

# MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN POST- CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICAN PEACE-BUILDING

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## **Abstract**

Post-conflict transformation is a difficult task, since renewed violence frequently flares up after peace treaties have been signed. Failure to end conflict often results from misinterpretations of the roots or an inability of the conflict to create suitable exit strategies for military forces. Reintegration of soldiers and non-state armed actors entails delicate and complex procedures, which are central in maintaining security in a newly created democracy. These all point to the important role of the military in post-conflict transformation. The focus of the study on which this article is based, was on evaluating the role and place of military forces in post-conflict peace-building activities. These activities relate to diverse peacekeeping experiences in Africa, and focused on flaws and challenges in post-conflict peace-building missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and the Central African Republic; post-conflict transformation and development; security sector reform; and South Africa's participation as member of the Southern African Development Community.

**Key words:** external, internal military forces, post-conflict peace-building, security sector reform, SADC participation.

## **Introduction**

Peacekeeping is a 50-year-old United Nations (UN) initiative that has grown swiftly in Africa over the past two decades from a traditional, mainly military model of observing ceasefires and force separations after intrastate wars to integrate a complex model of military and civilian participation in peace-building in the unsafe after-effects of civil wars. Peacekeeping is intended to support the policy

*Scientia Militaria, South African  
Journal of Military Studies, Vol  
45, No. 1, 2017, pp. 1–20.  
doi : 10.5787/45-1-1192*

and maintenance of situations favouring long-term conflict resolution and peace-building.<sup>1</sup> A complex peace operation implies joining peacekeeping with peace-building, which relates to “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and [build] ... something that is more than just the absence of war”.<sup>2</sup>

Military officers in peace-building efforts are enlisted personnel from different services and countries, participating with multinational agents of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international civil servants and individual diplomats, all having diverse institutional backgrounds.<sup>3</sup> Depending on the mandate of the mission authorised by the UN Security Council (UNSC), military officers serve in electoral, UN police and human rights groups and in delegations from UN programmes and agencies. UN missions are linked to regional organisations and alliances, prominently the African Union (AU) and sub-regional organisations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with their member states, as well as the European Union (EU). The number of agencies participating in multidimensional missions has greatly expanded owing to the increase in operational goals, now including human security principles through state-building, government-sector reform and peace-building. The asymmetric context of operations is becoming increasingly complex, mostly in situations with high levels of enduring conflict and volatility.<sup>4</sup> Peacekeepers are thrust into complex and dangerous tasks, such as weapons control, roadblocks and attacks on military patrols, refugee relief work, post-conflict reconstruction and election certification. These unconventional, asymmetric roles are not the preserve of the military, and are turning soldiers from trained warriors into peacekeepers deployed by a Chapter VII UNSC mandate.

Peacekeepers are required to have sound understanding of and appreciation for cultural diversities and different norms and traditions of host societies, and to demonstrate extraordinary carefulness, self-control and insight into other cultures, to avoid reflecting poorly on the UN mission. Intercultural factors are significant, as most conflicts stem from religion and ethnicity, as reported through interviews of 94 returning South African National Defence Force (SANDF) peacekeepers participating in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi.<sup>5</sup> Post-conflict reconstruction projects often fail owing to insufficient cultural knowledge, which can aggravate negative public opinion and hostility towards peacekeepers.<sup>6</sup> Irrespective of how many training courses peacekeepers may have attended, the reality of applying human security principles in unconventional, asymmetric conflict is far removed from the mentality of some African militaries, also at command levels.<sup>7</sup> UN peacekeeping and post-conflict

peace-building are demanding, dangerous tasks as were proved by Heinecken and Ferreira<sup>8</sup> in an in-depth qualitative research project employing questionnaires on the operational experiences of 94 SANDF peacekeepers.

Heinecken and Ferreira's main research question centred on the role and place of military forces in post-conflict peace-building activities. The study aimed to evaluate these roles and the place of forces by scrutinising peacekeeping experiences, flaws and challenges in post-conflict peace-building missions in the DRC, Burundi and Sudan, post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) and security sector reform. Military forces have vital roles to play in the eventual success of post-conflict peace-building. External militaries or peacekeepers have to create a security environment in which peace-building efforts can prosper and prevent internal forces from damaging the fragile stability created in post-conflict situations. Internal, national forces must be under democratic civil control and be restructured and retrained to become assets, not liabilities, in the long-term peace-building process. The roles of external militaries (peacekeeping/peace-building), those of internal forces (national security sector reform) and the interaction of these forces are important.<sup>9</sup> The value of security sector reform for national, regional and international security is esteemed by security aides and recipient societies, although recipients are sceptical about the conditions for improvement and about external actors imposing their own institutional and structural preferences in post-conflict transition, since earlier programmes were often ill-conceived and poorly implemented.<sup>10</sup>

Regional economic communities (RECs), such as the SADC and ECOWAS, developed in Africa as important participants and economic focal points in PCRD processes, but challenges are experienced in implementing strategies, as peace and security activities remain limited. The role the South African government could play in PCRD through the SANDF is explored here, since its declared foreign policy is to lead in multilateral forums to solve problems regarding the international community, including the SADC.<sup>11</sup>

### **Post-Conflict Transformation and Development**

After 17 years of almost continual conflict in the DRC, causing 2,5 million internally displaced people to flee their homes, post-conflict transformation is yet to be addressed. Originally, people directly concerned in violent conflict had to bear the consequences and the burden of PCRD primarily on their own, but a new human security debate on principles and insights emerged in the 1990s, discussing security threats emanating from five sectors: military, political, economic, social and environmental. The UN portrayed human security as a people-centred

approach (rather than state-centred), describing the most basic components as ‘freedom from fear and want’, and asserting that it should offer safety from chronic threats, such as hunger, disease and political repression.<sup>12</sup> An all-encompassing, holistic approach to the security of citizens was propagated to ensure stability in society, based on a functionalist theoretical perspective. The main premise is that military matters of institutional nature are regarded as organised systems of activities directed to reach specific goals or fulfil manifest functions (post-conflict transformation and development) in order to maintain stability and for the survival of the greater societal system. A definite link was made between human security, transformation and development, focusing on the termination of war and the rebuilding of post-war societies as crucial for transformation.

Terminating violence has failed repeatedly for reasons ranging from misinterpretation of the roots of the conflict to an inability to find suitable exit strategies for multinational peacekeepers from troop-contributing countries, enabling peacekeepers not to withdraw prematurely, but to stay for the duration of the PCRD project to achieve successful transformation. Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali introduced the concept of post-conflict peace-building in his 1992 Agenda for Peace, as an important step in the sequence of preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peacekeeping.<sup>13</sup> According to another former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, post-conflict peace-building refers to actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to strengthen and consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of armed conflict. Experience has shown that consolidation of peace in the aftermath of conflict requires more than purely diplomatic and military action. An integrated peace-building effort is needed as part of the many factors constituting post-conflict transformation. The UN Agenda for Peace has been proved insufficient for meeting humanitarian and security imperatives. The need to realign humanitarian interventions with military peacekeeping was acknowledged.<sup>14</sup> The UN tasked the Brahimi Panel to estimate the inadequacies in order to endorse change, and in August 2000, the Brahimi Report deliberated the state of UN peace operations, the shortcomings and enduring failures. Recommendations were made to align humanitarian interventions and to employ larger, well-resourced military forces with clear, credible and achievable mandates and specific authority to use force as a deterrent, while accepting the risk of operational casualties.<sup>15</sup> Although it emphasised that the UN “does not wage war”, the reality of robust peacekeeping is such that the UN now finds itself in situations where it must take vigorous action to protect civilians, such as in the DRC in 2013. For the first time in the 65-year history of UN missions, an offensive mandate was granted. The responsibility to protect became the task of the military, while states

ceded their sovereignty to protect civilians to military forces to prevent, react and rebuild.

On 28 March 2013, the UNSC (Resolution 2098) granted the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) an unprecedented Chapter VII mandate by authorising targeted offensive operations allowing “neutralisation of armed groups in the east of the DRC”,<sup>16</sup> specifying the elimination of the entrenched rebel movement, M23, and the protection of civilians from rebel forces in eastern DRC.

Post-conflict peace-building is a multidimensional, political process of transformation from violent conflict to stability and peace, needing “a multifaceted approach, covering diplomatic, political and economic factors”.<sup>17</sup> Suitable measures and timetables are essential, including exit strategies for the military to ensure sustainability. This converts into a particularly difficult and awkward undertaking, since peace-building does not replace ongoing humanitarian and development activities in countries emerging from crisis. It aims rather to build, add and orientate activities designed to decrease the risk of enduring conflict and to create conditions facilitating reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty states that the durable goal of international actors in post-conflict situations is ‘to do themselves out of a job’ by establishing political procedures, requiring local actors to continue commitments for rebuilding societies, and creating participation between hostile groups.<sup>18</sup>

In peace-building, intervening militaries operate in a milieu of fragile peace and order. They are confronted by local militaries and paramilitaries still to be integrated into post-conflict societies after months or years of engagement in violent struggles against each other and against the civilian population. External and national militaries are expected to unite to establish sustainable peace in the unstable environment. A dual transformation process is required, since external militaries of troop-contributing countries must meet the new challenges of peacekeeping, support and peace-building tasks, while internal militaries, paramilitaries and police forces must be transformed and integrated into acceptable, legitimate and democratic security structures. Relationships supporting an environment enabling broader, sustainable peace-building performance are challenging.<sup>19</sup>

### **Post-Conflict Peace-Building and Security Sector Reform**

Effective peace-building needs in-depth reform of society’s security sector, requiring active involvement of military, economic and political actors. The

security sector includes all organisations that have the authority to use force, or to order the use thereof, to protect the state, its citizens and civil structures accountable for management and oversight. Security reform supports peace-building, focusing on military assistance and civilian partners in peace operations. The guidelines on reform define the wider security system, involving actors, roles and duties to manage the system through democratic norms and wide-ranging principles of good governance, supporting a well-functioning security framework through the following key role players:<sup>20</sup>

- **Core security actors** are firstly the armed forces, which comprised of the military, police, paramilitaries, presidential guards, intelligence and security services, coastguards, customs authorities, and local security units.
- **Security management and oversight bodies** comprised of the executive and legislative select committees, defence ministries, internal and foreign affairs, customary authorities, financial ministries, audit and planning units, review boards and public grievances commissions.
- **Justice and law enforcement institutions** comprised of the judiciary, justice ministries, prisons, criminal investigation and prosecution services, human rights commissions and ombudsmen, customary and traditional justice systems.

The socio-economic, governance and security dimensions of a fragile environment are mutually reinforced by cooperating internal and external actors, leading to an integrated approach to development of conflict resolution and prevention within the multidimensional, political, economic and societal framework of PCRD.

### **Role of the Military in Peace-Building Missions**

Since the 1990s, most brutal conflicts have occurred in Africa. Despite some 20 peace-building operations in Africa over the past 25 years, there is still no cohesive strategy to target key areas in rebuilding war-torn countries. Conflict transformation, referring to long peace-making and peace-building processes, is difficult, as renewed violence breaks out regularly between governments and non-state actors, despite peace accords. Militaries regularly play political roles in peace negotiations, reintegration of soldiers, contact with non-state actors and application of human security principles in post-conflict political transition, but they often withdraw once peace negotiations have started or the state has won a military victory.

It is clear that a military approach to peace missions needs to include developmental, economic and governance support to ensure lasting stability and human security. Armed forces must be equipped and trained for these multiple roles, which were previously regarded as secondary functions, but are now priorities in humanitarian peace missions. The South African Army's strategy for PCRD in Africa, developed and based on the 2006 AU PCRD Needs Assessment Guide, is used as a parameter together with South African policy imperatives to integrate development projects and peace missions involving military and civilian organisations.<sup>21</sup> Particular processes are required to develop a sustainable and cohesive PCRD strategy in the African environment.

As implied, the roles of external and internal military forces and the process of security sector reform are key elements of PCRD, including the rebuilding of political institutions, security and economic structures. External military forces must be ready to cope with diverse tasks, such as reinstatement of order, support for local forces, disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) of fighters, facilitation of security sector reform, monitoring of elections, demining, securing the repatriation of refugees and protection of human rights. DDRR processes of ex-combatants and child soldiers must be prioritised, including skills training and long-term reform programmes to ensure security for them and their families. Proliferation of small arms must be limited by collecting arms, initiating buy-back programmes and enhanced internal control to avoid the distribution of weapons and a return to violence. Actions of external militaries must serve as integral parts of the overall transformation of the specific post-conflict society.

In most post-conflict societies, political institutions are absent or greatly weakened. While there is an excess of war ordnance and weaponry, there is little or no civil control over military and police forces, and mistrust and economic scarcity determine political and social relations. The gradual formation of democratic and legitimate state institutions and a functioning civil society is key in establishing stability, as are efforts to ensure that civil-military relations are restructured and based on democratic principles for military and police forces to enhance, not threaten, the security of the state and society. The military as a state institution is primarily an instrument to guarantee external security for the state and society and takes its orders from the state (*civis*), called 'state or civil control' over the military. Although the term 'civilian control' is frequently used, Chuter<sup>22</sup> questions it and is not in favour of using it, since the term 'civilian control' "is an accident of language rather than anything else". As a term, it adds little clarity, and should rather be discarded, since the military takes orders from the democratically elected state, or *civis*.<sup>23</sup> 'Civil control' refers to the obedience and loyalty the military owes

the *civis*, the state. The military upholds order by advising on the formulation of defence policy and by serving to implement it. It so happens that the individual personalities to whom the military has this civic duty, such as the responsible Cabinet Minister and the President, are civilians. According to Chuter,<sup>24</sup> if anything is wrong with civil-military relations, it is because the military is not prepared to acknowledge this partnership and does not adhere to orders. The minimisation of the power of the military through civil control is not the only issue of interest in civil-military relations, because the military has an important role to play in the institutionalisation of human security and humanitarian peace missions.<sup>25</sup>

Internal security structures and militaries tend to lack civil and democratic control, cohesion, proficiency and public credibility. The relational goals between civilians and the military are that civilians make policy decisions, but do not interfere in military matters, and the military does not intrude on civilian supremacy. In Africa, however, non-state actors, like donors and militaries, mostly operate in undemocratic governments, but there is “not necessarily a good relationship between the military and civilians”.<sup>26</sup> In African countries, it is not generally recognised that the military is subordinate to the polity. The opinion about civil-military relations is that countries are either undemocratic, or democratic governance is explicitly used to avoid civil-military relations.<sup>27</sup>

External militaries, regional organisations and the UN can be of assistance in restructuring and retraining post-conflict militaries by creating a security milieu, preventing dissidents from obstructing the delicate peace-building process and aiding reform. Positive security reform ensures that weak states do not revert to violence, but rather unite responsible governance between local stakeholders and international donor communities to ensure reform efforts. According to Karuru,<sup>28</sup> Africa is unable to build its peace and security programmes without the assistance of donor organisations, such as the UN and its affiliates. The African Standby Force (ASF) constitutes military personnel from diverse countries, cooperating with difficulty, because of cultural and language issues. These forces are mostly trained by private security companies paid by international donors, raising questions regarding cohesiveness and possible deficiencies of training. Karuru<sup>29</sup> suggests that relevant rules of engagement and ethics be held by related donor associations, since they have become indispensable non-state actors in missions. However, the operationalization of the five brigades of the ASF is fraught with problems. These are the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in West Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in southern Africa, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in central Africa, the Eastern Africa Standby Force



(EASF) in the east, and the North African Regional Capability (NARC) in the north. The primary task of these brigades is to train and keep the 25 000 troops ready for service at any time. The challenges the AU faces in 2017 are very different from the period in 2003/2004 when the ASF was conceptualized. Cedric de Coning states in an interview with Lesley Connolly of the *Global Peace Operations Review* on 29 February 2016 that “African peace operations are unique, and not just deficient UN peace operations. Africa does not need saviours, but partners...Those that still base their relationship with the AU around capacity-building and development need to adapt to the fact that any relationship with the AU today should be about strategic partnership.”<sup>30</sup>

The ASF is a capacity-building tool, but is unlikely to deploy a regional brigade. However, should that happen, the ASF structures need to adapt to that specific role.<sup>31</sup> Unsatisfied by the slow progress of the ASF, a number of West African states set up an equivalent crisis resolution mechanism in 2012, called the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) as an interim alternative. Only recently it was declared that the ASF is now operational, but this does not mean everything is in place and progressing positively.

Schirch<sup>32</sup> believes that someone using the term ‘peace-building’ sees the military as an essential component of these missions. Peace-building uses military means to identify the roots of conflict and the longer-term needs of the people. Many militaries operate mainly on the basis of national interests, which are frequently not in accordance with human rights and values that guide peace-building, since military personnel get trapped trying to fulfil multiple opposing goals, such as successfully securing democracy in the DRC and South Sudan. They also acquire access to oil and economic contracts for rebuilding.

Participating militaries facilitate the political, economic and social transformation from a war-torn society to one seeking long-term peace. The mere existence of military forces may deter the return to violence, while troops engage in active rebuilding tasks. When external forces withdraw, local militaries have to continue offering security tasks to prevent inadequate security sector reform.<sup>33</sup>

### *Training requirements for military personnel*

Conventional military doctrine and training address asymmetric, unconventional peace missions and peace-building inadequately. Peacekeepers are not provided with the unique range of asymmetric and humanitarian skills required for the diverse, complex challenges to be met in national military training. Some nations are wary of the negative effect peace-building might have on the combat

readiness of their troops, but emphasise that peace-building missions do offer unique opportunities for peacekeepers in diverse in-theatre environments, generating useful skills even for conventional warfare.<sup>34</sup> According to Heitman,<sup>35</sup> training programmes need to be sustained to ensure conventional and asymmetric warfare training, otherwise troops will be insufficiently trained and ill-equipped, as weaponry will be unusable and force infrastructure destroyed. Distinct structures should be provided to address all stages from early warning to conflict prevention, interventions and peace-building. Implementation remains challenging, but if a logical, clear foundation for operations exists, challenges may be overcome in African armed forces. Therefore, mission-specific training is deemed to be the most appropriate, for example, in the SANDF, to counteract diverse challenges in unconventional missions.

Appropriate training and conversion to civil control are needed, enhancing the capacity for contributing to peace legitimately.<sup>36</sup> In places like South Sudan, the DRC, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Burundi, the issue is complex, since solutions to ethnic and religious conflicts require robust diplomacy between governments, international supporters and detractors. Instant peacekeeping is needed to protect refugee communities and internally displaced people from more attacks; yet, some peacekeepers do not have good track records of respecting human rights. There is extensive evidence that rather than protecting refugees, they have committed sexual offences against women in Sierra Leone, Burundi, the DRC and the CAR. Peace-building is a process of building relationships and institutions that support peaceful conflict transformation. Exit strategies should be planned well to ensure that peacekeepers stay the duration of the mission to complete all aspects of peace-building. Logistic weaknesses of low serviceability of vehicles, insufficient airlift support for rapid deployment of troops, inadequate medical support, and insufficient force readiness hamper peace-building efforts.

According to Williams,<sup>37</sup> the number of UN peacekeepers was then the highest ever, with nearly 110 000 uniformed soldiers deployed worldwide, mostly in Africa. However, the status quo is unsustainable; unrealistic mandates, weak personnel, hostile host governments and mission creep have weakened peace operations. Until 2015, the USA trained over 250 000 African peacekeepers and paid nearly \$1 billion to support peacekeeping activities. However, these programmes provided a “broad rather than deep approach to training African peacekeepers” while not “encouraging African contributors to become self-sufficient”.<sup>38</sup> It is suggested that the focus of assistance programmes be shifted from training and equipping peacekeepers to building sustainable national peacekeeping institutions.

*Goals and challenges of peace-building missions*

External militaries and actors are tasked with two important **goals**: pointing security sector reform in the right direction during their presence in the conflict area and ensuring that local militaries and actors are capably trained and equipped to continue peace-building. Simultaneously, internal militaries must collaborate with external security agents and provide visible results; otherwise, external actors may lose interest and withdraw political and financial backing. Important difficulties in this process are that internal elites are often not interested in transparency, accountability and legitimacy, while external actors are often not interested in long-term commitment. In African peace missions, like the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), civilians and the military seldom participate well. This implies continuous re-evaluation of tasks in peace-building operations.<sup>39</sup> Most goals are interrelated and part of post-conflict settlements and mandates; thus, transparency of the security sector must be reinforced and regional confidence-building devices be endorsed by launching strong sub-regional organisations, conflict prevention, mediation and resolution techniques, including civil society in regional dialogues and development. Both sub-regional organisations, SADC and ECOWAS, have created conflict management structures to manage peace-building missions and goals for more holistic approaches.<sup>40</sup>

As mainly non-military actors provide political, economic and social assistance, military actors must respect the 'do no harm' principle; that is, avoid making things worse than they already are. The military provides internal security to facilitate economic and political regulation (the return of refugees or preparation for elections). It disarms warring parties and neutralises belligerents who threaten to rekindle war and intergroup hatred. External militaries secure the post-conflict environment, assist in reforming the security sector and contribute to reconstruction. These are the main goals of the military's post-conflict activities, which are addressed with the consent of a reform-oriented government.<sup>41</sup>

After withdrawing external military forces and donor organisations from conflict areas, security sector policy must be implemented and upheld by local actors to guarantee its functioning beyond the presence of foreign assistance. The goals of political, economic, legal, social and security sector reform must be strengthened in post-conflict societies to enable civilian expertise in defence, justice and internal ministries to launch independent audit offices, civilian review boards for police forces, penal institutions and parliamentary committees and civil control of militaries, policing and internal affairs. Respect for fundamental human and legal rights must be promoted and guaranteed.

Most military forces in advanced democracies – not necessarily including African militaries – are themselves in a process of organisational change, becoming postmodern militaries, which is an ideal-typical developmental construct developed by Moskos.<sup>42</sup> These military forces are categorised by six challenges.

- The traditional values of honour and of defending the homeland/country are increasingly challenged by universal values such as freedom, democracy and justice.
- Although fighting abilities remain important, other humanitarian tasks or so-called ‘missions other than war’ are gaining relevance. Postmodern soldiers are expert warriors and also humanitarian peacekeepers, policemen, diplomats and social workers.
- Mounting pressure exists for international (UN/AU) authorisation of external intervention in peacekeeping and peace-building, which is irregular in the traditional sense.
- The military is steadily becoming multinational, such as NATO’s (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, Eurocorps, the UN Standby High Readiness Brigade and the FIB in the DRC.
- A long-term organisational change in military affairs is guiding irregular warfare and intervention.
- Postmodern soldiers are met with growing privatisation of violence and the imminent security predicament this produces in society.

This ideal-typical development construct of organisational changes and challenges can be suitably applied to the SANDF peacekeeping and peace-building efforts.<sup>43</sup>

### **SANDF Peace-Building as a SADC Member**

South Africa has participated in peace missions in Africa since 1999. Its efforts to establish peace and stability and to strengthen democracy and economic development are central to its foreign policy. It is crucial to prevent the spill-over of intrastate wars across national borders through conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peace-building. As an SADC member, South Africa plays a role in peace and security issues, but the SADC currently has limited capacity to implement peace-building, as the capacity lies with individual member states.

The DRC peacekeeping mission is the largest, most expensive in UN history, costing billions of dollars and more than 20 000 troops at one stage, while 40 nations participated in 2009. The SANDF contributed to several DRC missions and facilitated peace-building to effect conflict transformation. The roles and functions of the SANDF changed drastically from those of warriors to those of peacekeepers in humanitarian missions, depending on the mandate. At least three

main phases can be identified in a mission: intervention, when the main work is done by the militaries; reconstruction, with shared responsibilities; and rebuilding, which should be managed to a large extent by civilian organisations. Political legitimacy and cost-effectiveness are the most vital benefits of multinational forces. The operational effectiveness of military forces has nevertheless long been a contentious issue, and there is wide consensus on possible sources of inefficiency in joint operations.<sup>44</sup>

The actual experiences of peacekeepers in Burundi, the DRC and Sudan were researched by Heineken and Ferreira.<sup>45</sup> It was reported by 94 SANDF members interviewed after returning from peacekeeping that missions were complex, vicious and protracted. This placed heavy demands on them, since the conditions under which they had to serve were difficult and resources available to them were inadequate. Experiences were analysed according to –

- operational experiences;
- the challenges posed by the rules of engagement;
- shortcomings in their training and education;
- readiness;
- interactions with other role players, such as local armies in the operational area.

The findings described a real sense of how challenging, stressful and also gratifying missions were and what needed to be done to improve the contribution by South Africa as a leading nation in Africa. Issues could be seen as lessons learnt and shortcomings in terms of cohesion, cooperation and overall stress of peacekeepers. More attention is suggested in terms of inter-agency cooperation, which could improve effectiveness of peacekeepers.<sup>46</sup>

The challenges of PCRDR are daunting, especially when the DRC, CAR, Sudan and Burundi are plunged into ethnic and religious violence once again after being peaceful for a while. As the intensity of intrastate conflict increased in Africa, RECs became significant role players in implementing PCRDR. The SADC, based in Gaborone, is the REC in sub-Saharan Africa that has mainly dealt with peace and security matters in the region.<sup>47</sup> However, its PCRDR undertakings have been restricted, since the SADC defines peace and security as state-centric, even though it is intended to promote security in the broader sense, including human security.<sup>48</sup> Human security relates to “freedom from fear and want”, which is not yet the focus of the SADC. Its conception of peace and security is based on prevention and peacekeeping, but not much is said on activities taking place after conflict has ended to improve human security. The perception of the SADC’s early-warning system is based on a state-centric mechanism. Thus, its peace-

building approach is reactive and relates to the traditional conception of security and sovereignty, as opposed to human security. The SADC chooses mediation over intervention, and canvasses for elections but does not follow up with peace-building and PCRD efforts. This approach to conflict will certainly not lead to enduring solutions, since it does not allow scope to address the root causes of conflict. Moreover, the push for elections often triggers new conflict, while the disposition to security was completely disturbed when SADC members intervened militarily in the DRC FIB in 2013 against M23 rebels in eastern DRC. This was an exceptional case, but the reason could be that many SADC member states have business interests in the DRC.<sup>49</sup> This controversial action is opposed to the conception of SADC policy, which does not yet adhere to human security principles, and when the AU insists on the implementation of PCRD, it is often met with resistance. Lack of implementation is mostly due to constraints in human capacity and a highly centralised decision-making structure, which causes delays.<sup>50</sup> To implement peace-building in the SADC eventually, a broader holistic approach will have to be adopted to include human security principles emphasising that economic, cultural and social development and the security of people and states are inextricably linked.<sup>51</sup> Conditions must be created for political and socio-economic reconstruction of governmental institutions, while the disarmament, demobilisation, reinsertion and repatriation (DDRR) of refugees and internally displaced people, women, children and the elderly must be implemented. Ensuring people's quality of life must include basic needs, such as healthcare, jobs, education and rural development. Elections are monitored to prevent social and political upheavals, and to enable the development of democratic institutions of member states to facilitate funding for reintegration and reconstruction programmes.<sup>52</sup>

### *Ending the conflict burden in Africa*

While peace and prosperity continue to elude Africa five decades after independence and constant peacekeeping is necessary, the AU signed a solemn declaration in 2013 to mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to end the conflict burden and to work for peace and prosperity.<sup>53</sup> The goals of the declaration are to rid Africa of violent conflicts, human rights violations and humanitarian disasters, and to prevent genocide. More ambitiously, leaders pledged not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation and to end wars and “silencing the guns” on the continent by 2020, indicating the aspiration for a peaceful and secure Africa as the most crucial priority, while proactive prevention of intrastate conflict rather than reactive intervention is suggested. The declaration is part of the AU's Agenda 2063

vision, entitled “The Africa We Want”.<sup>54</sup> This envisions an integrated, affluent and peaceful Africa, governed by its own citizens and representing a dynamic armed force in the international arena. The deadline for silencing the guns of belligerents and militaries in intrastate wars, is only three years away. Turmoil, insecurity and instability prevail mostly in South Sudan, the CAR and the DRC where SANDF peacekeepers are participating in diverse roles and tasks. A SANDF paratrooper, Busi Mokhothu, died in December 2016 during protests by Mai-Mai rebels to reinstate President Kabila for another term, ignoring the so-called ‘democratic system’. According to Jakkie Cilliers<sup>55</sup> of the Institute for Security Studies, it was proved in West Africa and Burundi in December 2016 that the AU does not respond when democracy and civil control are abused. African leaders pretend to support democracy, but it remains an illusion, and in the DRC, a stalemate is foreseen where nobody will progress with the implementation of the peace agreement.<sup>56</sup> Only time will tell whether this goal can be attained, but the relationship between the military and the politics of conflict transformation needs to be sustained.

### **SANDF readiness**

For South Africa as a perceived leader in Africa, bolstering its peace and security efforts in the DRC, the CAR, Burundi and Sudan makes moral, political and economic sense. It can help bring an end to the massive loss of life. However, in the DRC and Sudan, force readiness is lacking, while ill-disciplined troops and standard training correlate poorly with government’s political ambitions to contribute significantly to peace-building efforts. Budget cuts and overstretched resources cause low levels of operational readiness, while financial issues are reportedly problematic. When the UN reimburses the SANDF for peacekeeping missions, the funds are not allocated to the Defence account, but to the Ministry of Finance. The capability of the SANDF for socio-economic development is questionable. The force is in a critical state of decline, facing numerous problems including high HIV/Aids infection rates, skills and equipment shortages, block obsolescence and unaffordability of many of its main operating systems, disorderliness and an ageing force, which is being rationalised. The army has limited capacity to assist South Africa’s own development and growth meaningfully, let alone PCRD in Africa. While PCRD occurs together with peacekeeping and peace enforcement, the inability to meet current standing defence commitments exists as skilled staff have left the SANDF and only a few experienced personnel are guiding the rest who have restricted or no combat experience. The current balance of expenditure between personnel, operating and capital is both severely disjointed and institutionally crippling. Junior personnel are

appointed far above their abilities.<sup>57</sup> If South Africa is to be taken seriously, the country has to deploy in regional missions to prove its leadership role on the continent, such as being a SADC member, which militarily supports post-conflict transformation efforts.

Although the SANDF has serious internal challenges, it has a notable track record in conflict resolution. South Africa only has a few staff members in the SADC and it may be useful to increase its representation without this being regarded as a form of unilateral interference and dominance. Some SADC members perceive South Africa as the “regional hegemon and label whatever actions it takes as unilateral bullying”,<sup>58</sup> while the inaction by the country is regarded as failure to fulfil responsibilities, which also serves as an excuse not to do more. This is a conundrum to which South Africa must respond by direct communication of its intentions regarding PCRD. The SADC should be prioritised and recommended as the implementer of PCRD in African post-conflict states through SANDF assistance.<sup>59</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The focus of this article was on evaluating the role and place of military forces in post-conflict transformation in African peace-building activities by contributing to PCRD, security sector reform, diverse training requirements, goals and challenges in post-conflict societies, South Africa’s involvement as a SADC member, ending the conflict burden and the SANDF’s readiness.

Military forces play a crucial role in the long-term success of political, economic and cultural rebuilding efforts in post-conflict societies, while charged with the task of providing a security environment conducive to rebuilding war-torn societies. Post-conflict transformation and peace-building are complex, multi-dimensional political processes seeking eventual peace. Security sector reform contributes to peace-building, focusing on military contributions and civilian partners in military peace operations. The more South Africa, by way of SANDF peacekeepers, proves that it is genuinely committed to the SADC, the more it will be able to implement peace-building and PCRD.<sup>60</sup> The link between security and development is important, but the fact that violence is again experienced in the DRC, the CAR and South Sudan signifies the ability of those holding (undemocratic) power to violate the rights of local individuals with impunity. Military peace-building efforts are seen as of limited use if they cannot bring about radical restructuring of political and economic power and enable individuals in Africa to exercise these rights. Politically, the AU system should complete the



UN's efforts by having appropriate exit strategies for the mission to build institutional capacity in the integration of core structures.

Post-conflict peace-building requires unconventional military training to supply the full range of military and humanitarian skills to meet diverse roles and complex challenges presented in African peace-building missions. Despite good intentions, the general opinion is that the SANDF is trained mission-specifically, but does not have all-inclusive peace-building training and is ill-equipped with weaponry and logistic support.

Peace-building missions now require specific tasks from militaries, depending on mandates:

- Stabilise conflict states after ceasefires to reach an enduring peace agreement;
- Deploy to prevent new outbreaks of war after peace accords have been signed;
- Assist in implementing all-inclusive peace accords;
- Assist in wide-ranging security sector reform, restore law and judicial processes;
- Observe and advise on human rights and international humanitarian law;
- Interact with host nations, internal and external militaries, donor agencies, NGOs and regional organisations;
- Protect citizens and internally displaced people, mostly women and children;
- Endorse human security principles, confidence-building measures and power-sharing arrangements; and
- Guide states and governments through post-conflict transition to stability based on democratic principles, civil control, good governance and economic growth.

South Africa's willingness to be regarded as a leading African nation could be outrunning its military capacity, although politically it seems to be exerting power in the AU with Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as the retiring chairperson. Limited success in peace-building is reported and post-conflict reconstruction efforts are inadequate. For local elites, reconstruction is the extension of war and competition for resources by new means. Thus, their strategies are often hostile to the building of strong public institutions, which hampers successful peace-building in Africa. Challenges remain, and it is debatable whether the AU will attain a 'silent gun' reality by 2020. Militaries play political roles in peace negotiations, indicating the important relationship between the military and the politics of post-conflict transformation.

## Endnotes

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