasalo and Sipila.

The political realisation that defence diplomacy remains relevant increases the need for legitimate African military forces in terms of their readiness to assist African democratisation. The need is thus political, but satisfying it is partly the responsibility of military leaders who have to effect the conceptual, organisational and material adjustments. African military leaders are required to shift African military forces past *ad hoc* cooperation for short robust peace missions by adjusting the reigning paradigm within the African military psyche. Legitimacy, continental integration and eventual interoperability are

longer-term requirements to refurbish the desired military policy instrument required by the AU.

Changes to the culture of armed forces are notoriously difficult to effect and military leaders need to act as catalysts to reconcile political ambitions with more constructive African defence establishments. This difficulty is exacerbated by the financial implications, for the current view is on funding employment costs while assuming that the difficulties and costs of moving towards more constructive roles are resolved. Failure to fund and effect the full hierarchy of required changes at the conceptual, organisational and material levels threatens to leave African leaders devoid of the military policy instrument to which they have now become accustomed. Such failure could also cause African military establishments to again contribute to African pessimism.

Moving African armed forces into the domain between war fighting and peace is fraught with vulnerabilities emanating from inherent military aversion to change, but also from over-ambitious political views of how rapidly, deep and cheaply such adjustments may be effected. The conceptual shift depicted by political ambitions needs to be matched by the organisational and material shifts at the military level. Institutional inabilities and competitive military responsibilities are bound to obstruct or slow down the military migration. In this way the near paradigmatic shift towards constructive military forces suited for missions below the threshold of war fighting proper becomes a viable, but difficult pathway to pursue African futures devoid of war.

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