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REVISITING THE SOFT SECURITY DEBATE: FROM EUROPEAN PROGRESS TO AFRICAN CHALLENGES[1]

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Abstract

Proponents of soft security strive to ensure the goal of individual security without resorting to armed coercion. Given the extended scope of security sectors falling within the ambit of soft security regional co-operation is indispensable – a phenomenon most visible in European security architecture and that of Northern Europe in particular. Not only European decision-makers, however, pursue the soft security option. As Africa entered the twenty-first century, co-operation and an implicit realisation of the importance of soft security threats increasingly configured its regional security arrangements. A new wave of warfare simultaneously entered the African realm and any security approach had to contend closely with the inhumane profiles of these so-called new wars. Subsequently, African security architecture had to straddle the resultant hard-soft security domains more acutely than that of Europe. This required appropriate military options and the adjustment of African armed forces towards softer security policy instruments. For Africa in particular, the maintenance of a hard divide (even if only conceptually) between hard and soft security as imposed by Northern Europe in particular, remains more declaratory than real.

Introduction

At the turn of the 20th century expectations grew of a more secure world with less military involvement. Simultaneously, the Clausewitzian paradigm for using armed coercion increasingly had a critical spotlight turned upon its role amidst an expanded security landscape. Proponents of the demilitarision of security and the co-operative paradigm challenged the traditional national security paradigm as the changing face of security was judged to require more leeway for non-military intervention. Subsequently, soft security increasingly coloured the European

security debate, but elements of hard security challenge it being furthered, especially beyond Western Europe.

On Europe's southern periphery, new wars, as well as soft security (although not always explicitly expressed in these terms), feature on the emergent African security agenda being demarcated by the African Union (AU). In Africa new wars fundamentally disrupt African preferences to pursue human security by steering threats away from the hard end of the security spectrum. A rising African partiality for soft security, amidst the spate of new wars on the continent, raises particular challenges to the traditional outlook for using African armed forces. The roles of African military establishments need to be adjusted in order not to disrupt African political preferences to promote also the facets of soft security that are embedded in the influential views of the AU leadership.

The arguments in this paper aim to address two dilemmas in the pursuit of soft security. First, the imposition of a rigid barrier between hard and soft security and secondly, to bring about appropriate armed forces to straddle the emergent hard-soft divide of the early 21st century security landscape. To these ends the discussion below is structured as follows. An overview of soft security and co-operation opens the discussion and is followed by a review of the maturing European soft security debate and some practical issues. A further section explores the rise of new wars and the need to change the profile of armed forces as a policy instrument to straddle the hard-soft security divide. The essay then turns to a third topic – the rising soft security focus of African decision-makers – where two matters are addressed. One, the preference for soft security as viewed through the lens of the AU and two, shifts to transform African armed forces to support the dictates of soft security more closely. The paper concludes with a summary of soft security, new wars and the African response.

Defining and locating soft security in the security realm

Early twenty-first century security remains a contested, but dynamic concept. Amidst emergent complexities, soft security and co-operation are but attempts to bring practical order to burgeoning insecurities that continue to challenge individual state capacities. The leeway to follow an alternative way of viewing and contending with newly demarcated sectors of security, received renewed emphasis as the Cold War declined, although the roots of more critical thinking even preceded the Cold War to post-Cold War rift of 1989 (Mutimer 1999:81-82). The widening of the security concept beyond the state-military sector (in part facilitated by the

prevalence of new wars as the Cold War declined) (Gray 2005:19) allowed renewed room for recognising the more critical thinking posited by soft security (Aldis and Herd 2004:170).

The backdrop to soft security portrays the decline in the primacy of the state-military security paradigm and its substitution by competing thought to broaden the security concept. By broadening the concept the hard military option was relegated to merely one of several competing sectors of security and no longer a prominent one. Adjoining security matters accentuated by environmental, societal and cultural threats assumed prominence due to theoretical expositions that demonstrated their connectivity to societal and human security (Buzan, 1992:16, 133). Buzan, Wæver, Kelstrup and Lemaitre shifted security thinking more dramatically by recasting security comprehensively towards societal security, ousting the state as referent and positing that military and ideological conceptions are to dwindle significantly in future. Wæver further questioned the dynamics raising a matter to that of a security problem. Inherently Wæver deeply probed the role of the state to securitise issues and lay claim to resources and institutions to address and even militarise security (Mutimer 1999:84, 89-90).

By deeply questioning the state-military nexus, allowing conceptual space for new sectors of threats and vulnerabilities to emerge and shifting the referent object of security towards that of society, humanity and ultimately individual security, new contours of security emerged. Ensuring human security depended more upon economic, environmental and societal security, than security provided by a military security apparatus and as the extended security paradigm gained support, the state-military security nexus lost much of its appeal. The leeway by the state to securitise matters and monopolise resources was comprehensively challenged and paved the way for new conceptions as demonstrated by the soft security concept. Within the drive to demilitarise security, soft security became particularly salient during the early 1990s. This soft conception emanated from the work of the Danish Commission on Security and Disarmament to demilitarise all aspects short of military combat operations (Council of the Baltic Sea States 2001). As a non-military concept, soft security primarily contends with political, social and economic threats not amenable by military solutions (Moustakis 2003:6) with individual security, not the state, as its primary referent.

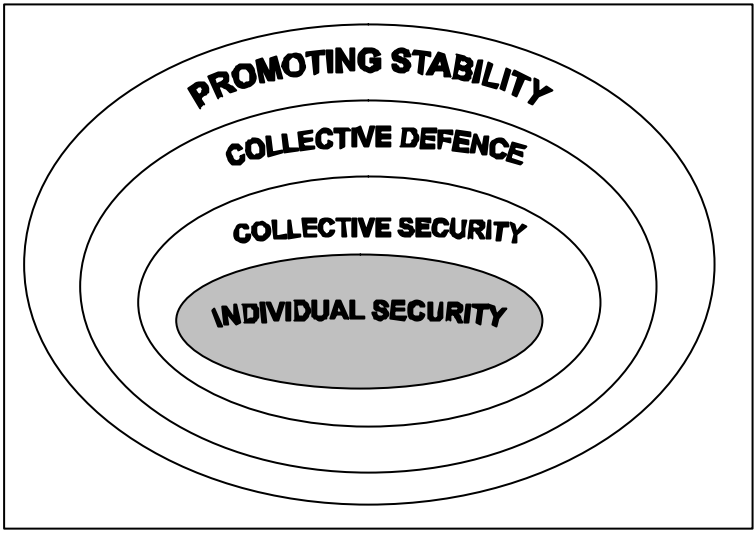
The contours of soft security are demonstrated aptly in the report of Pursiainen (2001) on '*Soft security problems in Northwest Russia and their implications for the outside world*'. In his report Parsiainen demarcates soft insecurities and their immunity to military solutions, their threat to society and the

scope for co-operation towards their solution. In Northern Europe[2], as demonstrated by Prantl (2000:17-18), soft insecurities are deemed more worrisome than traditional hard threats with the further prospect of soft threats becoming even more important towards 2010.[3] Furthermore, the salient human concern of soft security connects firmly with the human/individual security context of modern co-operative security outlooks as the issues comprising soft security and their transnational features make co-operation indispensable (Parsiainen 2001:33).

Co-operative security posits that actors do not compete for security, but due to its mutuality, they co-operate at the regional, state and lower levels to avoid confrontation and eventually interstate conflict. However, co-operative security still caters for both military and non-military components through discussion, negotiation, co-operation and compromise (Snyder 1999:113-115). Cohen (2001:1) conceives of co-operative security as a model that entrenches the central notion of individual security within mutually reinforcing and protective concentric shields of collective security, collective defence and stability promotion (See Figure 1). Inherently the model of Cohen, as well as the demarcation by Snyder (1999), both affords conceptual space for hard, as well as emergent soft security dynamics, to promote individual, not state security.

Although the model proposed by Cohen visualises alternative, but more constructive avenues towards peace, early twenty-first century conflicts raise a profile that accentuates the hard-soft interplay of the co-operative paradigm. The 2003 Gulf War, North Korea admitting it has nuclear weapons, the confrontation in Darfur (western Sudan), the War on Terrorism, and the Chechen conflict, all pose rather destructive security challenges that in part also portray profiles of new wars. This hard-soft duality represents a lingering discontinuity in the drive towards maturity for proponents of soft security and illustrates ongoing developments to demilitarise the security discourse.

Figure 1: Cohen's co-operative security model



Contextually, soft security not only contends almost exclusively with non-military issues and common threats, but also leans towards co-operation for their solution (Pynnöniemi and Raik 2002). In contrast to co-operative security, soft security proponents marginalise the military option to break its monopoly and create conceptual space for expanding soft security. The soft security strand furthermore affords leeway to understand the rise of new insecurities that endanger people and state integrity (Aldis and Herd 2004:1771). This soft focus not only originates from the work of academics, but also features in the minds of individuals as found by Prantl (2000:14, 19) in a survey in Northern Europe.[4]

As could be observed in the hierarchy of Moroff, soft insecurities unfold upon different levels (Pynnöniemi, and Raik, 2002) that can be used as a basic ordering mechanism. First is the individual level where main risks derive from environmental, health and crime issues. Secondly, at the societal level threats originate from identity questions and the position of minorities. Thirdly, one encounters the state level where sovereignty and a corrupted administrative governance system could configure the threat spectrum. At stake, lastly, is the regional level where threats are fuelled because of the absence of regional stability and coherence that primarily rely upon the activities of states. The different entities (states, institutions, societies, and individuals) are vulnerable and bound to be

disrupted (if not destroyed) by this hierarchy of soft threats operating upon their vulnerabilities (Politi 1997:9).

States or collections of states engaging in soft security should operate simultaneously at all four levels to contend with the above threat hierarchy. This places stringent demands upon those elevating this notion to prominence on their security agendas for turning to unilateral and even some form of military solutions are precluded. Flexibility, consistency, patience, as well as intergovernmental and governmental?non-governmental co-operation, are required (George Marshall Centre 2003:6). As Cohen noted, institutions play a central role to operationalise the different human, collective, and stability domains and form an important capacity domain. The importance of this institutional focus is clearly visible in the survey by Prantl (2000:25) that illustrates the roles of international organisations and their increased future importance to promote sectors of soft security. In effect a higher order of interstate and inter-institutional co-operation is required within and adjacent to the formal co-operative arrangements (Cohen 2001:22). These multiple level interactions, however, are only some of the challenges.

Soft security competes with hard, more military-styled matters amidst a strategic environment where even the nation state increasingly vies with a host of powerful non-state actors (Politi 1997:9). Strategic culture plays an important contributory role in this competition. Established perceptions of dealing with interests and threats through military ways and means are changed slowly and with difficulty for they are generally deeply held beliefs. Furthermore, the required adjustments are also dependent upon structural and cultural changes as to the role of the military alternative (Heikka 2002:6). However, as discussed in an earlier section the military alternative came to be viewed as counter-productive, it has no universal appeal and is limited to a security sector now judged less important. Here endism theories fuel the ongoing debate as to whether the hard state-military security paradigm is truly fading and creating leeway for an ascending soft security paradigm (Herd and Aldis 2004:175).[5] Meanwhile, soft insecurities need to be dealt with, but as indicated below, apparently not amidst the luxury of exclusivity.

Lindley-French accentuates soft security threats, but also the imperative to discern between hard and soft security to select eventually the appropriate policy tool(s) (Lindley-French 2003:5). Traditionally hard security displays a military-defensive profile to cope with military threats, and remains a familiar and even preferred setting for some decision-makers. This military connection cannot be ignored (Tewes and Grabbe 2003:3) and, as illustrated by Cohen's model, even collective security arrangements still cater for this connectivity by including

collective defence. Nevertheless, energies and contributions should ultimately be directed towards areas where they may offer a contribution ? but not necessarily along the familiar military domain (Tewes and Grabbe 2003:3). Even so, attempting a stark division is difficult and raises the need for policy tools that could straddle the hard-soft divide.

Proponents of soft security are hardly bound to find a reserved position on security agendas as long as hard security instruments remain an alternative (Huntington 1989). Theories on the removal of war and matters of hard security have not yet affected a total absence of those strategic affairs that require hard security considerations. In Northern Europe in particular the preference for soft security is strong and quite advanced, but as surmised by Pratl (2001:34) hard security threats remain even in this region. At the macro-level, this competition is illustrated further in the current tendency for the USA to militarise its security, whereas its European allies are civilianising and softening their security agenda. This leads to the subsequent debate typified as 'Hard America *versus* Soft Europe' (Lindley-French 2004:12). Finding a balance, or for soft security to assume a competitive position, remains an ongoing debate amidst modern threats that are interlinked and require a comprehensive and inter-disciplinary approach to stave off their militarisation (Ziyal 2004). These demands and responses are complex and the discussion will now shift to the European region to explain particular progress in this regard.

Building soft security: some images from the European debate

In Europe ? Northern Europe in particular ? progress is evident to delimit and contend with soft security in both a conceptual and an institutional way. A 2003 conference on European soft security hosted by the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies reflected an agenda configured by particular soft security concerns regarding Europe and its eastern periphery. In brief, the following soft security threats were addressed:

Illegal migration. Illegal migration unfolds along two dimensions that result from the practice and its consequences. Illegal immigration, transit country status, human trafficking and criminal connections form one threat domain. The other results from migration dangers that manifest nationally as shadow economic markets, ethnic conflict, deformed labour markets, threats to economic security, and reconfigured domestic demographics (George Marshall Centre 2003:8-9).

Trafficking. Trafficking involves a triad of criminality, primarily configured by humans, drugs and nuclear materials. This practice is further facilitated by corruption, with the criminal-political connection being the principal practice sustaining this. Particular trafficking matters concern transit routes and destinations, drug addiction levels and related crimes, organ trafficking and rising HIV infections. Their solution is also rather embedded in regional co-operation, with transitional countries being most vulnerable (George Marshall Centre 2003:10-11).

Weapons transfers. The dangers of weapons transfers emanate from them upsetting balances of power, the difficulty of keeping track of arms once they enter the market and a policy-implementation gap. As criminal networks become involved, they further blur the legitimate profile of transfers (George Marshall Centre 2003:12). Although weapons transfers lean towards hard security, it is the opaqueness and illegal outcomes of transfers that eventually leave a soft insecurity footprint.

Moroff (2002) in *European Soft Security Policies: The Northern Dimension* extends the specific issues raised above to two additional soft insecurities and highlights particular risks that arise.

Environmental and health risks. Health risks resulting from environmental mismanagement, or even sabotage, are first order priorities, since they involve human security acutely. Nuclear accidents, spills, hazardous waste, wastewater streams and poverty-related illnesses configure risks in this field (Pynnöniemi and Raik 2002). Environmental and health risks impact upon individual security in no uncertain way while their transnational and non-military character cannot be ignored.

Corruption and its economic and political risks. Corruption in the form of undue extraneous influence upon legislation and other government policies is growing. In addition, administrative corruption that involves distorting the implementation of existing legislation also features. This undue influence and distortion ultimately unfold as a political risk that promotes distrust of public institutions (Pynnöniemi and Raik 2002). Corruption touches upon numerous soft security domains, individual security in particular, and is, therefore, deemed a central vulnerability of affected countries.

Prentl (2001:20) demonstrated the soft security threat-clusters explained above by constructing a perceived threat hierarchy from European perceptions in

this regard. His findings reflect the following hierarchy of how intensely soft threats are perceived by Europeans in general:

- nuclear safety: nuclear fuel and waste contamination;
- state structures: penetration by transnational criminal organisations;
- state administrations: penetrated by corruption and fraud;
- disparate living conditions;
- water pollution;
- narcotics trade;
- international organised crime;
- open borders;
- migratory pressures.

Merely demarcating the soft security risk spectrum is one matter. Decision-makers inclined to pursue soft security have to grapple with the difficulties it brings to decision-making. Less than amicable co-operation between actors like the USA and the European Union is an illustration of the difficulties dotting the soft security landscape. Here soft security raises the perception of a European pretence to do nothing, to contribute as little as possible or even to ignore soft security as an insecurity domain (Aldis and Herd 2004:181). As Aldis and Herd (2004) pointed out, two fundamentally different outlooks reside at the heart of the matter upon how to deal with matters of insecurity – a hard or soft approach. Although soft security inherently contains difficulties, its utility is eroded and disputed by the persistent presence of hard security matters.

The military backdrop to the pursuit of soft security

The dictum that armed forces need to adjust to changes in society, implies that an increased shift towards soft security with its accentuated humanitarian face is bound to impact upon armed forces. At the one extreme features the notion of soft security and it erasing the need for armed forces from the security landscape. This notion, however, turns upon the perceived decline of war as an option to resolve disputes (Dandekker 1998:158), a trend disputed by Kummel (2003:429), who argues that only traditional war - not armed violence as such - has declined. In the interim, decision-makers will have to consider trade-offs between hard and soft security (Ziyal 2004) for the declaratory demilitarisation through soft security competes persistently with the reality of lingering hard threats.

Considering the hard-soft security domains raises the question on how close to soft security the roles and missions of armed forces could be shifted. In

part, the answer resides in adapting future roles of armed forces in a setting where the risk of war has declined, or a choice is made to no longer rely upon or consider the military response (Thompson 1998:95). Toning down or adjusting the military option in the face of soft security preferences holds several implications. Conceptually and operationally these are difficult matters that are influenced by a number of change factors.

Firstly, there is a tangible apprehension about the future role of armed forces. The shifting security debate that relegated the military option to the bottom of the response ladder raised some uneasiness. This apprehension came to fruition when softer issues, such as economics, information, financial power and co-operation together with global entities like the United Nations (UN), began to co-determine employable influence and power (Dandekker 1998:145). These challenges raise the profile of soft power and armed forces subsequently need to either step aside, or adjust, or risk becoming dysfunctional.

Secondly, international law, minority rights, and human rights accentuate increasingly the realm of soft security and set more rigid parameters for the need and conduct of armed coercion (Dandekker 1998:146-149). This legal domain with its humanitarian focus compels armed forces to acknowledge the impact of soft issues with humanitarian overtones as diverse operations, such as contending with narcotics, terror, and peace missions, seep into the military mission spectrum (Burk 1998:38). Modern armed forces now seemingly have to assume a greater policing and humanitarian profile to contend with new threats beyond the strict military realm that straddle the hard–soft security divide.

Thirdly, the rise of new non-state entities or, more specifically, global, regional or sub-regional entities, are directly or indirectly, concerned more with constructive matters, such as prevention, soft intervention and ultimately post-conflict reconstruction (Burk 1998:28-29). Armed forces subsequently either play a limited, adjusted or no role, but whatever military involvement arises, it is to be attuned to protection, prevention, assistance, policing or more constructive roles to protect humanitarian interests. As a matter of fact, military forces are required to operate increasingly below the war-fighting threshold in order to remain in step with resolving conflicts in a more constructive way. In reality, military forces are now trapped between the clarity of Cold War fighting roles and the opaqueness of plying their trade amidst a multitude of softer new roles added to their mission spectrum (Raitasalo and Sipila 2004:249).

The burgeoning of actors not only extends the military operating domain, but calls for deep coalitions where armed forces, governments and NGOs co-operate to tend to complex emergencies arising from the operation of soft security threats (Toffler and Toffler 1997:xix). This latter co-operation is not new, but the scope of co-operation now surpasses earlier arrangements. Military authorities no longer only prepare to co-operate with non-military actors. As demonstrated by the roles of CIMIC Group North, military authorities such as NATO now actively prepare to also conduct roles that surpass that of protecting and tolerating civilian counterparts in theatre. They now interface with and support civilian actors and actions in a theatre of operations and if necessary, even assume parallel functions to assist civil society (CIMIC, n.d.).

Fourthly, the collapse of boundaries needs to be addressed. Assuming hard boundaries between threats calling for hard responses that could include a military backdrop, and soft threats that eschew the latter, could be misleading. It remains a human decision that creates these categories and what is included or excluded (Mutimer 1999:89-90). Demarcating and tending to domestic and foreign, as well as state, factional and individual issues, are becoming increasingly difficult as well. This coalescence underlines the need for close co-operation between armed forces and civilian contingents to either collectively and simultaneously, or individually, contend with both hard and soft matters (Burk 1998:28). Although preferred, soft power at times still remains futile and flexible military participation might forestall soft insecurities from maturing as hard threats.

Within the realm of demilitarising security and eliminating its state-centric focus, soft security features as a reconceptualised security strand. Proponents of soft security strive to solve insecurities that threaten societies and ultimately the individual without resort to the military policy instrument. At the operational level, very particular insecurities within the European security environment were demarcated, operationalised and dealt with in ways that illustrate the practice to securitise a particular phenomenon and setting in place ways and means to address it. In a declaratory sense soft security tests the limits of demilitarising security, but in empirical terms, some military insecurities linger on. In Northern Europe the soft security agenda is quite prominent, while in Europe in general the leeway seems more limited.

From the above synopsis it appears that the latitude to confine insecurity to the soft domain – irrespective of its logic – is maturing, but imprecise. Given this remaining ambiguity, the indistinct aim of contributing to international peace and stability arose as the guiding intelligence for deploying armed forces at the turn of

the 20th century (Dandekker 2003:411). Promoting peace and stability guide decision-makers and armed forces in no uncertain terms to develop appropriate organisational structures and an array of capabilities for more than warfighting. Although not a primary vehicle to address soft security threats, military responses are no longer mainly about victory, but about cleverly redesigned ways and means to augment the policy tools employed – a matter now dominating the African security agenda.

New wars and soft security: an African challenge

Establishing security on the African continent features amidst a collapsed hard-soft security divide. The African strategic landscape undoubtedly holds its own challenges as it depicts the simultaneity of new wars and a drive towards co-operative security ventures through the AU and NEPAD. These continental institutions and programmes contain indicators of a preference for soft security to eradicate wars and their potential for promoting African humanitarian disasters. However, also in Africa the preference for a soft security paradigm has to face a harsh security landscape.

New wars do not readily conform to the practice of the state using its monopoly over the instruments of violence to defend legitimate matters, such as territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of a political entity. Brzoska (2004:112) points to the new war theory of eroded state capacity through newly styled wars with asymmetric actors, strategies and tactics blunting the traditional policy instruments of state power. The Hamburg school of thought in turn attributes new wars to new styles of state and society building in Second Tier countries by pursuing stable institutions and efficient economies. However construed, new wars originate from the current weakness of the state to maintain itself in all spheres of security, not even within its borders, where these wars feature prominently (Brzoska 2004:109-110). Also called informal war, grey area war or resource wars, they depict images of new warfare forms with newly styled protagonists constantly reconfiguring its conduct (Metz 2000:27).

In conducting new wars military victory is no longer a goal, but rather the imposition of political or economic power through the exploitation of people (Kaldor 2001:2). New wars also threaten human and individual security, as people and their security environment become primary political and economic targets. This threat with its inhumane profile thus operates close to the heart of the soft security domain ? that of ensuring individual security. Kaldor further underpins its inhumane face by pointing out that new wars raise civilian casualties

disproportionately to those of military losses, destroy societal infrastructure and disrupt societies for they typically fester on indefinitely (Kaldor 2000:58 ; Kaldor 2001:4).

In general, military responses to new wars, both conceptually and operationally, are not well developed (Bellamy 2002:26). Kaldor (1996:5) avers that the uneasiness of armed forces towards new wars stems from their Clausewitzian culture to understand and respond in a particular way. Armed forces, therefore, have to reconfigure their responses to contend with new wars (Bellamy 2002:31). One alternative is a non-interventionist hard response: to let the war run its course and then to pursue peace. The other is preventative coercive inducement where military forces are deployed very early and are able to migrate along a policing-interventionist continuum to protect victims as well as themselves, whilst a third option is soft intervention against a hard backdrop (Prins 2002:160-161). In effect, these alternatives call for fungible armed forces to support tenuous political initiatives.

Ending new wars is an acute challenge as they thrive on transnational networks and imploded states where the individual ultimately pays the price (Bellamy 2002:31). Although a softer mode of political action is preferred, the military instrument still has a role, albeit a transformed one, since a monopoly over military power remains an objective of new wars on the African continent (Duyvesteyn 2001:105). Furthermore, individual security has to be assured within the confines of international humanitarian law and, if necessary, enforced by legitimate coercive power (Kaldor 1996:2). However, contending with new wars on the African continent has a visible declaratory profile, but a somewhat masked operational side.

Both the 1998 report of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Africa, as well as the AU (established 2002) and its primary security instrument, the Peace and Security Council, (finally established during March 2004) could not but acknowledge the spate of new wars disfiguring the African strategic landscape (African Union 2004a:2). As the AU assumed an increased responsibility for African security, the need also arose to establish proper politico-military mechanisms. During the official launch of the Peace and Security Council of the AU (2004), conflict situations in Africa were closely reviewed and raised a determination to tackle African conflicts (African Union 2004a:2-3). Ethiopia-Eritrea, the Sudan, Burundi, DR Congo, Central African Republic, Liberia, Darfur, and Ivory Coast were acknowledged as cases requiring urgent and special attention of the AU Peace and Security Council (African Union 2004b:7). However, only

Ethiopia-Eritrea in some way reflects an old war profile. The rest emerged as new wars that unfolded primarily after the demise of the Cold War and imposed numerous soft and hard insecurities upon the African strategic landscape.

Soft security threats, and vulnerabilities of African states in transition, constitute a dangerous interface (Politi 1997:9-10). This threat becomes particularly relevant during contested migrations to new constitutional dispensations. Certain African states, for example the DR Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Central African Republic, Somalia and Zimbabwe, are particularly vulnerable during their current flirting with democracy amidst their collapsed or collapsing status. Few, if any, African countries could claim to be immune to soft security risks, many of which are pervasive in kind (Mazrui 2001). Furthermore, people are often the target or victim of soft threats while crude counters by weak African governments easily threaten existing individual freedoms. The vulnerabilities of African states and the operation of soft security threats, therefore, constitute a major soft security risk hierarchy that could be demarcated as follows:

Individual level. Criminal violence, political and socio-economic problems, such as minority exclusions, violating human rights, poverty, unemployment, poor education and AIDS, ultimately threaten individual security of Africans (Garuba 2001:27). In addition, bad governance, failure to provide security, the lack of entrenched democratic imperatives and honest competent administration also threaten individual security. Environmental insufficiencies accentuate and reinforce individual insecurity even further (Dick 2003:66). A case in point is food security. In Sudan food aid directed to Darfur is under physical attack, whilst Zambia is in urgent need of food aid. In Zimbabwe food became a political tool in the 2005 elections whilst 3.1 million people in Ethiopia were estimated to be in need of food aid by April 2005. Abuses of human rights and individual security in the Darfur region of Sudan will be highlighted in a court to be set up by the AU and UN (Hanekom 2005:NFA 061&067). In a similar process, a former Rwandan defence minister appeared before a traditional court (preceding the UN War Crimes Tribunal in Arusha Tanzania) for his alleged involvement in genocide (Hanekom 2005:NFA 067). Many African individuals are thus exposed to a range of soft insecurities promoting poverty, violence and denial of basic human rights.

Societal level. HIV/AIDS and malaria severely threaten African societies and now constitute a standard insecurity acknowledged by the AU leadership. To cope with the pressing need to stop and turn the tide of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and malaria, these illnesses now feature prominently on the continental security agenda (African Union 2005:152). The rise of particular 'plague-like' diseases also

threatens African society. Pneumonic plague in DR Congo and Ebola-related health risks in the north of Angola (the Marburg virus) reflect the African version of threatening diseases to be countered (Hanekom 2005:NFA 040 & 069). In addition, massive refugee and migration profiles of the African continent forged by new wars, identity questions and the treatment of minorities rapidly reinforce and spread these societal soft insecurities.

Institutional and governance level. Matters relating to institutional corruption and bribery also feature in leading African states. In Kenya, these became particularly sensitive during early 2005 (Hanekom 2005:NFA 040). A determined stance by Nigeria to 'crush' corruption underlines the seriousness of this issue in that country (Hanekom 2005:NFA 069). An Anti-Corruption Conference in South Africa further highlighted its saliency (Department of Public Service and Administration 2005). At the latter conference Transparency International announced that South Africa rated only 4.2 on a perceptual scale of 10: a rating disputed by the South African leadership (Hanekom 2005:NFA 060). Another indicator is the fraudulent behaviour of a number of South African MPs in terms of travelling expenses and their subsequent conviction (Hanekom 2005:NFA 058). Furthermore, the nature of political power as the winner takes all, little accountability by leaders, a lack of transparency, and not upholding the rule of law and mechanisms to affect smooth power transfers, create an insecure institutional environment for human rights and ultimately individual insecurity.

State level. Features at this level include contesting who governs and how to govern. Such problems threaten the continued existence of states and that of African societies. Illustrative is the unstable peace processes in Côte d'Ivore and the DR Congo where these countries remain split between government and rebel controlled factions and regions (Hanekom 2005:NFA 060 & 58 & 67). In Burundi, setting up a government remains tenuous, whilst in Sudan, maintaining state integrity in the interest of all Sudanese is more virtual than real. Somalia is attempting to move from total state anarchy to normalcy, but the envisaged government remains in 'exile' whilst clans and other sub-state groups are still the *de facto* rulers (Mazrui 2001).

Regional and continental threats. Africa features at the forefront of conflict in the international system (African Union 2005:152-153). Political instability, porous borders, lax security, impoverished populations and abundant weapons promote terrorism. AIDS orphans are now seen as vulnerable to exploitation by terror organisations. Africa is thought to contain contextual conditions that promote terrorism – both as a breeding ground as well as a target rich

environment (Global Business Coalition 2005). Arms transfers, exploitation of natural resources (Sierra Leone, DR Congo), personal agendas for wealth (Kenya) and the scarcity of environmental resources feed African conflicts and configure the resultant mixed hard-soft insecurity profile of the African continent (United Nations 1998:5). Insecurity in Africa, and its sub-regions also results from hard conflicts, since 14 of 53 African countries were afflicted by armed conflict in 1996. African conflicts also accounted for more than 50% of all war-related deaths worldwide and large populations of refugees and displaced persons (United Nations 1998:3-5). These insecurities promote weak, failing and failed states (and perhaps regions) that cannot uphold good governance, state authority and their responsibility towards their citizens (Mills 2004:3). Subsequently the citizen is at the mercy of institutions that are too weak to function on behalf of, and at the behest of individuals and their security.

The threats posed by, and inherent vulnerabilities of African states to new wars are acknowledged and efforts to opposing these reflected a need for transnational co-operation. This co-operative response increasingly becomes visible in the AU outlook of moving away from a state-centric security approach. Economic integration, social upliftment and conflict prevention (South African Department of Foreign Affairs 2001) by means of a plethora of mechanisms and sub-regional arrangements (South African Department of Foreign Affairs 2002) now feature prominently. These preferred pathways portray a soft security preference that is observable in the objectives of the AU that explicitly steer away from harder coercive pathways (African Union 2000: Article 3).

Particular soft security indicators in the functioning of the AU become salient when reviewing the array of formal commitments and programmes of the AU displayed in Table 1:

Table 1: Objectives of the AU

?	Accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent.
?	Encourage international co-operation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
?	Promote peace, security, and stability on the continent.
?	Promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance.
?	Promote and protect human peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments.

- Promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies.
- Promote co-operation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples.
- Co-ordinate and harmonise the policies between the existing and future Regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union.
- Work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent.

The Peace and Security Council of the AU acknowledged the danger of new conflicts on the continent being a threat to the fundamental vision of comprehensive human security of the AU (African Union 2004a:2). Intervention to stop and terminate conflicts is one option. Prevention is another and the conventions, charters and protocols in Table 2 are illustrative of preventative and soft security focus areas of the AU.[6]

Table 2: Soft security focus areas of the AU

- Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.
- Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism.
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa.
- African Nuclear Weapons Free-Zone Treaty (The Treaty of Pelindaba).
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.
- Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism.

Towards more constructive African armed forces

The soft security profile outlined above raises the imperative for flexible armed forces (Dandekker 2003:405) and for African armed forces to remain in step or become irrelevant. The founding documents of the AU reflect a common desire to place soft security at the pinnacle of its security policies and goal of promoting human security. From this emerges an institutional profile for promoting stability and peace by the absence of reliance upon the traditional use of armed coercion.[7]

Some African states have a limited capacity to constructively assist in the AU's activities, for they rather promote insecurity through vulnerabilities predominantly located in the soft security realm. These vulnerabilities (as indicated earlier) either lead to, or perpetuate hard insecurities and new wars that threaten to overwhelm AU containment capacities and soft security preferences. Despite a declared predilection for preventative strategies (Konare 2005), Darfur, for example, once again illustrates how soft vulnerabilities are allowed to escalate and eventually require a military-styled response – one that flies in the face of the preventative spirit of the AU and that of solving soft insecurities.

The African move towards soft security impacts upon African armed forces through the need for adjusted armed forces to contribute to solving disputes without going to war, as articulated by Konare: *'We need to improve the way our defence mechanisms work, to enable us to deploy troops more rapidly. We must be able to mobilise our respective national forces in the service of African causes, alongside regional mechanisms'* (Konare 2005). This calls for a changed role for African military institutions. As Africa enters a strategic environment that is jointly configured by new wars, human insecurity, co-operation and soft security imperatives, certain complexities arise for African armed forces:

Dangers of adjusting armed forces. The process of shifting military institutions to contribute also to the prevention or containment of soft insecurities is plagued by uncertainty. These shifts require of armed forces to fill a new conceptual space and to face the following:

- Promoting peace, or contributing to peace, through role mobility for the execution of likely, to less likely, and even non-military future missions (Dandekker in Caforio 2003:408).
- The post-modern argument that by adjusting to change, legitimate armed forces need to adapt to the military requirements of a potential future warless society (Moskos in Freedman 1994:138).
- Understanding that appropriate reform and development of defence establishments to do more than mere warfighting promotes wider transformation. This empowers the security sector to contend better with change, to meet new defence needs (Gompert et al. 2004a:6) and remain in step with the demilitarisation of security.
- The acceptance of principles governing the emerging responsibility to protect both states and individuals *via* prevention, intervention and

rebuilding. This is to ameliorate the biased and destructive slant of the military interventionist debate and to raise credible future roles for armed forces where vulnerable societies and people stand to benefit most (ICISS 2001:xii-xiii).

Entering the co-operative domain. The scope and character of African conflicts (in part underpinned by new wars), threaten both human and state security. As these threats increasingly defy the capability of any one state to terminate them, layered collective defence, interdepartmental and military co-operation forge better capacities and increased legitimacy to contend with mission complexities (Dandekker 2003:409). Migrating within and between harder and softer missions through flexible forces - as demonstrated by the South African participation in African peace missions - become important. Gearing for 'hostile and full-scale action' in the DR Congo to disarm militias (Hanekom 2005:NFA 065) and participation in hunting down militiamen who killed Bangladeshi soldiers (Hanekom 2005:NFA 053) coincide with protecting political leaders in Burundi and creating and defending security pockets for refugee groups in Darfur.

Adjusting the roles of African armed forces. African armed forces should migrate from primarily warfighting institutions to catalysts of human security that turn upon two important matters. First the fullest range of military capabilities should be provided and the second refers to the tough decision regarding which conflicts should be engaged in militarily (Dandekker 2003:413). The need remains in Africa for viable and credible security agencies to contribute to fending off particular insecurities. The latter insecurities typically emerge from both hard and soft insecurities and reversing them cannot readily emanate from mere soft political and socio-economic security practices. To straddle this need, the AU as a primary African security agency, aspires to address armed threats along the lines set out in Table 3 (African Union 2004c).

Table 3: Security promotion and conflict prevention by the AU

?	Early warning and preventive diplomacy.
?	Peace-making, including the use of good offices, mediation, conciliation and inquiry.
?	Peace support operations and intervention.
?	Peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.
?	Promotion of security and stability.
?	Humanitarian assistance.

Table 3 illustrates the spirit and determination of the AU to remove new conflicts through a co-operative profile that relegates traditional military coercion to less prominence, but not armed forces *per se*. African military establishments have to adjust to this more constructive paradigm and the reality of an altered, but busy strategic environment where humanitarian and individual security concerns and cosmopolitan interests now order mission priorities and profiles (Kaldor 1996:5). Effectively the AU acknowledges the soft security imperative and aims to use the military instrument indirectly as a preventative or contributory instrument. Although this is seemingly somewhat contrary with the demilitarised fundamentals set originally by theorists such as Buzan and Wæver, it nonetheless illustrates an African understanding of insecurity and what to do about it.

The imperative for African military institutions to adjust, ties in with calls for a new defence thinking to address alternatives beyond the traditional war-fighting luxuries, whilst still maintaining societal legitimacy (Nyanda 2000:10). In his regard, Kuhlman (1998:422) alludes to the responsibility of contemporary armed forces to contribute to more than mere national security by defending or protecting human and individual security in particular. Ultimately, however, African armed forces have to keep in step with growing soft security preferences in their operating domains. In this regard, the matters briefly discussed below are illustrative of ongoing African adjustments.

Dealing with an expanded threat spectrum. The expanded threat spectrum originates from a number of interdependent developments: These include less prominent direct threats to national security and them being superseded by direct threats to individual well-being and raising expectations for military establishments to contend with more than major war. These shifts unfold against the declining ability of individual defence forces to cope with the hard-soft threat spectrum, adapting to societal changes and using technologies to achieve military flexibility (Dandekker 2003:412). Overtly, a deliberate AU conception is to come to terms with future military contingencies in a preventative or reactive, but non-destructive way. This mental resolve took shape as African experts on defence gathered on 27 March 2003 to formulate a Common Defence and Security Policy. This policy was officially launched on 25 May 2004 in Addis Ababa (African Union 2004a:1). As the AU managed to obtain the required consensus, the collective, pro-active and preventative alternative began to supersede and soften old thinking on employing military coercion.

Appropriate structures. The AU Commission on a Common African Defence and Security Policy acknowledged the complexities of forging a common

defence and security policy to direct legitimate military coercion (African Union 2003:Par 33). This enterprise is largely located at the politico-strategic level and is, therefore, not a purely military concern. Military institutions, however, will be expected to execute eventually their decisions through appropriate structures in the typical policy-strategy-structure hierarchy, but still remain a last resort – even in a soft mode. The Panel of the Wise, a Continental Early Warning System, an African Standby Force and Regional Standby Brigades constitute instruments for a graded employment of interoperable armed forces. It remains questionable, however, whether a mere adjustment to this traditional notion in a superficial manner would be able to satisfy future demands. South Africa for example found that its military capacity very rapidly became overstretched when it operationalised this domain of extended defence thinking (Solomon and Swart 2004:14-15).

Moving towards a policing role. Conceptions of the nature of war and armed force direct how the use of armed forces unfolds. Furthermore, as states decline, their military and policing capabilities decline as well (Mills 2004:3) with Kaldor (1996:5; 2000:58) as well as Bunker (2002:xx-xxi) arguing for a policing role by modern armed forces. Whilst African defence forces adjust to the AU's mechanisms to co-operate and address the effects of new wars on the African continent, a particular policing strand becomes important (Mills 2004:13). This supports the military policing theory of Bunker (2002:xxi) that softer military and harder policing roles are challenging both military and police services. Policing by military establishments is demonstrated by the South African military protection contingent in Burundi. The merger of military and police contingents in Darfur further underlines the policing function (United Nations, 2004a) where protecting people and their interests by enforcing international humanitarian law, not fighting, is the mission (Kaldor 2000:61).

Towards constructivism. As contingents of UN missions, African armed forces increasingly also participate in post-conflict reconstruction and stabilisation (United Nations, 2004b). In the DR Congo, as well as Rwanda and Burundi, military contingents are deployed to smooth a pathway towards elections. Regional forces deployed in the Central African Republic set an example in this regard by conducting a so-called Second Generation Peace Mission (Draman 2001:135) that went beyond prevention and intervention to adhere to the responsibility to protect and reconstruct. These add-on roles further extend the foreseen softer roles of African armed forces when employed within the vision of the AU as expressed by Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the AU and its regional bodies.

Conclusions

Soft security represents a particular preference by theorists and decision-makers to conceptualise and operationalise security as envisaged by leading security theorists such as Buzan and Wæver. Terming it soft security, its proponents seek to deal with threats and vulnerabilities in ways that circumvent the resort to military power, remove the state as referent and set human security as the first concern. With human security at its apex, the pursuit of soft security is posited to serve the individual as the primary referent. Geographically soft security and regionalism stand in close proximity with it primarily unfolding in Western-Europe to oppose soft threats arising from illegal trafficking, pollution, migrations, diseases, corruption, criminality and new wars. Over time, soft mechanisms were developed through institutional, state- and regional structures to resolve soft security challenges to the region, states, societies, and ultimately the individual. The European region that demonstrates most progress in this regard is Northern Europe – also known as the Northern Dimension.

Indiscriminate new wars with their dire threat to human security sharply rose as the Cold War faded. Inherently the destructive slant of new wars contested the preference for soft security alternatives and their demilitarisation by those viewing it from a distance (Europe) as well as those closely involved (Africa). This challenge allowed for harder military responses to compete once again for a foothold in the security agendas of states and institutions, and for armed forces to be adjusted to new defence requirements. As for the latter, preferences for a military paradigm that leans towards the softer or harder response profile emerged and became particularly salient in the differing European?US outlooks on tending to contemporary insecurities ? many of which emanated from new wars on the international scene.

African leaders acknowledged the phenomenon of new wars and resolved to remove this scourge from the continent and establish comprehensive human security. At the conceptual level, this stance placed the AU initiative alongside the European effort. In a declaratory mode the co-operative profile of the AU and its focus upon human security is embedded in a preferred soft security paradigm that now permeates the African security agenda. However, the drive to eradicate new wars and their destructive impact upon vulnerable African societies, do not allow African actors the non-military leeway afforded to European decision-makers. A starker choice of not whether, but how to straddle the soft - hard security divide still face African decision-makers. This imperative exposed the difficult practice of shifting the reigning outlook for using African armed forces.

At the operational level, the kind of military participation required by the AU could not be inferred directly from African armed forces because they are primarily prepared for war fighting, or for internal operations. Consequently, a more constructive pathway for employing African military means needs to be pursued. From a theoretical perspective this involves insights into military missions that do not seek military victory through war fighting doctrines, but success by adjusting armed forces towards more constructive roles. To these ends, the use of armed coercion should be aligned with the professed softer preventative, soft interventionist, and reconstructive continuum of the AU.

Keeping African armed forces in step with the declared soft security pathway of the AU primarily took shape through the establishment of AU institutions such as the Peace and Security Council, a Common African Defence Policy, and military structures such as the African Standby Force and Regional Brigades. These bodies and arrangements are aligned to augment conflict resolution by moving beyond the war fighting paradigm and the state approach. This shift also implies the transformation of African armed forces to master an alternative and diverse range of skills to prevent, police, protect and reconstruct, rather than fight and destroy.

Africa cannot demilitarise its security architecture to reflect the European maturity and the declared AU-preference for soft security. Neither can it contribute directly to the eradication of soft threats. The alternative is to persist in adjusting existing military structures to augment and protect the unfolding soft security mechanisms for eradicating new wars and promoting comprehensive human security on the continent. This prospect sets the scene for straddling the hard-soft security divide by first adjusting African military means to assist in eradicating the threat of new wars to Africans and subsequently to play a more constructive and preventative military role in support of soft security.

Notes

[1] This paper was presented at the World International Studies Conference in Istanbul, Turkey' 24-27 August 2005 as 'Shifting the paradigm: From new wars and soft security towards constructive armed forces for African security.'

[2] Northern Europe (the Northern Dimension) is demarcated as: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Northern Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, North-west Russia and Sweden (Prantl, 2000:7)

[3] Prantl (1999:20) presents soft insecurities as migratory pressures, international organised crime, corruption and fraud within state administrations, narcotics trade,

environmental damage, water pollution, nuclear safety, and pressures resulting from open borders.

[4] Prantl (2000:18-19) demonstrates that soft threats are perceived as real threats by society, but that they coexist with hard threats in Northern Europe.

[5] MccGwire, M, 2000, Shifting the paradigm, *International Affairs*, Vol 78, No 1. In this two-part article MccGwire sets forth compelling arguments for moving away from the narrow adversarial national security paradigm towards a global co-operative security paradigm to contend with the expanse of future security threats.

[6] See Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Database of key documents for the AU/OAU and African Regional Economic Communities, as well as 'African Union 2004c' in the reference section of this paper.

[7] The ISS maintains a database of key documents for African regional organisations. See ISS under 'References' for more detail.

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