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The Historical and Political Context of the Demobilisation-Reintegration Process in South Africa

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the historical and political context of demobilisation-reintegration in South Africa. The South African transition to democracy was the result not of a "miracle" or a seizure of power but of a negotiated settlement. In the mid-1980s it became clear that the armed conflict was ripe for resolution. Armed conflicts are ripe for resolution when there is a mutually hurting stalemate (Zartman, 2000). "The idea behind the concept is that, when the parties find themselves locked in a conflict from which they cannot escalate to victory and this deadlock is painful to both of them (although not necessarily in equal degrees or for the same reasons), they seek a way out. The catastrophe provides a deadline or a lesson indicating that pain can be sharply increased if something is not done about it now…" (Zartman, 2000: 228). Thus, while the objective of the liberation movement in South Africa was the seizure of state power through popular armed struggle, "instead of seizing power, the democratic movement negotiated its partial transfer. Instead of taking over and transforming the state, the movement found itself assimilated into it" (Marais, 2001: 2). The South African transition was characterised by accommodation and appeasement of two sets of interests – those of white power and privilege and those of domestic and international capital. This was aimed at preventing a civil war or a seizure of power by the military and in order for South Africa to survive economically in the context of globalisation.

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The assimilation of the liberation movement was most evident in the transformation of the military. The main challenge to the transformation of the military and the creation of a unified defence force was the existence of seven armed forces. While these differed in composition, history and military culture, they could be broadly categorised into two main groups. The first group consisted of defenders of the apartheid regime and were created through the South African apartheid law. They included the South African Defence Force (SADF), the Transkei Defence Force (TDF), the Bophuthatswana Defence Force (BDF), the Venda Defence Force (VDF) and the Ciskei Defence Force (CDF). The latter four were known as the TBVC forces, from the acronym used for the group of bantustans to which they belonged.[5] The TBVC forces were established by the South African government and the SADF, and were effectively surrogates of the SADF. The second category consisted of armed formations established by the movements fighting to overthrow the apartheid government. These included the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), the military wing of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and uMKhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the African National Congress(ANC). For 30 years APLA and MK were engaged in an armed liberation struggle against the SADF. It all began with the National Party victory in the 1948 elections.

The National Party victory in 1948 was a triumph of Afrikaner nationalism that resulted from mobilising against the political, economic and colonial "powers" of the English speakers, and their real and alleged exploitative effect on Afrikaner interests (Terreblanche and Nattrass, 1994). The victory led to the introduction of discriminatory laws to which the oppressed responded with the intensification of a peaceful struggle for liberation that had been started by the African National Congress in 1912. Thus, the 1950s was characterised by a series of defiance campaigns against the apartheid government, to which the state responded with more repressive legislation.

The state's violent response to the anti-pass campaign on March 21, 1960, and the subsequent banning of political activities led to the beginning of an armed struggle for

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[5] The National Party, through its racial policies of exclusion, created ethnic-based pseudo-self-governing homelands or bantustants. Transkei and Ciskei were homelands for the Xhosa-speaking people, Bophuthatswana for the Setswana-speaking people and Venda for the Tshivenda-speaking people.

liberation. However, the liberation movements did not have the military capacity to engage in full-scale war against the government security forces, and thus armed conflict remained at a level of low-intensity conflict. In the 1980s, as a result of the intensification of the armed struggle as well as the government's intensification of repressive measures, South Africa became a highly militarised society. It was in the context of high militarisation that the apartheid government initiated negotiations for a peaceful transition.

The transition to democracy began with the suspension of the armed struggle and the repatriation of MK soldiers to South Africa as unarmed civilians. However, unlike in Namibia where all armed forces were disbanded before independence, in South Africa the statutory force (the SADF) was left intact. In the absence of an international peace-keeping authority, the SADF performed the peace-keeping role during the election period.

It is not the intention of this chapter to discuss in detail the history of the armed struggle in South Africa, nor does it claim to offer a full analysis of the process of transition to democracy. All these are beyond the scope not only of this chapter, but of the study as well. The chapter draws on some of the elements of the history of South Africa, including the armed struggle and transition to democracy, to illuminate the background to the South African demobilisation-reintegration process.

This chapter is divided into four sections, the first being a discussion of the concept of low-intensity conflict and how it applied to the South African context. The second section analyses the South African armed conflict; it is divided into two sub-sections – first, the early years of the armed struggle including a discussion of the formation of MK); second, a discussion of the armed struggle from 1969 until 1990. The third section focuses on one of the consequences of armed conflict – the militarisation of South African society. It will be argued that the apartheid government mobilised resources at economic, ideological and political levels, and that both the defenders of the apartheid regime and its detractors were influenced by the ideology of militarism. The last section focuses on the transition to democracy and is divided into four sub-sections. These deal with the role of former MK soldiers in community Self-Defence Units, APLA's armed struggle in the early 1990s, the role of the SADF in South

Africa's negotiated transition, and the military negotiations. The process of transition is discussed as far as it relates to military transformation; thus many aspects of the multiparty negotiations do not form part of the discussion.

4.2 Theorising South Africa's Liberation Struggle

In the 1980s the political discourse[6] in South Africa allowed the apartheid regime to continuously shift its position on the definition of the conflict between the state security forces and the liberation movement. For example, in 1988 Brigadier Stadler of the South African Police (SAP) dismissed the argument that there was a war between the African National Congress and the South African government. The Brigadier described the ANC's actions as a "revolutionary onslaught" against the government. In the same month, "in a different court case the state did describe itself as being at war" (Cock, 1989: 1). In the first case, the state's aim was to deny ANC members prisoner-of-war status, which was offered to members of armed forces engaged in wars against colonial powers in terms of the Geneva Protocol of 1977. In the second case, the aim was to exempt members of the SADF from criminal prosecution by arguing that the Defence Force was on a "war footing" (Cock, 1989).

The ability of the South African government to shift the usage of the concept "war" emanates from the contested definition of the concept. Shaw (1991:10) defines war as a "systematic and extensive use of violence as a means of policy by an organised social group claiming (but not necessarily exercising) legitimate control over a given territory, against another such group (or groups)". According to Shaw, not all wars are about the control of territory. He also states that this definition includes forces within societies seeking to overthrow the existing government or state-forms, where these reach the stage of civil war. Kaldor (1982, 1982, cited in Cock, 1989: 2) defines warfare as a "socially organised physical coercion against a similarly organised opponent, while Kidron and Smith (1983, cited in Cock, 1989: 2) define war as "an open armed conflict in which regular, uniformed forces are engaged, on at least one side; the fighters and the fighting are organised centrally to some extent; and there is

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[6] Discourse in the context of this paper refers to the practice of a public, scholarly debate on the genesis, meaning and shifting usage of concepts in public policy and debate.

some continuity between armed clashes". Shaw's (1991) definition of war applies to the armed conflict that took place in South Africa. The liberation movements were engaged in armed action to overthrow the apartheid government, and in the 1980s South Africa was almost in a state of civil war. The other two definitions cannot be used to define the armed struggle in South Africa, first, because MK was not as organised as the SADF, and second, because there was no continuity between episodic armed clashes (Cock, 1989).

This chapter uses the concept "armed conflict" instead of "war" to describe armed clashes between the state security forces and members of the liberation armies. The concept of conflict has different meanings, which range from an actual physical fight or battle to a disagreement over differences of interest, opinion or principle. Conflict can be defined as a social situation in which at least two parties try to acquire the same set of scarce material or immaterial resources at the same time (Wallesteen, 1988). Conflict occurs between people, groups or states. An *armed conflict* is defined as a "contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one is the government of a state" (Eriksson, Wallensteen and Sollenberg, 2003: 597). Armed conflicts can be divided into three categories – *minor armed conflict*, where the number of battle-related deaths during the course of the conflict is at least 25 but below 1,000; *intermediate armed conflict*, with more than 1,000 battle-related deaths recorded during the course of the conflict, but fewer than 1,000 in any given year; and *war*, with more than 1,000 battle-related deaths in any given year. The last two categories are referred to together as *major armed conflict* (Eriksson, Wallensteen and Sollenberg, 2003). The relationship between conflict and war is better understood if war is viewed along a continuum of violent conflict, ranging from low-intensity conflict through conventional war to high-intensity conflict (nuclear war).

Cock (1989) argues that the conflict that took place is South Africa was a low-level civil war, or low-intensity conflict. "Low-intensity conflict is generally characterized by a clash between revolutionary and counterrevolutionary processes... such conflicts involve a struggle between proponents of radical change and the guardians of the prevailing order" (Klare, 1988b: 75). The term is also used in the literature to describe

a military strategy of the state. "This is a counter-insurgency strategy to defeat liberation movements without engaging in full-scale conventional war" (Cock, 1989: 2). Low-intensity conflict is often characterised by constraints on the weaponry, tactics and level of violence (Klare, 1988b). In 1973, P.W Botha, then Minister of Defence, declared that "[We have not] yet eliminated the [guerrilla] threat. I do not wish to spread the alarm, but I must state that for a long time already, we have been engaged in a war of low intensity and that this situation will probably continue for some considerable time to come" (cited in Cawthra, 1986: 22).

4.3 Low-Intensity Conflict in South Africa: 1961 - 1990

4.3.1 Apartheid and the Struggle for Liberation

The National Party (NP) came to power in 1948. Soon after taking power it implemented a three-pronged programme to further the interests of Afrikaner Nationalism. "New discriminatory laws were added to the existing arsenal (and extended to Coloureds and Indians), the bureaucracy and parastatal sector were enlarged in order to generate Afrikaner employment opportunities, and a variety of welfare programmes were launched to redistribute wealth and uplift the poor (mainly Afrikaner) white population" (Terreblanche and Nattrass, 1994: 196). Draconian laws to intensify the oppression of black South Africans were also introduced. The first major restriction on democratic political activity was the *Suppression of Communism Act* of 1950 which outlawed the Communist Party of South Africa. The new law made it an offence to propagate "communism". However, "communism was so broadly defined that it could include virtually any non-parliamentary political opposition…" (Pampallis, 1994: 207).

By the time the NP came to power, the ANC was already in existence and had a history of peaceful protest. Formed in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), it changed its name to the African National Congress in 1923. Since its formation the ANC had been engaged in the struggle for independence from British colonialism. This took the form of peaceful but vigorous protest between 1912 and 1961, which included "constitutional petitions to the British authorities during the earlier part of the century, mass campaigns and strikes against unjust apartheid laws

during the 1940s and the 1950s" (Williams, 2000: 16). In the 1950s, the ANC and its allies intensified their defiance; hence some have described the 1950s as the decade of defiance (see for example, Cawthra, 1986).

There were other organisations that challenged the apartheid government, but the history of these organisations, such as the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) remains largely undocumented. This chapter confines itself to the role played by the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in the struggle for liberation. These were the two main African organisations involved in the armed struggle for liberation.

The PAC was established by a number of radicals who broke away from the moderate ANC in 1959. These members were critical of the ANC's alliance with white, Indian and coloured organisations. Their argument was that this alliance "diluted" African nationalism. "In their view, ideological emphasis on racial identity was essential in the formation of a revolutionary popular consciousness" (Lodge, 1995: 105). The PAC's first campaign was the Status Campaign which was designed to elicit courtesy from whites in their interaction with blacks. In the face of white racism and arrogance, Africans were called upon to shame whites with dignity (ANC, 1998). When launching the Status Campaign, the founding president of the PAC, Smangaliso Sobukwe, said:

> We are reminding our people that acceptance of any indignity, any insult, any humiliation, is acceptance of inferiority. They must first think of themselves as men and women before they can demand to be treated as such. The campaign will free the mind of the African – and once the mind is free, the body will soon be free (cited in Mphahlele, 2002: 59).

However, the campaign failed to make an impact (ANC, 1998).

Meanwhile at the ANC's December 1959 annual conference, there was a unanimous vote to launch a massive, countrywide anti-pass campaign. The campaign was to start on March 31, 1960, and culminate on June 26 with a great bonfire of pass books. Planning began immediately. ANC organisers and officials toured the country, talking to branches about the campaign. Leaflets, stickers and posters were circulated and

posted in buses and trains (ANC, 1998). However, before the beginning of the ANC-led pass campaign, the newly formed PAC announced that it, too, was launching an anti-pass campaign on March 21, ten days before the launch of the ANC-led campaign. This was less than a year after the PAC's inaugural conference (Lodge, 1995). "No conference had been held by [the PAC] to discuss the date, no organisational work of any significance had been undertaken. It was a blatant case of opportunism. Their actions were motivated more by a desire to eclipse the ANC than to defeat the enemy" (Mandela, 1994: 225).

On March 21, 1960, PAC anti-pass protesters were gunned down by members of the South African Police in Sharpeville. The police shot at protesters without provocation. "They did so out of fear for their lives, without orders, and entirely on their own initiative" (Frankel, 2001: 86). The incident left 69 Africans dead and 180 wounded (Seegers, 1996).

On the same day, and as police were shooting people in Sharpeville, the Minister of Defence described the changes in the armed forces that were meant to deal with the implementation of internal security tasks (Cawthra, 1986). Changes in the role of the SADF became evident on March 30, 1960, when a State of Emergency was declared and the SADF was partially mobilised to deal with any form of protest. Legislation banning both the ANC and the PAC was passed on April 8, 1960. A number of ANC and PAC leaders were arrested and, later in that year, public meetings were banned and there was a massive mobilisation of the SADF (Cawthra, 1986). In 1961, a year after the ANC was banned, Nelson Mandela wrote to Hendrik Verwoerd, then prime minister, appealing to him to convene a national convention at which all South Africans would be represented, to draw up a new non-racial and democratic constitution. Verwoerd did not reply to Mandela's letter (Sparks, 1994). All these developments led to a vigorous debate within the ANC about the viability of peaceful protest action under the prevailing conditions of the time. The outcome was the formation of uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) to fight an armed struggle against the apartheid government.

Opinions were divided on the moral and practical viability of initiating an armed struggle against the South African state and, for this reason, the nascent MK was

initially not specifically linked to the ANC (Williams, 2000). Evidence of this is the message announcing the formation of MK, distributed in a leaflet on December 16, 1961:

> uMKhonto we Sizwe *is a new independent body*, formed by Africans. It includes in its ranks South Africans of all races... uMKhonto we Sizwe will carry on the struggle for freedom and democracy by new methods, which are necessary to complement the actions of the established national liberation movement, and our members, jointly and individually, place themselves under the overall political guidance of that movement (cited in Barrell, 1990: 2, emphasis added).

Contrary to Williams' (2000) argument, Ngculu (2002) argues that during the initial stages of its formation, MK avoided openly mentioning the ANC in order to protect the leadership of the ANC, in particular those who had nothing to do with the decision to take the route of armed struggle, from reprisals by the South African government. Among its founder members were Nelson Mandela, MK's first Commander-in-Chief, Walter Sisulu, Wilton Mkwayi, Joe Slovo and Raymond Mhlaba (Motumi, 1995). However, the armed struggle was not the ANC's sole form of resistance. In fact, it was viewed as one part of a "four pillar" strategy, with the other three pillars being mass mobilisation, underground organisation and international solidarity work As Nelson Mandela himself says, "I started Umkhonto we Sizwe … but I never had any illusions that we could win military victory; its purpose was to focus attention on the resistance movement" (cited in Sparks, 1994: 26). In 1978 an ANC delegation visited Vietnam and concluded that the political dimensions of a revolutionary struggle should be given priority over the military dimensions (Bailey, 2003).

4.3.2 The Early Years of the Armed Struggle

The struggle for liberation can be divided into four phases: 1961-1969 with the Morogoro Conference being a turning point; 1970-1976 with the student uprising of 1976 being the second turning point; 1977-1985 with the Kabwe Conference being the turning point; and 1986-1990. For the purposes of this chapter, two broad phases are distinguished: 1961-1969 and 1970-1990.

In the early years of the armed struggle, MK concentrated on sabotage, targeting mostly electricity pylons and government buildings and seeking to avoid casualties (Cawthra, 1993). As Mandela (1994) put it, the aim was not to seize power but to bring the government to its senses and to demonstrate that a new phase in the struggle had begun. In the two years following the formation of MK, there were over 200 sabotage operations, virtually all of them directed at strategic and economic targets (Cawthra, 1986). However, these operations were characterised by their simplicity. Homemade explosives were used, and much of the expertise was provided by former Second World War veterans who had joined MK (Williams, 2000). One of these veterans was Jack Hodgson, "whose Johannesburg flat became MK's first 'bomb factory'" (Barrell, 1990: 10). During the early days of military operations, MK personnel lacked specialised training in covert operations, and as a result many of the operations were characterised by a certain degree of amateurishness. Thus, a number of MK saboteurs and would-be saboteurs were captured and imprisoned by the authorities (Williams, 2000).

MK despatched a number of senior commanders abroad to facilitate the establishment of an external infrastructure and to secure advanced training for MK combatants. One of those dispatched was Nelson Mandela who received military training abroad in Algeria and Ethiopia between 1961 and 1962 (Williams, 2000). In the early days of armed struggle, an extensive rural-based guerrilla strategy was envisaged/ However, this vision was never fully realised. A number of factors made the strategy impossible to implement:

> South Africa was industrialising rapidly; security force mobility and firepower were considerable; the black peasantry, although still fighting for its rights, was rapidly becoming marginal; ANC organisation amongst the peasantry was minimal and no slogans had been advanced around which to mobilise this class; and there is little evidence to suggest the MK leadership had any clear idea on how they might transform a sabotage campaign conducted by a small group of specialists into a more generalised guerrilla war involving people at large (Barrell, 1990: 17 – 18).

During all the years of the armed struggle, the ANC was never able to engage in significant unilateral conventional warfare against the South African security forces.

Nor was it able to establish liberated zones within South Africa, largely due to the enormous resources that the South African security establishment had at its disposal. The police reserve set up in 1962 "grew rapidly to more than 16,000 whites by 1964 to complement the standing force; the balloted call-up of whites for military training increased to more than 16,000 a year" (Barrell, 1990: 12). Compared to the state security forces, MK posed no challenge. In 1965 the ANC had about 800 guerrilla trainees, based either at camps in Tanzania or undergoing military courses in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and China (Barrell, 1990).

Shortly after the launch of the armed struggle, MK leaders were arrested at Lilliesleaf farm in Rivonia (Motumi, 1994; Williams, 2000). The subsequent (Rivonia) trial led to the detention of the entire MK leadership including Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu (Motumi, 1994). Following the Rivonia Trial, most ANC activities within South Africa, including armed struggle, ground to a halt. The detention of the MK leadership necessitated the speedy establishment of an external infrastructure for MK. According to Cawthra (1986), this was slow and painful until 1975 when former Portuguese colonies gained independence and there was new militancy inside South Africa. The main problem faced by the ANC was that South Africa was surrounded by neighbours who were unlikely to sympathise with its attempts to infiltrate MK cadres into the country. "Unlike the Zimbabwean and Namibian struggles (which possessed the friendly borders of Mozambique, Angola and Zambia respectively), Southern Rhodesia, Bechuanaland, Basutoland, Swaziland and Mozambique were either occupied by settler regimes or were too dependant on South Africa to challenge its hegemony in the region." (Williams, 2000: 19).

In 1965 the ANC formed an alliance with the ZAPU and its military wing, ZIPRA(Motumi, 1994; Ngculu, 2002; Williams, 2000). According to Williams (2000), this alliance had both political and regional significance. First, both the ANC and ZAPU had strong links to the former Soviet Union upon whom they relied for the bulk of their military requirements. Second, the alliance was strengthened by the close ethnic links which existed between the Ndebele-speaking and Zulu-speaking South Africans and their Matabele cousins in Matabeleland (the latter being the product of a diaspora that took place within the Zulu kingdom during the mid-nineteenth century). Lastly, both the ANC and ZAPU possessed strong urban bases (Williams, 2000).

During the next two years, both MK and ZIPRA did extensive reconnaissance within Rhodesia with the intention of launching a massive infiltration of ZIPRA and MK personnel into that country. In August 1967, a joint MK-ZIPRA detachment crossed the Zambezi River into Rhodesia (Barrell, 1990). The intention behind the incursion had been for ZIPRA to establish itself within Rhodesia following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Ian Smith and for the MK contingent, known as the Luthuli Detachment, to fight its way to South Africa through Zimbabwe (Motumi, 1994; Williams, 2000).

The incursion led to armed clashes between MK soldiers and the Rhodesian forces. This became known as the Wankie Campaign and resulted in the capture and killing of some MK soldiers (Barrell, 1990). Despite the setbacks suffered in the Wankie Campaign, on December 28-29, 1967, a second joint MK-ZIPRA infiltration was mounted from Zambia across the Zambezi into Rhodesia, headed for Sipolilo to create a base for guerrilla warfare in Rhodesia. The Sipolilo Campaign also resulted in several furious battles (Barrell, 1990). Some MK cadres were captured while others were killed. Among those captured was Mr. Ike Maphoto; reflecting on the campaign he said:

> *I was a commander during the Sipolilo operation. We were bombarded from 11h00 until 19h00 non-stop and the enemy [SADF Air Force] was using ten warplanes. The bombing went on non-stop and I normally have some flashbacks of the event* (Interview with Mr. Ike Maphoto, Polokwane, 31.01.2002)[7].

Two further incursions were reported, one in February 1968 involving 100 combatants and another one in July (Barrell, 1990). In launching the campaigns, two practical errors were committed. First, MK and ZIPRA commanders underestimated the importance of building a local power base among the people prior to entering into armed engagement with the enemy (Barrell, 1990; Williams, 2000). Second, MK commanders lacked knowledge of the terrain the cadres were entering, and thus relied

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[7] At the time of the interview Mr. Ike Maphoto was a Member of the Limpopo Provincial Legislature

heavily on ZAPU's knowledge and contacts which, it turned out, were weak (Barrell, 1990).

On April 25, 1969, the ANC convened a conference in Morogoro, Tanzania (which became known as the Morogoro Conference). The conference sought to achieve a higher integration between political and military activities, and this led to the establishment of the Revolutionary Council (RC). The former MK command became a military administration under the Revolutionary Council (Barrell, 1990). The conference further sought to ensure better training of military personnel within MK and to establish a more effective political and military presence within South Africa (Williams, 2000).

The origins of the PAC's armed wing can be traced back to the formation of Poqo cells in migrant worker hostels in Cape Town in September 1961. The Poqo movement was responsible for a series of local uprisings, attacks and violent conspiracies inside South Africa between 1961 and 1967 (Lodge, 1995). Poqo was renamed the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) in 1968. In the 1960s APLA engaged in armed attacks against police officers, representatives of traditional authority in the former black homelands, perceived PAC dissidents and a few white civilians. In the late 1960s, the PAC fought alongside the Mozambique Revolutionary Committee (COREMO) against Portuguese forces in Mozambique. Their first operation in collaboration with COREMO was in 1968 and involved the first 200 cadres trained in Ghana and Algeria (Lodge, 1995). The PAC and APLA were more closely allied to the People's Republic of China, where the bulk of their cadres were trained (Williams, 2000). However, the Chinese staff at the Chinese Embassy in Botswana "were irritated by what they termed the PAC's racist policies of excluding whites from membership" (Mphahlele, 2002: 107).

The PAC established links with other Southern African liberation movements such as SWAPO and ZANU. The relationship between the PAC and ZANU was facilitated by the political focus of both of these parties. They were more rurally based and both endeavoured to build strong power bases among the peasantry – a process that only ZANU was successful in accomplishing (Williams, 2000). However, even though the PAC failed to build a strong base among the peasantry, it emphasised the

redistribution of the land in its campaigns. The emphasis is evident in the words of Letlapa Mphahlele, the former APLA Director of Operations. "The sacrifices of generations of Azanians will have borne fruits the day every square centimetre of land is taken back from the alien conquerors, not the day the PAC flag is hoisted on the Union Building in Pretoria" (Mphahlele, 2002: 148).

4.3.3 Armed Struggle After Morogoro

In the early 1970s, following a revision of the ANC's strategy and tactics at the Morogoro Conference, armed attacks against the apartheid state slowly regained momentum. In the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto uprisings, the numbers of sabotage attacks dramatically increased (Cawthra, 1993). This was largely due to the large number of militant youth who left the country in 1976 to join the liberation movements in exile. In November 1977 a bomb exploded at the Carlton Centre in Johannesburg; seventeen people were injured. More police stations were bombed and railway lines were sabotaged. On the night of June 1, 1980, in co-ordinated attacks, MK operatives struck and destroyed four reservoirs at SASOL I while causing minor damage to the SASOL II plant at Secunda. "The SASOL sabotage was the most dramatic in a series of attacks carried out since 1977, in the wake of the Soweto upheavals" (Leonard, 1983: 22).

Other special operations carried out included the rocket attack on Voortrekkerhoogte military base in August 1981, the Koeberg nuclear power plant sabotage attack in 1982, and the May 20, 1983, and a car bomb explosion outside the South African Air Force headquarters in Church Street, Pretoria (Motumi, 1994). "An analysis of armed actions between January 1977 and October 1982 revealed 33 attacks on railway installations, 25 on industrial and power installations, 14 on administrative buildings, 13 on police stations, three on military bases and 19 clashes between guerrillas and army units as well as other actions" (Cawthra, 1986: 218). According to Lodge (1988), MK guerrilla activities increased from 23 in 1977 to 136 in 1985. Meanwhile, in the late 1970s the PAC embarked on a Maoist strategy of a protracted people's war, and APLA members infiltrated certain rural areas, with sporadic attacks launched against members of the security forces. The rural emphasis was part of the strategic

priorities adopted at the PAC's consultative conference held in Arusha, Tanzania in 1978 (Lodge, 1995).

During the 1980s, armed struggle was incorporated into the ANC strategy of "making the townships ungovernable" (Cawthra, 1986; Motumi, 1994). This was the period of mass protests triggered by the rent and services boycott in the Vaal Triangle. It was also a period when the ANC's strategy of a "people's war", whose primary objective was to involve the entire populace in the fight against apartheid, got under way (Motumi, 1994). The period also saw the rise of the United Democratic Front (UDF), formed in 1983. The UDF united youth and women's organisations, trade unions, students, community and religious organisations at both local and national level. It grew to incorporate over 600 organisations, collectively representing two million South Africans (Cawthra, 1986). The strategy of a people's war and making the country ungovernable was reappraised at the Kabwe Consultative Conference in June 1985. This conference pointed to the weaknesses in MK's focus on urban operations. The outcome of the appraisal was the launch of operations in the rural areas, which at that stage were isolated and had not experienced mass protests like those in the urban areas (Motumi, 1994).

Following the Kabwe Conference, from November 1985 onwards, there was a notable increase in the number of "rural incidents". During the period from November 1985 to 17 December 1985, seven land mines were detonated by vehicles (Motumi, 1994). Farm workers embarked on strikes to demand higher wages, puppet chiefs and bantustan leaders were attacked, and schools were boycotted. Organisations such as the Northern Transvaal People's Congress, in conjunction with trade unions, organised workers alongside village committees, establishing alternative forms of administration which articulated "people's power" (Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, 1994). Lodge (1988) observes that there were 50 attacks on police facilities and/or police/MK clashes between January 1 and June 30, 1986. A total of 26 landmines were activated as opposed to seven the previous year (Barrell, 1990). There was a steady increase in the number of operations in the 1986-1988 period, including special operations involving car bombs at the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court in May 1987, and one outside the Witwatersrand Command of the SADF in 1987. Operations

continued until late 1989, so that when the ANC and MK were unbanned in February 1990, many were caught unprepared for the new situation (Motumi, 1994).

By the mid- to late-1980s APLA was launching attacks against security force members from urban townships such as Alexandra. "Reports of APLA guerrilla operations began appearing quite frequently in the South African press [in 1986]" (Lodge, 1995).

As a consequence of the armed liberation struggle and the government's counter-insurgency strategy, South Africa became a highly militarised society.

4.4 The Militarisation of South African Society

J.B. Vorster had begun to build up South Africa's military forces, but he had relied predominately on the security police to maintain white supremacy. P.W. Botha stepped up the pace of militarisation. He brought military leaders into high levels of government to co-ordinate the "total strategy" – a programme for mobilising all the nation's resources for war (Leonard, 1983). According to Cawthra (1988), one of Botha's most important steps was to establish a new framework for making and implementing policy decisions which completely cut across, and indeed replaced, many of the existing constitutional structures. This became known as the National Security Management System (NSMS). The most significant site of power for the NSMS was the State Security Council (SSC). In the early 1980s, the political influence of the military had not yet expanded to the point where the defence force could command public moneys and other social resources on a large scale. This happened in the late 1980s, when the state mobilised resources for war on a significant level, thus making South Africa a militarised society.

In the late 1980s South Africa was militarised at three levels: economic, political and ideological (Cock, 1989). An indicator of militarisation at the economic level was the expanding armaments industry and the growing links between the South African Defence Force and private sector companies. At the time, ARMSCOR was one of the largest corporations in South Africa, making the country the fifth largest arms

producer in the world (Cock, 1989). However, Cawthra (1997a) observes that South Africa never attained full self-sufficiency in arms, except perhaps in the case of light weapons. He further observes that South Africa continued to rely on imported technology and components. The second indicator of militarisation at an economic level was the high defence expenditure. In June 1987 the Defence budget was increased by 30 per cent over that of 1986, to R6,683 million (Cock, 1989). Another indicator of militarisation at an economic level was the influence of the SADF on economic development. Many whites living in rural areas benefited directly from the construction and expansion of SADF bases, "whose consumer buying power and infrastructural demands [could] be an important spur to the economic development of more remote regions. The case of the South African Air Force and its contribution to the economic growth of the Pietersburg region of the northern Transvaal is instructive" (Frankel, 1984: 132).

Militarisation at a political level was evident both within and outside the borders of South Africa. Internally the SADF was used to maintain the system of apartheid, through, among other things, evicting rent defaulters, occupying black schools, monitoring demonstrations, forced removals, repressing labour strikes and re-educating political detainees (Cock, 1989). Some townships were subjected to security operations comparable to an occupation or a siege. "At Zweletemba, near Worcester in the Western Cape, for example, an army camp was set up at the township's entrance, roadblocks were established, parts of the township were sealed off with razor wire, and towers were erected from which searchlights were played across the houses to ensure no one was breaking the dusk-to-dawn curfew" (Cawthra, 1993: 110). Initially the government issued strong denials about SADF's entry into previously civilian jurisdictions, "but later statements made a case for the benefits derived from such interventions" (Seegers, 1996: 164).

Externally the SADF played an extensive coercive role in South Africa's regional policy of destabilisation. For much of the 1980s, South Africa carried out raids on targets in Southern African states, especially in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and Angola (Cawthra, 1997a). At one stage, up to half of the total mobilised strength of the apartheid armed forces were committed to war in Namibia and Angola (Cawthra, 1986). Seegers (1996) states that between 1978 and 1984 the SADF

launched seven major military operations in the south of Angola. The figure excludes a large number of minor military operations. The decisions for such attacks were taken by the State Security Council and not Cabinet. According to Cawthra (1988), Parliament knew nothing of these decisions until after the attacks had taken place. By the late 1980s the SSC which was technically a Cabinet committee responsible for making and implementing decisions relating to state security, but had effectively replaced Cabinet as the main decision-making body (Cawthra, 1986; 1988). According to Cawthra (1988), the SSC met before Cabinet, and more regularly in secret, and its non-Ministerial members (for example, chief of the SADF) were more important than Ministers.

> Although it was not empowered to make decisions, the SSC met just before Cabinet did, creating a decision-making momentum Cabinet found impossible to stop. It may also have been unwilling to do so. Many in the state's senior leadership corps were convinced that South Africa was effectively at war (Seegers, 1996: 166).

As a result, the military and government were indistinguishable in maintaining white hegemony of the state. "The SADF became so insulated and clothed in a siege mentality that in pursuit of 'national security', its conduct went beyond the reach of parliamentary control" (Winkates, 2000: 451).

At an ideological level, militarisation was characterised by the promotion of the ideology of militarism, thus legitimising state violence as a solution to conflict. This also influenced the policy process, as "all activities of the state and society had to be orchestrated through a counter-revolutionary security agenda aimed at preventing a communist take over of the country" (Cawthra, 2000a: 52, 2003: 34). The ideology, Cock (1989) observes, was linked to a consumerist militarism, which was evident in the popularity of war toys, games and films, and in the frequency of military parades and other military displays. Many whites supported the SADF in the direct sense by purchasing Defence Bonds (Frankel, 1984). The extent of militarisation at an ideological level was further reflected in legislation enacted in July 1982 that made all white men up to the age of 60 liable for military training and service (Leonard, 1983). Out of a white male population of around two and half million, more than half a million were conscripted at any one time into active or reserve forces (Cawthra,

1997a). Different SADF publications glorified the role of the "security forces" and raised the spectre of a "Marxist threat" and "total onslaught" against South Africa. Furthermore, all SADF training involved ideological indoctrination through lectures, films and videos (Cawthra, 1986).

Militarisation at an ideological level was also evident in the government's strategy of "area defence". This was developed in response to the growing country-wide APLA and MK military activities and the political mobilisation of the black population (Cawthra, 1986; Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, 1994). The strategy was adopted after the SADF's realisation that MK's strategy was "to spread its forces thinly and strike whenever possible rather than build up strongholds in remote or border areas" (Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, 1994: 94). Area defence involved the conscription of older men in rural border areas into commandos (Cawthra, 1986). In some areas men were conscripted who had never served in the military before. Their ages ranged from 35 to 55, and they were expected to serve in the local commando unit on a part-time basis until they were 55 (Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, 1994). These farmers were required to form a "first line of defence" for the SADF and to carry out certain military tasks.

> These [included] participating in commandos, making sure their farms [were] occupied by whites all the year round, maintaining fences and roads for SADF patrolling purposes and keeping written records of all blacks living on their properties… The farmers [had] also been subsidised by the regime to buy armoured vehicles and to install security fences, alarms and flood-lights. They [played] a crucial role in providing the SADF with information on the movement of guerrillas through the Military Area Radio Network (MARNET). Most farmers [had] MARNET equipment installed, which [enabled] them to communicate with SADF bases and mobilise troops (Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, 1994: 97).

The involvement of farmers in commando structures was used by the ANC to justify attacks on white farms in the rural areas. The argument was that farmers were "legitimate targets" since they supported apartheid and formed part of the security forces' rural commandos (Motumi, 1994). During the period in which these operations were under way, there was also a considerable amount of debate within MK on what

exactly constituted a "legitimate target" for attack (Motumi, 1994). There was also the formulation of theoretical positions defining the objective of the armed struggle as "insurrectionary". A distinction was made between the mobilised masses who were defined as a "political army", and the armed component which was defined as the "revolutionary army", within which there was the "organised advanced detachment", this referring to MK (Motumi, 1994).

Further evidence of militarisation at an ideological level was the absence of a mass-based anti-militarisation movement in South Africa. The activist anti-militarist groups appealed to a very small and select community of liberals and mild radicals (Frankel, 1984). These included the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), which was formed in protest against compulsory military service. The objectives of the ECC were "to build pressure on the government to end conscription; to raise awareness of an opposition to militarisation and the SADF's role in South Africa, Namibia and southern Africa; to win support for non-military and non-governmental forms of alternative service for all conscientious objectors; and to 'work for peace and justice in South Africa'" (Nathan, 1989: 310). While Nathan (1989) regards the banning of the ECC as an unintended testimony to the degree of its success, others note that the organisation was unable to establish a mass support base within white communities. "The core ECC support was in the white liberal universities, and among middle-class, white, English-speaking youth. It tried hard to break into the broader white community, but was only partially successful" (Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, 1994: 208). Many of the people who supported the ECC were politically demobilised by the contradiction between their material commitments to the white state and their moral and philosophical repugnance at it (Frankel, 1984). In London, a group of young white men who left South African to avoid call-up for service in the SADF formed the Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR). "Cosawr and its journal, *The Resister* kept resisters in contact with each other. They also helped put military conscription and war resistance on the agenda of the international anti-apartheid movement" (*Work In Progress*, 1990: 4). However, as COSAWR's founder Gavin Cawthra admitted to *Work In Progress,* COSAWR never had a base inside South Africa (Frankel, 1984).

Cawthra (1997a) argues that the concept of militarisation did not apply neatly to the South African situation. According to him, in so far as the concept involved the

diversion of state resources from civilian to security functions, entailed military preparation amongst South Africa's whites, and led to increased military influence over the state, the media and the economy, it is an accurate description. However, he maintains that the concept of militarisation disguised important processes:

> For instance, the police remained central to state security strategy, and the black population remained largely unaffected by military mobilisation – except when they came to be on the receiving end of military operations. The extent to which resources were allocated for the military effort was not extreme by world standards. The proportion of the state budget earmarked for defence seldom rose above 20 per cent … and military expenditure accounted for little over 5 per cent of GDP, even in the late 1980s. For a country facing security challenges which threatened the very survival of the regime in power these figures appear to be quite low (Cawthra, 1997a: 36).

While it is true that the black population remained largely unaffected by military mobilisation, they were not passive victims of militarisation as Cawthra (1997a) seems to suggest. The militarisation of South African society in the 1980s was not confined to formal state security structures and their personnel. "The potent combination of state repression and the consequent insurrectionary struggle resulted in high levels of militarisation in civil society" (Marks and Mckenzie, 1998: 222). While militarisation manifested itself in many ways within the black population, the formation and evolution of Self-defence Units (SDU) was perhaps the most important evidence of local militarisation. The concept of community defence structures arose because of inadequate policing in black townships (Marks and Mckenzie, 1998; Motumi, 1994; Rakgoadi, 1995; Schärf, 1997). At the time, the police were seen to be inefficient and ineffective, because most of the cases that were reported to the police were never followed up. Most communities did not have confidence in the criminal justice system, which took a long time to bring the perpetrators of violence and crime to justice, and which was seen as being biased against blacks. Some SDUs were prominent in the African townships, especially in the 1980s (Rakgoadi, 1995).

From late-1984 onwards, Self-Defence Units were incorporated into the ANC's strategy of ungovernability. However, these structures were not necessarily called SDUs; sometimes they were part of street committees or youth organisations (Schärf,

1997). These structures largely operated underground but became more visible in the late 1980s. While the SDUs were conceived as people's defence structures, they began to change in character. Motumi (1994) traces the changes to the context of the State of Emergency and the growing sophistication in the state's counter-insurgency measures, which made life more difficult for people in townships. Marks and Mckenzie (1998), on the other hand, trace the decay to the early 1990s, when key leaders of the 1980s left local youth organisations. According to Marks and Mckenzie (1998), the departure of key leaders created a leadership vacuum. "New, less politically astute and disciplined youth constituted the social base of youth structures, and it proved difficult to organise and to instil the sense of discipline held by youth activists of the 1980s" (Marks and Mckenzie, 1998: 225).

Increasingly, the SDUs began to be made up of community youth who were not necessarily recruited, as occurred originally, but who saw an opportunity to exert power and influence through membership of the SDUs. Many of them were township thugs commonly, known as *tsotsis* (Marks and Mckenzie, 1998; Motumi, 1994). They were masquerading as members of the youth organisations, and genuinely belonging to them in some cases. It is on this basis that they came to be known as *com-tsotsis*, because of the dual identity they held – they were comrades, belonging to and associating with youth organisations and members, while at the same time retaining their trade as thugs (Motumi, 1994). As a consequence of these developments, discipline within the structures weakened and problems were no longer being resolved democratically through the street committees. Members of SDUs imposed arbitrary "laws" and "disciplinary measures" on members of the community. The people's courts that emerged were the domain of the undirected youth (Rakgoadi, 1995).

Within this context of high militarisation, the government initiated negotiations for a peaceful transition to democracy.

4.5 Transition to Democracy

4.5.1 The Process of Negotiations

In the 1980s the ANC was preparing to negotiate with the National Party government. For example, the ANC's National Working Committee commissioned a group chaired by Pallo Jordan to explore the scenarios for negotiations. The committee argued that negotiations could only come about under three circumstances: outright defeat of the apartheid regime, stalemate, or a "Patriotic Front dilemma". The latter referred to "the situation of the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front in 1979, when the [Front Line States] gave them an ultimatum to go to Lancaster House or get out of our countries" (Callinicos, 2004: 576). On September 13, 1985, a number of businessmen, the editors of *Die Vaderland* and *The Sunday Times*, the publisher of *Leadership* magazine and former Progressive Federal Party leader Zach de Beer met with Oliver Tambo, Acting President of the ANC, and his delegation in Lusaka, Zambia (Callinicos, 2004). According to Callinicos (2004), P.W. Botha, who initially supported the meeting, distanced himself once news about the meeting leaked out. However, earlier in the same year, the National Party government had begun "four years of secret talks" (Sparks, 1994: 21). Minister Kobie Cotsee met Nelson Mandela in the Volkshospitaal in Cape Town on March 23, 1985 (Seegers, 1996).

At the time Oliver Tambo knew that Nelson Mandela had been separated from his comrades in prison for some time, and send him a note to find out what "he was up to" (Callinicos, 2004: 590). Mandela was worried that news of his meeting with Kobie Coetsee might reach the ANC leadership in exile, and that they might think he was doing deals without the consent of Oliver Tambo, whom he regarded as the ANC leader (Callinicos, 2004; Sparks, 1994). Thus, he sent George Bizos to meet with Tambo in Lusaka, with an assurance that nothing would happen without the ANC's approval (Callinicos, 2004). In March 1986, a three-man delegation of the state met the ANC in Paris, France (Seegers, 1996). In 1988, Oliver Tambo appointed a President's Team on Negotiations under his leadership to develop the ANC's perspective on negotiations (Callinicos, 2004). However, the first formal and official meeting between delegations from the government and the ANC was not held until May 2-4, 1990, in Cape Town. "For the ANC, 78 years of exerting pressure, 29 years of armed struggle, countless marches, demonstrations, petitions and appeals for the

most simple demand – human equality – which had been met with detentions, trials, assassinations and vicious repression, finally culminated in the first ever official ANC/government meeting" (South African History Archive, 1990: 17).

The document that resulted from the first meeting became known as the *Groote Schuur Minute.* It stated among, other things, that the government had agreed to review existing security legislation to bring it into line with the new dynamic developments in South Africa in order to ensure normal and free political activities. The Cape Town meeting was followed by another meeting in Pretoria in August 1990. The document arising from this meeting became known as the *Pretoria Minute;* it stated that the government had agreed to review the security legislation while the ANC had agreed to suspend the armed struggle. However, the main shortcoming of both meetings was the absence of a formal ceasefire agreement. In its report-back to the people of South Africa on the process of negotiations, the ANC argued that the armed struggle was suspended and not abandoned, that MK had not been dissolved and that the right to self-defence had not been forfeited. According to the ANC, the continued suspension of the armed struggle was conditional on the behaviour of the South African Police and Defence Force (ANC, 1990). At its Consultative Conference on December 14-16, 1990, the ANC mandated its National Executive Committee to create people's defence units as a matter of extreme urgency for the defence of communities (ANC, 1991a).

At its 48th National Conference on July 1, 1991, the ANC reiterated that while it had suspended armed activities, it had not abandoned the armed struggle (ANC, 1991b). The ANC resolved, among other things, that it would maintain and develop MK until the adoption of a democratic constitution and the creation of a new defence force into which cadres of MK would be integrated. Further, until such a point was reached, the equipment of the movement would not be surrendered to the regime. The ANC further resolved that MK remain in constant combat readiness and that the ANC would establish structures of MK throughout the country at all levels, including the establishment of offices and the provision of resources for such activities (ANC, 1991b).

Meanwhile, the PAC refused to take part in negotiations with the government except around three principles: straightforward majority rule, redistribution of resources particularly the land, and a Constituent Assembly based on one-person-one-vote on a common voter's roll of Azanians[8] eighteen years of age and over (PAC, 1990a). In a document presented at its Consultative Conference in Harare on September 21-23, 1990, the PAC reiterated its call for a principle of one-person-one-vote on a common voter's roll in a unicameral legislative assembly. The PAC argued that there was no principled basis for it to abandon the bullet until the ballot was secured for the African majority to contest power (PAC, 1990b).

On August 16, 1991, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the South African government signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of an estimated 40,000 South African returnees. The agreement provided for a comprehensive amnesty for all political offences, a mechanism allowing the UNHCR to make representations on behalf of persons not granted amnesty, the establishment of a UNHCR presence in South Africa and complete freedom of movement for returnees within South Africa *(Memorandum on the Repatriation of South African Returnees,* 16.08.1991).

The returnees included about 4,000 MK cadres who returned to South Africa as unarmed civilians (Cock, 1993). These refugees returned to a very violent society. For example, in 1991 alone there were 8,815 incidents related to political unrest in which 2,246 people died (Anon, 1993). It was generally accepted that the violence had its roots in the uprising against black local authorities in the Vaal Triangle townships in September 1984 as part of the ANC's campaign to make the country ungovernable (Anon, 1993). There were different interpretations of the violence, some calling it black-on-black violence while others saw it as the result of political rivalry between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). However, it was almost "certainly incorrect to simply attribute [the violence] to political rivalry between the ANC and IFP. Even to describe it as 'black-on-black', 'ethnic' or 'tribal' – while often factually accurate – was generally superficial" (Anon, 1993: 4).

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[8] Members of the Pan Africanist Congress referred to South Africa as Azania and the indigenous people of South Africa as Azanians

On September 14, 1991, a total of 29 political parties and organisations came together to sign the National Peace Accord. The Accord included a code of conduct for security forces and political parties; it also established a National Peace Committee and a Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation (chaired by Justice R.J. Goldstone) to monitor implementation of the Accord. The Accord prohibited possession, carriage and display of weapons or firearms by members of the general public attending any political gathering, procession or meeting. However, one of the first difficulties facing the sustainability of the National Peace Accord was experienced during the leaders' press conference that immediately followed its signature. During the press conference, there were "several thousand Inkatha supporters openly bearing traditional weapons [outside the press conference venue] – in direct contravention of the accord that had just been signed" (Anon, 1993: 8). The National Peace Accord made little difference – in 1992 there were 8,765 incidents in which 2,429 people died (Anon, 1993: 8). This included the Boipatong Massacre of June 17, 1992, in which 50 people in an ANC-aligned area were killed by hostel dwellers from a nearby IFP stronghold. Subsequent evidence indicated that the IFP and the security forces had co-operated in the violence that plagued the transition (Shaw, 1995). Furthermore on September 7, 1992, during a march on Bisho, the capital of Ciskei, Ciskei soldiers fired on demonstrators who tried to bypass their position. This resulted in the suspension of marches on other Bantustan capitals (Anon, 1993).

The period was also characterised by random armed attacks on trains, which extended to the communities adjacent to railway stations and hostels; these hostels were believed to be IFP strongholds (Motumi, 1994). "Between the unbanning of the liberation movements in February 1990 and the election of a Government of National Unity (GNU) in April 1994, about 14,028 deaths were attributed to political conflict, much of it between ANC and Inkatha supporters in Natal" (Lodge, 1995: 111). The National Peace Accord did not prohibit the formation of voluntary associations or self-protection units to prevent crime and to prevent any invasion of the lawful rights of citizens. It is worth noting that in February 1991 the DF Malan Accord, then a secret agreement between the government and the ANC, excluded MK from the restrictions on private armies which were later implemented under the National Peace Accord (Shaw, 1995). In the violent context of the time, the ANC encouraged the

formation of SDUs whose role was to defend communities against hostel dwellers (Motumi, 1994). IFP supporters formed their own defence structures called Self-Protection Units (SPUs). There were also smaller groups of youth who were members of similar formations organised by AZAPO and the PAC. SDUs and SPUs mushroomed throughout South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and Gauteng (Marks and Mckenzie, 1998).

4.5.2 MK soldiers in Community Self-Defence Units

Since MK was unbanned, SDUs fell under the auspices of MK. It was relatively easy for them to train SDU members, and some returned MK soldiers served in a full-time capacity (Motumi, 1994). However, there was no attempt to rid SDUs of undesirable elements. While in some cases SDUs were not new, in other parts of the country, like the Northern Cape, SDUs were introduced by returned MK soldiers. Major Lawrence Mbatha observes that 1993 was a volatile time, when the apartheid government was using the "third force" to destabilise communities. "*People were used to fighting against the organised structures they could not see. MK offered hope; here was a structure they could see and trust. People were looking up to us*" (Interview with Major Mbatha, Thaba Tshwane, 05.08.2000). It was in this context that returning MK soldiers recruited and trained local community members as SDUs. Major Mbatha states that while SDUs were trained and deployed in some Northern Cape townships, the name Self-Defence Units was never used there:

> *These people were SDUs but you could not make them aware. They would start abusing their status. In other areas people would go into situations where they would conduct activities that were unconstitutional like robbing people of their belongings. They would then threaten them with MK saying we will call MK to discipline you* (Interview with Major Mbatha, Thaba-Tshwane, 05.08.2000).

In the period following their formation, these units were, for the most part, accountable to local political structures (Marks and Mckenzie, 1998). The ANC and other organisations aligned to it argued strongly in favour of establishing SDUs, but emphasised the need to make them accountable to community structures. For

example, Cronin (1991) argued that before establishing SDUs in communities, there had to be inclusive consultations involving the ANC and SACP branches, civic associations, local trade union structures, women and youth groups, and other formations irrespective of ideological or political affiliation.

Through ongoing discussions, there was a resolution to develop a code of conduct for SDUs. Such a code of conduct spelled out, among other things, that an SDU was to be a protector of the community and not a terroriser, and that no weapons belonging to the SDU should be personalised. The code of conduct further declared that all weapons in the SDU were the property of the community (Rakgoadi, 1995). One of the best innovations in Cronin's (1991) guidelines was the idea of "unarmed self-defence", which encouraged people to join martial arts classes like karate and those with such skills to teach them to others. However, given the prevailing ideology of militarism at the time, unarmed defence was never a popular option. The code of conduct was never implemented. In fact, the whole idea of making SDUs accountable to their communities was never implemented. Thus, members of the SDUs became the masters in the areas they controlled (Motumi, 1994). All previous links with the political structures disappeared. This was because, given the urgency through which SDUs were created; there was not enough time to conscientise new recruits. The emphasis was on military training for community self-defence, and thus differed from MK soldiers in that:

> *MK members had to be politically oriented before receiving military training. MK soldiers are more of politicians than soldiers. They were taught about the founding of the ANC, what it stands for, and how it functions. They were taught about how to use a gun for political purposes. They know that when holding a gun you do not simply choose easy targets to make easy war. MK people are highly disciplined and always look at the political implications of their actions* (Interview with Mr. Bob Mabaso, first Secretary-General of MK Military Veterans Association, Johannesburg, 09.07.1999).

This was also revealed by a number of key informants who were very critical about the process of recruiting SDUs in the early 1990s. Due to the absence of any form of guidance from political leaders, SDUs assumed a purely military character, especially

with the infusion of MK training and, to a degree, staffing. As a result certain areas in the black townships became inaccessible to anyone from outside, unless allegiance to the SDUs was pledged (Motumi, 1994). Major Mbatha's statement cited above also indicates that in some parts of the country the image of MK was wrongly used to intimidate community members. All this took place within a context of negotiations for transition to a non-racial democratic South Africa.

4.5.3 APLA's Armed Struggle in the early 1990s

In 1992, the PAC committed itself to participate in the multi-party negotiations, but without suspending the armed struggle. When the PAC finally agreed to take part in multi-party negotiations, a faction opposed to the decision emerged. It called itself Watchdogs of the Revolution, and was strong in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) region (now part of Gauteng Province) (Mphahlele, 2002). The period 1990-1994 saw an escalation of APLA operations. In his New Year's address Sabelo Phama, APLA Army Commander, declared that 1993 would be "The Year of the Storm" (Lodge, 1995). APLA attacks claimed the lives of over 100 police personnel in 1993, plus an unknown number of farmers (Mantzaris, 1993). While Letlapa Mphahlele, a former APLA Director of Operations, confirms that APLA operations escalated in the 1990s, he argues that some of the operations credited to APLA were unknown to the APLA High Command. This applied mostly to operations carried out by someone calling himself Karl Zimbiri. Although he was unknown within APLA ranks, the PAC and APLA did not condemn him because his operations helped build the profile of APLA:

> Apla combatants continued to gun down security forces, and would assume the name of Karl Zimbiri when they telephoned the media to claim responsibility. There were, however, other operations that we did not know about, which the media attributed to Zimbiri… We fell short of denouncing [Karl Zimbiri] publicly, because when Apla was going through a drought in military activities, he would come up with operations that would capture the newspapers' front pages. We kept our ignorance of his identity to ourselves (Mphahlele, 2002: 162).

The suspension of the armed struggle without a formal ceasefire had the potential to lead to renewed conflict, evident in the increase in the number of APLA military operations. Furthermore, the fact that the ANC leadership had suspended the armed struggle did not deter MK cadres from offering military assistance to APLA cadres. This assistance included donating limpet mines, a bazooka and an assortment of arms and ammunition. MK cadres also trained APLA cadres in the handling, transportation and setting of limpet mines (Mphahlele, 2002). APLA established bases in the Transkei from which they launched a series of attacks against police, military and civilian targets between 1992 and 1994 (Lodge, 1995). "One of the most publicised APLA attacks during this period was the attack on St James Church in Cape Town on July 25, 1993, in which 12 worshippers were killed and 148 injured" (Le Roux, 2005: 249). PAC and APLA leaders usually justified killing white civilians by arguing that in a militarised society they were indistinguishable from the security forces – "even children are taught to shoot in school" (Lodge, 1995: 115). The argument was valid because under the commando system discussed above, many farmers' wives carried firearms, including automatic weapons, and children as young as eight had been taught how to use semi-automatic rifles (Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, 1994).

The PAC suspended the armed struggle on January 15, 1994. As was the case with MK, this was a decision taken by the political leadership without consulting APLA cadres. Members of the APLA High Command, which included APLA Army Commander Sabelo Phama and APLA Director of Operations Letlapa Mphahlele heard about the PAC's suspension of the armed struggle through the media (Mphahlele, 2002). Some members of the PAC and APLA believed that the political negotiations would not automatically lead to the transfer of power from the minority to the majority. This group argued that negotiations were meant to entrench white minority. They believed that armed struggle should continue until a mutual cessation of hostilities was declared with government (Mantzaris, 1993). As a consequence, when the PAC announced its decision to suspend the armed struggle, APLA cadres felt betrayed and took a conscious decision to defy the PAC leadership (Mphahlele, 2002).

PAC's commitment to the suspension was also suspect because "the leadership of the PAC didn't condemn the attacks that took place after they [had] suspended the armed

struggle, like the Vryheid, northern Natal disco attack in which a white woman was killed and several people were injured. The PAC merely attributed these to Apla cadres who had not yet heard of the suspension because they were operating in remote areas" (Mphahlele, 2002: 171). APLA commander Sabelo Phama and PAC leaders repeatedly stated that even though APLA was the PAC's armed wing, it had its own organisational autonomy (Mantzaris, 1993). Some members of the PAC and APLA believed that participation in parliamentary processes and the continuation of the armed struggle were not mutually exclusive. They argued, "You use parliament for barking and the army for biting" (Mphahlele, 2002: 10).

4.5.4 The Military in South Africa's Negotiated Transition

Writing of transition from authoritarian rule, Przeworksi (1991: 98) argues that "unless the armed forces collapse, successful transition can be brought about only as a result of negotiations of pacts". In South Africa, neither the SADF nor MK could claim military victory. The SADF was able to contain the armed struggle inside South Africa at the level of "low intensity" while MK was able to make the country "ungovernable". "The ANC never posed a serious military threat to the apartheid regime, but the political effects of its revolutionary effort in the second half of the 1980s were such that white South Africa's leaders were left with the realisation that they could not survive without making a deal with the liberation movement" (Cawthra, 1997a: 47). The belligerents had reached a mutually hurting stalemate and thus the armed conflict was ripe for resolution (Zartman, 2000).

However, this is not enough to explain transition in South Africa. Nathan (2004) identifies five categories of factors that facilitated transition in South Africa. These are political, leadership, process, institutional, and social and structural. In terms of leadership, Nathan (2004) observes that South Africa was blessed with mature political leadership in the course of its negotiations between 1990 and 1994.

> Political leaders in South Africa understood that negotiated settlements, if they are to
> stand any chance of enduring, require all parties to compromise their positions and
> accommodate the needs and interests of their opponents. In particular, they
> understood that a sustainable settlement in South Africa would be one that

simultaneously addressed the aspirations of the black majority and the fears of the white minority (Nathan, 2004: 3).

The interests of the white minority were protected through a package of constitutional compromises which were successfully argued by the former leader of the South African Communist Party (SACP), the late Joe Slovo. Known as the "sunset clauses", the compromises provided for a period of compulsory power-sharing in the form of the Government of National Unity, the commitment to secure state jobs for apartheid functionaries for a period of five years (which meant no purge of the security forces), the protection of property rights, significant federal elements, and the commitment to a set of constitutional principles that could not be violated. The provision that there would be no purge of the security forces meant that key SADF figures would remain in their positions with an opportunity to shape the nature and outcome of transition.

The state's attitude towards the role of the military during the transition period was contradictory. F.W. de Klerk replaced P.W. Botha as the head of the National Party in February 1989, and in the September 1989 he was elected president. One of his first major steps was the announcement that he was dismantling the NSMS and the secretariat of the SSC. The Cabinet was to become his adviser on security matters (Griffiths, 1995). It seemed that "negotiations would entail the use of instruments other than the military and gradually the role of soldiers was eclipsed" (Shaw, 1995: 10). Apart from dismantling the NSMS, De Klerk diminished the influence of the military in other ways. "He bypassed SADF and Defence Ministry personnel in selecting members of his negotiating teams for talks regarding transition to majority rule, halved the term of compulsory service for white conscripts, and cut the military budget by 16% in 1990-91 and a further R1.5 billion in 1991-92" (Griffiths, 1995: 398). The reduction of the military budget contradicted the 1990 Cabinet decision to fall back on the SADF if the transition went sour (Shaw, 1995).

That cabinet decision confirms the argument in Chapter 2 that in some cases elected civilian governments may co-opt the armed forces and police as instruments of political control (Luckham, 2003). The co-option of the military became evident in how F.W. de Klerk dealt with SADF officers implicated in misconduct. In late 1992, following the Goldstone Commission's findings regarding the involvement of military

intelligence operatives in covert activities against anti-apartheid activists, 23 SADF officers up to the rank of major-general were retired or suspended (Burger and Gould, 2002; Shaw, 1995). However, none of them were charged, and all received substantial severance pay. It is worth noting that

> neither [General George] Meiring (then chief of the army) nor the chief of staff military intelligence, Lieutenant-General Joffel van der Westhuizen, lost their jobs, although both were allegedly implicated by the Goldstone Commission. SADF sources suggest that key strong men were retained to secure the confidence of the (white) leadership cadre, to present a strong front at the negotiating table, and to lessen the controversy (Shaw, 1995: 14).

The action against military officers was not a purge of potentially disloyal officers, as suggested by Huntington (1991). It was rather a gesture against members of the SADF with the most tainted images. However, nine days after F.W. de Klerk's announcement, fifteen SADF officers were reinstated. One of the reasons civilian governments co-opt military leaders during transition is to ward off pressure from those who seek social as well as a political revolution (Przeworksi, 1991). This was clearly the case in South Africa's transition to democracy.

The case of former SADF officers implicated in orchestrating political violence contrasted sharply with the initial handling of political activities carried out by former members of the liberation movement. Unlike the SADF officers who were retired or suspended and later reinstated, former members of the liberation movement had to apply for indemnity, as if being a freedom fighter was a crime. The granting of pardon or indemnity was considered in respect of political offences committed on or before 12h00 on October 8, 1990. According to the *Indemnity Act* (No. 35 of 1990), only two categories of people received unconditional indemnity. The first category comprised persons who had left South Africa without being in possession of valid travel documents. Such indemnity was granted either on an individual basis or according to a list of names. The second category consisted of people who had left South Africa at a place other than a port referred to in Section 2(b) of the *Departure from the Union Regulation Act* (No. 34 of 1955). In making a recommendation for indemnity in all other cases, seven factors were considered:

- the motive of the offender – that is, whether the offence was committed for a political motive (for example, to further or oppose the aims of a political organisation, institution, or body) or for a personal motive;

- the context in which the offence was committed – in particular whether it was committed in the course of or as part of a political uprising or disturbance, or in reaction thereto;

- the nature of the political objective (for example, whether to force a change in the policy of or to overthrow or destroy the political opponent);

- the legal and factual nature of the offence, including its gravity;

- the object and/or objective of the offence (for example, whether it was committed against a political opponent or his property, or directed primarily against private individuals or property; or was committed on the assumption that a particular cause, governmental or otherwise, was being served);

- the relationship between the offence and the political objective being pursued, (for example, the directness or proximity of the relationship, or the proportionality between the offence and the objective being pursued);

- the question whether the act was committed in the execution of an order or with the approval of the organisation, institution or body concerned (South African History Archive, 1991a).

The different approaches to "political crimes" meant that the SADF entered the transition process more powerful than MK and had the power to shape the outcomes of transition. However, as noted in Chapter 2, the military and security bureaucracies should not be unduly stereotyped as obstacles to transformation (Luckham, 2003). This is because in some cases the need to preserve its interests may motivate the military to support the democratic process (Danopaulos, 1992; Hamburg, 1998; Huntington, 1996; Luckham, 2003). "Important institutional interests may be at stake, including funding, mission and composition of the officer corps" (Griffiths, 1996:

473). In South Africa three factors motivated the SADF to support the transition process. First, the SADF wanted to participate in the negotiation process to repair its image, tarnished by allegations of involvement in third-force activities. Second, the declining military budget was an indicator that the military was becoming less important than before; thus in order to protect their interests, SADF officers supported the transition. Third was the realisation on the part of senior military officers that the SADF was no longer as vital a component of state strategy as it had been in the mid-1980s. "These factors had prompted Lieutenant-General Steyn to argue in 1992, that the SADF should initiate talks with MK; this, he believed, would give it greater control over the negotiation process and the way in which change, both political and within the SADF, was to be managed" (Shaw, 1995: 14).

Due to the need to control the process, when military negotiations began, they were initiated by the military, not the politicians. There is strong evidence that at least some SADF generals pressed hard for the discussions with MK early in 1993, supported by then Defence Minister Kobie Coetsee and his deputy Wynand Breytenbach (Shaw, 1995). This was contrary to the position adopted by General Magnus Malan, then Defence Minister, during a parliamentary debate in 1990. At the time, General Malan emphatically rejected the possibility of integrating the SADF and MK (Nathan, 1991; Shaw, 1995).

> The SADF's move to negotiate implied that the then chiefs of the SADF, Generals 'Kat' Liebenberg and Meiring, had not differed with Steyn on principle, but timing: they justified talks on the same basis that they would enable the SADF to manage change (and pre-empt ANC demands). While most of the SADF probably favoured slower change than did Steyn, attempts to formulate a negotiation position had begun in November 1992, at the highest level in defence headquarters" (Shaw, 1995: 14-15).

The fact that military negotiations were initiated by the military and not the politicians indicates that the relationship between the armed forces and the elected civilian leadership, as suggested by the term civil-military relations, is both complex and more salient during democratic transition and consolidation (Griffiths, 1996).

4.5.5 Military Negotiations

Frankel (2000) argues that while the first tentative and vague contacts between the SADF and MK took place in 1991, there is some evidence that informal discussions occurred between individuals from the South African military and MK as early as ten to fifteen years earlier. "SADF and MK sources confirm that six to eight such meetings took place; while apparently officially sanctioned by political principles, they were largely informal and always secret…" (Shaw, 1995: 17). However, contrary to this, Ngculu (2002) states that the first direct meeting between MK and SADF took place in May 1990. This was a conference on *The Future of Security and Defence in South Africa,* jointly hosted by the ANC and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA)[9] (Nathan, 1991; Ngculu, 2002). Delegates to the conference included retired and serving SADF officers, military analysts, researchers, and officers from the Transkei, Ciskei and Venda Defence Forces. Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, the head of IDASA, led the delegation. The ANC delegates were drawn from Military Headquarters, the Department of Information and Propaganda (DIP), the South African Congress of Trade Union (SACTU) and the International Department. The delegation was led by John Nkadimeng and co-chaired by Thabo Mbeki, then head of the International Department of the ANC (Ngculu, 2002).

Among other things, the delegates discussed the need to integrate MK and the SADF (including its surrogate TVBC forces). However, there was reluctance from some South African delegates who were concerned that MK was a political army and the SADF a professional army, and that MK did not fight with the SADF but with the South African Police (SAP). Another concern was that there should be no Nuremberg trials in post-apartheid South Africa (Ngculu, 2002). After a heated debate it was agreed that the SADF could not be called a professional defence force and that MK was an army of liberation rather than a police force. It was further agreed that there would be no Nuremberg-like trials but that ways should be found to address the question of atrocities and crimes against humanity. Most importantly, it was agreed that South Africa would ultimately need a small defence force that would not pay allegiance to any political party but to the Constitution (Ngculu, 2002). Other agreements included the following:

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[9] It is now known as Institute for Democracy in South Africa

- There should be a mutually binding ceasefire prior to the commencement of negotiations. This would entail a suspension or ending of the ANC's armed struggle, the withdrawal of SADF troops from the townships "where conditions permit"; and the ending of security force "search and destroy" operations against guerrillas.

- The future defence force should be non-racial and open to all citizens.

- The new defence force should be a professional-type organisation with high standards of efficiency.

- In anticipation of integration, the SADF and MK should initiate "politically sensitising programs" to reduce soldiers' fears and antagonism and prepare them for the future.

- A joint commission made up of defence experts and SADF and MK leaders should be formed to investigate the process of integration and the formation of a new defence force.

- An all-party agency should be established to monitor the security forces in the transition period.

- Once negotiation commenced, the return of ANC soldiers to South Africa should be organised in a formal manner. The SADF should make bases and logistical support available to them, under MK control.

- The system of conscription should be phased out and replaced by a professional, permanent and a volunteer reserve.

- There should be a "gradual but substantial" reduction in force levels of up to 50 per cent (Cock, 1994: 142–143; Nathan, 1991: 6 – 8).

The initial meetings were meant to set the scene for the formal process of military transformation that was to follow. According to Frankel (1998), the first contacts were important as they helped to clear mutual misperceptions. Negotiations over the future military began in March 1993, more than three years after formal political negotiations had begun. This was because in 1990 Cabinet had taken a decision that the SADF should remain untouched as the stable core around which the dynamic of change could occur and as deeply into the transition as possible. "In other words, the South African Government needed to know that it alone would control the military until it was reasonably certain of the outcome of the transition" (Shaw, 1995: 13). As stated earlier, this was contradicted by the gradual reduction in the military budget.

In March 1993, SADF and MK representatives appeared together in public for the very first time at a conference organised by the Institute of Defence Policy (Frankel, 1998; Shaw, 1995).[10] However, Frankel (1998) observes that the first substantive bilateral talks between MK and SADF took place on April 23-24, 1993, at Admiralty House in Simonstown naval base in Cape Town. The purpose of the meeting was to examine mechanisms for the management of ongoing violence in the run-up to national elections, and, where necessary, to clear up "possible misunderstandings and misperceptions" on both sides of the military equation (Frankel, 1998). Other meetings followed, and discussed issues such as standards and training for the new national defence force. While standards were not clearly defined (and remained a bone of contention for years to come), Frankel (1998) notes that both MK and SADF concurred on the need for a military based on advanced technology compatible with international standards. As early as 1993, it became known that MK cadres were undergoing extensive training overseas, mainly in India and Zimbabwe, in an attempt to upgrade their competence, a move which was consistent with the SADF's concern to prevent low military standards from weakening an integrated national military. Some 8,000 to 10,000 MK soldiers were trained in conventional military tactics (Shaw, 1995).

Frankel (1998) observes that while military negotiations seemed to proceed smoothly, some key issues were either given limited exposure or even kept off the agenda of the 1993 talks by both parties as a matter of default or conscious consideration, in order to avoid derailing negotiations. Other long-term issues such as the downsizing of the armed forces and the precise mechanics of civilianisation were left to the Joint Military Co-ordinating Committee (JMCC) to be established later that year under the Transitional Executive Council (TEC).[11] The TEC was established in 1993 as a product of multiparty (political) negotiations. It was tasked with the responsibility of overseeing the process of transition. A number of sub-councils were established under the TEC. These included the Sub-Council on Defence (SCD), which was tasked with the responsibility of overseeing the military transition process at a political level. The

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[10] The Institute for Defence Policy was later renamed the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).
[11] Although the name Joint Military Co-ordinating Committee came later, Frankel notes that parties to military negotiations had agreed to a structure similar to the JMCC in one of the earlier meetings.

crucial task for the SCD was to plan the integration of all armed forces represented at the negotiations, with the aim of forming a new representative military organisation.

To deal with the details of integrating all the armed forces, the Joint Military Co-ordinating Committee was created. The JMCC consisted of representatives of those armed forces which were established by parliamentary statutes (Statutory Forces, SF) and those that were created by political organisations (Non-Statutory Forces, NSF). The SADF and the TVBC forces were termed Statutory Forces and MK was known as the Non-Statutory Force (Masondo, 1997). The PAC was not part of the negotiations and thus its military wing, APLA, was not initially included (Interview with General Masondo, Pretoria, 16.08.2000).

The JMCC had two chairpersons. One was the chief of the SADF and the other the chief of staff of MK. The two chairpersons took the chair in rotation. The JMCC established six working groups for personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, finances and non-cardinal issues. Each working group was staffed by persons from both SF and NSF. The operations working group was responsible for providing central guidance for the other working groups, while the SADF's Directorate of Strategic Management kept the overall process to a set timetable (Masondo, 1997).

> The work groups prepared position papers on the basis of consensus and then referred them to the principals. This was followed by a meeting of the JMCC in which, various papers were discussed. The JMCC accepted, amended, rejected or referred back for further discussion or investigation. Once agreement was reached the chairperson presented the findings to the Subcouncil on Defence (SCD). Only after approval by the SCD did JMCC decisions become final (Masondo, 1997: 56).

According to Masondo (1997), the process produced a national defence strategy, the arms of service and a support strategy. The process also produced a plan for the implementation of these strategies. The process ended four days before the first elections in 1994, and the new South African National Defence Force (SANDF) came into existence at midnight on 26/27 April 1994 (Masondo, 1997). The military negotiations were characterised by the dominance of the SADF, which came from a context in which the military had dominated policy through the SSC.

4.5.5.1 The Dominance of the SADF

Nathan (1991) identifies four factors that worked in favour of the SADF and facilitated its dominance during the transition period. First was the absence of an impartial international third party to serve as an adjudicator in cases of dispute. While UNTAG and the Commonwealth Monitoring Force (CMF) could not prevent some negative developments in Namibia, they were able to introduce neutral and authoritative third parties into situations that were highly polarised. In South Africa the absence of a reputable international body meant that the SADF could dictate terms without the interference of an impartial referee. The second factor was the absence of a formal ceasefire, which allowed the state to invoke security legislation on a number of occasions to deal with the political violence in the early 1990s. In his country-wide message on December 18, 1990, State President F.W. De Klerk said that the government was determined to take whatever action might be necessary to maintain law and order throughout society. "With this in mind, the government has already taken far reaching steps, including: the strengthening of the police force, *the utilisation of the South African Defence Force… We will not shrink back from using all available resources to ensure stability* (South African History Archive, 1991b: 20-22, emphasis added). However, subsequent evidence revealed the involvement of the SADF in fuelling political violence.

> The most serious allegation was that certain security elements, referred to as a 'third force', were engaged in a covert campaign to disrupt the negotiating process by committing acts of terror and fuelling sectarian township violence. There [was] mounting evidence that the 'third force' [was] located in the Department of Military Intelligence (DMI), which [was] responsible for the operations of the SADF special forces. In the course of 1991 a number of former soldiers broke ranks to reveal that DMI and special forces were funding and arming Inkatha, training members of Inkatha and Renamo in urban warfare at secret camps, and dispatching hit teams to massacre civilians and kill ANC members (Nathan, 1991: 11).

The third factor that worked against MK was the disparity between itself and the SADF. The SADF was a formidable force in Africa, comprising the navy, a modern army and an air force. Furthermore, it was experienced in conventional war and had a highly developed infrastructure and technically advanced weaponry and equipment.

"It was estimated to have an active force of 77,400 and reserves of 425,000 in 1990-91; the Permanent Force had 75,000 members in 1990" (Nathan, 1991: 13). In contrast to this, MK was a guerrilla army with a total size estimated to be 10,000; many of its members did not see themselves as career soldiers. Thus, the disparity weakened MK's bargaining power.

The disparity between the rival armies was linked to the fourth factor, which was the unequal balance of power. During the years of the armed struggle MK never presented a serious military threat to the SADF, while the National Party government enjoyed a virtual monopoly of military and police power. The SADF dominated the JMCC process, "in part because its technical and personnel resources and staff skills were far superior to those of other parties, and also because it determined the planning process and provided the logistics and facilities (Cawthra, 1997a: 57). The government and the SADF thus entered the transition process in a relatively powerful position to influence the nature of both the new political dispensation and the new defence force (Nathan, 1991).

During military negotiations SADF representatives were concerned with determining as many details of the military pact as possible before power was handed to a Government of National Unity. For MK the policy was to delay making commitments for as long as it had room to manoeuvre. As far as possible, the aim was to leave unfinished business until after elections when, it was reasonable to assume, ANC domination over the political system would vastly increase its leverage in the military arena (Frankel, 1998). These different approaches to military negotiations were shaped largely by the nature of civil-military relations of the political structures to which the two armed forces were aligned. On the one hand, MK was a political army fully subordinated to civilian control by the ANC. This was evidenced by the fact that the decision to suspend the armed struggle was taken by ANC leaders and not MK commanders. Some informants stated that MK commanders had not been involved in the deliberations to suspend the armed struggle and thus were taken by surprise when they heard about the decision. On the other hand, the SADF was emerging from a period of militarisation in which it had dominated all facets of life in South Africa. While President F.W. de Klerk later curtailed the power of the SADF, it seems he failed to have any control over the armed forces. Thus when negotiations began they

were initiated by the military, not the politicians (Shaw, 1995: 12). During the transition period some observes argued that De Klerk was not able to bring the security forces completely under control (Griffiths, 1995). The legacy of the total strategy created a variety of open and covert units to deal with those opposed to apartheid. "The complex network of security structures established under apartheid diffused power throughout the defence establishment, making it more difficult to assure the security forces' compliance with the transition goals" (Griffiths, 1995: 400).

Perhaps as part of the ANC's strategy to delay making commitments on the military pact until after the elections, the ANC reserved their experienced negotiators for political negotiations. A former MK commander in the Northern Cape argues that while the ANC was grappling with issues at high-intensity meetings,

> *in some of the military meetings where decisions were to be made, people from MK were grabbed and thrown into such meetings. People were just grabbed, it was said, you are going to attend a meeting of the JMCC. The difficulty that we were exposed to ... imagine I am coming with my non-conventional military training, I am going to go into a meeting where close to 23 or 56 senior white officers of the SADF are sitting and you are alone and it is said that you should reach an agreement on a certain clause. They [SADF representatives] are there as a fully-fledged structure. They are all staff officers, you must do it alone* (Interview with Major Mbatha, Thaba Tshwane, 05.08.2000).[12]

According to Major Mbatha, on April 28, 1994, he received a call from the SADF Northern Cape Regional Commander instructing him to attend a meeting to discuss integration. He states that despite his lack of conventional military training MK authorised him to attend the meeting with SADF generals in Kimberly. General Sipho Binda (a former MK Commander, now serving in the SANDF) also noted that on a number of occasions people were sent to meetings in which they could not make any meaningful contribution.

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[12] At the time of interview Major Lawrence Mbatha was deployed in the MK Integration Office in the Department of Defence.

During military negotiations, people [MK soldiers] were hand-picked to attend meetings with SADF [representatives]. There were those kinds of things, guys were taken, 'go and attend the meeting of the intelligence committee, go and attend a meeting of the logistics committee and so on'. When you visited Shell House [former MK Head Office] they would say, 'hey, who is that one, take him there to attend the meeting'. Meanwhile, the SADF people were proactive. They were producing documents, some of them written in Afrikaans. At the meeting 'dinkalakatha' [SADF top brass] produced documents, they gave direction. Actually you are hungry, you want to get there [join the military]. They knew that. I remember one guy coming from a meeting and Joe Modise asked, 'gentleman, what is this, it is written in Afrikaans, do you understand what it says?' (Interview with General Binda, Pretoria, 26.08.2000).

The point is further corroborated by Tsepe Motumi, another former MK soldier. He states that the SADF sent their top brass to negotiate military transformation, while MK representatives who attended meetings were picked without the necessary skills. The result was that at the end of the meetings to which MK contributed little (if anything at all) the SADF would organise a *braai* with alcohol in abundance:

*They knew very well that these guys spent too many years in the bush and were deprived of alcohol. The poor guys would get drunk and at the end of the evening, the SADF would produce a thick position document with a request for a response the next day. Obviously, the poor guys would have no time to study the document and thus in the next meeting they would simply endorse decisions (*Interview with Mr. Tsepe Motumi, Pretoria, 18.04.2000).

The ANC's approach to military negotiations is attributable the fact that the ANC had paid surprisingly little attention to the transformation of defence before 1990 (Cawthra, 2000a; 2000c). According to Shaw (1995), after being unbanned MK had no clear policy or strategic approach, and the ANC itself had no detailed proposals on defence issues (Shaw, 1995). Thus, until 1990, the ANC's policy approach had been

limited by its insistence that its revolutionary army would seize power and form the basis of the new post-apartheid defence force. "The onset of negotiations, and the realisation by the ANC that it would inherit the existing SADF into which MK would at best be integrated and possibly assimilated, led to a sudden requirement for new policy options" (Cawthra, 2000a: 54). The view that the ANC paid little attention to military transformation was also expressed by General Sipho Binda:

> *The ANC had a political strategy, had plans and ways to deal with*
> *Constitutional matters and so on, but had no strategy to deal with the military.*
> *[There was no] military strategy although our political strategy was guided by*
> *our need to have our own people in the military* (Interview with General
> Binda, 26.09.2000).

MK was substantially weakened by the outflow of leadership and organisational talent. (For example, Chris Hani was appointed General Secretary of the SACP.) Thus, on the eve of military negotiations MK was less prepared than the SADF (Shaw, 1995). According to Cawthra (2000a), capacity for new policy options for defence within the ANC was quite limited and was largely based within its Military Intelligence section, headquartered in Lusaka, Zambia. "The task of policy analysis for the ANC thus fell largely to a somewhat odd grouping of military intelligence operatives, anti-conscription activists and a small number of activist-academics, who operated within the broad political framework established by the ANC's military political leadership" (Cawthra, 2000a: 54). Other groups that contributed to policy formulation include the Military Research Group (MRG), an ANC-aligned "think tank" on defence policy.

> One consequence of the lack of policy was an attempt by ANC-leaning academics to assist policy-making on security issues… They established a loose group of analysts known as the Military Research Group (MRG), whose aim was to stimulate debate within the ANC on security issues and to provide policy-related advice. Among them were Laurie Nathan of the [University of Cape Town's] Centre for Intergroup Studies and Jackie Cock of the University of the Witwatersrand… the MRG included analysts with practical experience; they had been MK operatives. Two key figures were Rockland Williams, who held a doctorate in civil-military relations from Essex

University, and Calvin Kahn, an MK member with close links to MK commander, Joe Modise [later appointed Defence Minister] (Shaw, 1995: 16).

The MRG workshopped policy options in the context of emerging international debates, and promoted these options within ANC structures (Cawthra, 2000a).

Perhaps it was the absence of capacity within the ANC that led to the dominance of the SADF in the early transition phase. This dominance is evidenced by the fact that most of the provisions of the *Transitional Executive Council Act* (1993), which informed military transformation, "echoed virtually word for word those contained in official communiqués of the SADF's Operation Division some months before" (Frankel, 1998: 18). However, while the SADF dominated the earlier military negotiations during the transition phase, the ANC had more leverage in the military after the elections. According to Cawthra (2000a), the ANC's negotiators took many of the positions developed by the Military Research Group into the conference chambers. While, they were inevitably diluted during the process of negotiation, Cawthra (2000a) maintains that it is possible to trace the passage of many policy formulations verbatim from the MRG, through ANC conferences and then re-emerging as policy outputs from the multi-party forums and later from government. "For example, in 1992 the MRG devised a set of Principles of Defence in a Democracy which became ANC policy and then re-emerged virtually word-for-word in the White Paper on Defence as the main principles underpinning the Department of Defence (DoD)'s policy framework" (Cawthra, 2000a: 56). The key aspects of the new defence policy are discussed in Chapter 8.

The aim of this section is not to overestimate the capacity of the SADF to shape the outcome of military negotiations. However, it is important to note that a political compromise, worked out in the negotiations prior to the 1994 general election, contained a serious and painful handicap for APLA and MK soldiers. They had to ask for indemnity for the activities they engaged in while serving their respective armies, as if the struggle against the apartheid regime was a crime, while SADF and SAP members retained their positions and were never punished when implicated in orchestrating political violence. As Colonel Lucas Sigela, a former APLA commander, argues, the concept "demobilisation" does not apply neatly in South

Africa, because most APLA and MK soldiers were demobilised before they reached South Africa. According to Colonel Sigela, "*In Tanzania and Zambia we were told to sign an amnesty form that demobilised and disarmed us…How do you demobilise a person who has already been demobilised? The person has already been demobilised externally when that person signed the declaration of ending hostilities*" (Colonel Lucas Sigela's input at a Roundtable, 3-4 August 2000).[13]

The dominance of the SADF in the process of military transformation will be further discussed in Chapter 5. A major shortcoming of military negotiations was the absence of effective disarmament.

4.5.5.2 The Absence of Effective Disarmament

When MK suspended the armed struggle, it had arms hidden both within and outside the boundaries of South Africa. Assembling all the weapons outside the country was a difficult task. As stated in Chapter 3, after independence in Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe was able to obtain the co-operation of both Zambia and Botswana for the return of ZIPRA weapons and other war materials left in those countries. Thus, for the South African government to obtain MK weapons outside the country would require the co-operation and assistance of the governments of neighbouring countries and beyond. Collecting weapons during the transition to democracy was the responsibility of the JMCC. However, Frankel (1998) observes that while in some cases it would be relatively easy to collect weapons in other countries it was going to be difficult. This was because in Angola and Mozambique MK arms were stored for safekeeping in government depositories, and in Tanzania MK arms caches were monitored by the Organisation of African Unity's Liberation Committee. In Botswana, MK arms were placed in a number of carefully concealed safe houses to protect them from both the SADF and the local authorities.

> Most of those states sympathetic to MK were not in any case especially enthusiastic over assisting the SADF in a project that appeared to militarily emasculate the primary liberation army, even if they had the administrative capacity (which they did not have) to provide details of MK arms stored (or hidden) within their territorial boundaries (Frankel, 1998: 24).

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[13] Colonel Lucas Sigela was deployed in APLA's Integration Office within the Department of Defence.

After some deliberation, the JMCC resolved that MK arms outside South Africa were not considered a threat to the electoral process. MK had to provide guarantees that all its internal armaments would be under the full control of its Chief of Ordinance (Frankel, 1998). These were later to be conveyed to assembly areas for inspection, after which legal permits would be issued. This was similar to the Angolan case during the Bicesse Process (as discussed in Chapter 3), in which disarmament was the responsibility of the army that held the weapons (Porto and Parsons, 2003). According to the agreement of participants in the JMCC meetings, all armaments entering the country after April 15, 1994, would be considered illegal, while provision was made for the audit team to conduct spot checks on SADF installations. This was meant to address the "concern of some JMCC-MK members". However, systematic spot checks never took place, no comprehensive register was ever submitted by MK, the SADF register that appeared was suspect, and there were no conclusive inspections or audits (Frankel, 1998).

In April 1994, participants at the JMCC decided that no weapons could be taken into assembly areas until the mechanisms of indemnity had been resolved. According to this arrangement, MK weapons would be collected at various regional sites for "safe-keeping", and MK would once again provide a comprehensive plan for control of its own weapons (Frankel, 1998). Disarmament and amnesty issues were never resolved, but were referred to the newly elected Government of National Unity.

While the GNU dealt with amnesty issues through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Amnesty Committee, there is no evidence of how it dealt with the problem of disarmament. By referring disarmament to the new government, negotiators failed to recognise the fact that "guns outlast peace agreements" (Weiss, 2003: 6). A number of MK respondents reported that they submitted some but not all weapons. As one respondent from Orange Farm argues, *"Only those who were foolish handed in all the guns"* (Interview with a former MK soldier, 15.08.2000). Those who became involved in SDUs had a chance to acquire one or more weapons. Thus, even if they had initially handed their weapons to the authorities, they had an opportunity to rearm. While it is true that "narrow supply-side approaches that focus on the weapons and on ex-combatants are only part of the solution" (Batchelor and Muggah, 2002: 9),

disarming combatants before they get a chance to disappear with weapons, is an important step in dealing with the proliferation of weapons. This was particularly relevant because of the need to disarm not only guerrillas, but also SDU members, some of whom disappeared with weapons when the SDUs disintegrated.

While negotiators in the JMCC were struggling to reach a firm position on disarmament, Peter Storey, then a Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, began to articulate his concern that the easy access to and excess of guns in South Africa was one of the biggest threats to the emerging democracy (Kirsten *et al.*, 2006). In 1994 a campaign for a "gun free" South Africa was launched. After discussing several ideas, a decision was taken to undertake a Voluntary Weapons Collection Programme, combined with a toy gun exchange and a widespread education campaign (Meek, 1998). The campaign was supported by local business, media, religious organisations and government, including the South African Police Service (SAPS) which assisted in publicity and was present at the hand-in locations during the exchange programme (Meek, 1998). On December 16, 1994, a 24-hour national amnesty calling on people to hand in their weapons was declared. Civil society, in particular religious institutions and anti-militarisation activists in partnership with government, set up 167 hand-in points across the country. A total of 900 firearms and explosives including 199 pistols, 42 AK-47s, 72 hand grenades and more than 7,000 rounds of ammunition were handed in across the country in 24 hours (Meek, 1998).

Although the number of weapons handed in was disappointing, the Gun-Free South Africa campaign had put the issue of national gun control on the political and social agenda (Kirsten *et al.*, 2006).. This growing movement demanding a gun free South Africa was crystallised through the formation of Gun-Free South Africa. This organisation articulated a vision of a gun-free society and mobilised resources towards that end. In 1995 GFSA became a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with the explicit aim of reducing the number of firearms in circulation in South Africa (Kirsten *et al.*, 2006). The organisation took a decision to work at both policy level and at the grassroots, influenced by its understanding of the nature of the gun problem in South Africa, which is one of easy supply and high demand (Kirsten *et al.*, 2006).

One of the ANC's proposals during military negotiations was the setting up of a multi-party paramilitary force to police the elections. The practical implementation of this proposal was the creation of the National Peace-Keeping Force (NPKF) in January 1994. However, the NPKF did not perform its task because it was withdrawn before the elections took place and was disbanded after the April 27 elections. MK members who had joined the NPKF were given the option of applying to join the new SANDF. While the NPKF was described as a failure (see for example, Cawthra, 2000a), a discussion of its brief history is relevant for this study, because the NPKF was seen as a test run for integration (Cilliers and Reinchardt, 1995). The NPKF affected integration in three ways: "[It] prevented a negotiation deadlock on joint control. It provided a test for integration, and its troubles ensured that more time was allowed for integrating the armies. Also the new legitimacy it afforded the SADF was transferred to the new SANDF" (Shaw, 1995: 4).

4.5.5.3 Integration Test Run: The National Peace-Keeping Force

The NPKF was established as an attempt to create a "new" neutral peacekeeping force to control the political violence during the transition period, and thus replace the SADF and the Internal Stability Unit (ISU) of the South African Police (Cilliers and Reichardt, 1995). It was made up of members of the ISU, the SADF, the Transkei, Venda and Ciskei defence forces, and MK (which included some members of the SDUs). The inclusion of MK was an attempt to achieve wide support for the NPKF. Brigadier Gabriel Ramushwana from the Venda Defence Force was appointed commander. Both Frankel (1998) and General Binda argue that it was envisaged that the NPKF would eventually phase into the new SANDF once it had completed its mission of protecting elections. However, there is no provision in the *Transitional Executive Council Act* (1993) or the *Interim Constitution* (1993) for the continuation or transformation of the NPKF after elections. However, given all the internal and external problems experienced by the NPKF, it was unlikely that it would be allowed to continue in any form after the elections.

The first problem facing the NPKF was the lack of enthusiasm from the SAP. This was evidenced by the fact that the SAP contributed less than 220 men and women to the NPKF, and there were allegations that the SAP was preparing documentation on the role of the police during the elections (Cilliers and Mills, 1994). Second, the

NPKF was inadequately prepared for the huge responsibility it had to perform. The force was deployed after only six weeks of training. Training was divided into three main modules, all with specific sub-topics:

> Module 1 started with the 'aim of the force' and its structure, then code of conduct and lectures on the peace accord. Module 2 focused on drill, musketry, communications, negotiation skills and first aid. The final module concentrated on more detail regarding peace force training, namely crowd control, road blocks, cordon and search operations, etc. (Cilliers and Reichardt, 1995: 42).

Training was conducted with some international assistance (this was obligatory in terms of the *Transitional Executive Council Act* (1993) from the Commonwealth and the French government. "The Netherlands also offered assistance but the offer was not taken up" (Cilliers and Reichardt, 1995: 49).

The third problem facing the NPKF was that it was plagued from the start by charges of indiscipline and internal squabbling (*ANC Daily Newsbriefing,* 03.06.1994). Training began on January 24, and on January 29 MK members threatened members of the SADF and SAP, and danced and sang into the early hours of the morning. About 30 soldiers at a time went absent without leave for the first few weeks and some members became involved in fighting in the centre of Bloemfontein (Cilliers and Reinchardt, 1995). As early as February 1994, the NPKF commander conceded that the NPKF would not be ready to keep the peace during elections at the end of April. This followed a report in the *Sunday Times* that the force was a "shambles, full of drunkenness, indiscipline and desertion" (*ANC Press Briefings,* 07.02.1994).

The last problem is that, despite the Inkatha Freedom Party's withdrawal from the establishment of the NPKF, the force was deployed on the East Rand, an area engulfed in a political conflict between the ANC and IFP. Cilliers and Mills (1994) warned that the NPKF would not be acceptable to the IFP, particularly if the IFP was not represented in a force operating in areas of intense IFP and ANC rivalry.

Originally intended as a force of 10,000 men, the NPKF initially comprised some 4,500 members (Shaw, 1995). However, figures provided by Cilliers and Reinchardt

(1995) indicated that 4,854 members went through training (3,730 at De Brug and 1,124 at Koeberg). On April 11, 1994, an advance team of NPKF soldiers was deployed in the Katlehong/Thokoza/ Vosloorus (KATHORUS) area on the East Rand, and in the week of 15 and 16 April the rest of the NPKF battalion was deployed (Cilliers and Reichardt, 1995). As if to confirm Cilliers and Mills' (1994) concerns, on April 18, a few days before the first multi-racial elections, members of the NPKF engaged in a shooting with residents of an IFP-dominated hostel in Thokoza. By April 20, sixteen people, including one NPKF soldier and Ken Oostebroek, a press photographer working for *The Star* newspaper, were killed, while 40 people were injured (Cilliers and Reichardt, 1995). This shooting incident tarnished the image of the NPKF further. "Less than a week after the integrated force replaced the SADF in the violence-torn region, the NPKF was withdrawn from the East Rand and operationally restricted to certain areas as the SADF moved back to restore peace" (Cilliers and Reichardt, 1995). In this manner, the failure of the NPKF gave the SADF the legitimacy to operate in a place where it was initially seen to have failed to bring the political violence under control.

On May 16, 1994, the JMCC recommended that the NPKF be disbanded (Cilliers and Reichardt, 1995). On June 4 the NPKF was disbanded and a provision was made for the 1,200 MK members from the NPKF to apply to join the SANDF, while members of the statutory forces would join through their respective armies (Cilliers and Reichardt, 1995). Some military analysts concluded that the NPKF was meant to serve as a temporary catchment area for MK until integration (Cilliers and Mills, 1994; Shaw, 1995). However, General Binda argues that since it was envisaged that the NPKF would eventually phase into the new national defence, this created a fear among those formerly opposed to MK. The fear was that MK would be too strong in the new national defence force since it was already a dominant political force (in terms of influence) in the establishment of the NPKF (Interview with General Sipho Binda, Pretoria, 26.08.2000). General Binda attributes the demise of the NPKF to the deliberate efforts of former SADF officers to sabotage the process of phasing the NPKF into a new national defence force. He observes that first, members of the NPKF were deployed quickly without adequate training in peace-keeping. Second, they were issued with inappropriate military vehicles. As he puts it, "*You do not attack a stationary target [such as a hostel building] with a soft military vehicle*"

(Interview with General Sipho Binda, Pretoria, 26.08.2000). However, despite its failure, the experience of the NPKF provided a test run for civil-military relations in a post-election period. As, Cilliers and Reichardt (1995) argue, the need for inclusivity and political balance meant that even the commander of the NPKF operated according to instructions based on consensus among political actors in the TEC.

4.6 Conclusion

The victory of the National Party in the 1948 elections led to the entrenchment of white privilege in South Africa and the discrimination and political domination of other race groups. The discontented groups responded to the racial policies of apartheid with peaceful defiance campaigns. This was the continuation of a peaceful struggle for democracy started by the ANC in 1912. The continued intransigence of the apartheid regime, especially its violent response to the anti-pass campaign in March 1960, triggered an armed struggle for democracy. The three main belligerents were APLA and MK on the one hand, fighting against the SADF on the other hand. The exodus of militant youth from South Africa following the 1976 student uprising led to an intensification of the armed struggle in the 1980s. In the 1980s, the ANC made a call to people to make the country ungovernable, and this was crystallised through rent boycotts and protests against black local administrations. In the same period, Self-Defence Units were formed to serve as community defence structures. However, most of them took on a paramilitary character as they gradually became staffed mainly by criminals masquerading as political activists. This took place at the time when the apartheid government had mobilised resources at economic, ideological and political levels in defence of apartheid. The SADF played an extensive repressive role both within South Africa and in the region.

During all the years of the armed struggle neither APLA nor MK posed a serious military threat to the SADF, even though their military activities had a destabilising effect on the country. However, the SADF could not completely stop APLA and MK military activities, and by the mid-1980s both sides realised that they had reached a stalemate; hence the South African government started a series of secret negotiations with the ANC. These negotiations eventually put South Africa on the path to

democracy. In 1990 the meetings that produced the Groote Schuur Minute and the Pretoria Minute led to the suspension of the armed struggle by the ANC and the return of exiles. However, the period was characterised by violent conflict which led to the signature of the National Peace Accord spearheaded by church and business leaders. For the ANC and its allies, the failure of the state to stop the violence necessitated the formation of Self-defence Units. The involvement of MK soldiers and the decay in the political leadership of SDUs caused them to develop into unguided structures which were accountable to no one other than themselves.

The military negotiations were characterised by the dominance of the SADF and the failure to agree on effective disarmament. This meant that even the unguided SDUs had access to "illegal" weapons which they could use as they pleased. The dominance of the SADF was partly due to the fact that they were more prepared than MK when they entered the military negotiations. During military negotiations participants did not fully deliberate on the criteria for inclusion in the new national defence force. As a consequence, some of the undesirable SDU elements were included in the NPKF (and later in the new national defence force). A combination of factors which included inadequate training, indiscipline among members and the lack of adequate support for the NPKF from other security structures such as the SAP led to the demise of the NPKF. However, as a product of an integration of different armed forces, it served as a test run for the formation of the new national defence force. It also provided a legacy of civil military relations, as the NPKF was fully subordinated to the Transitional Executive Council – what Cilliers and Reichardt (1995) term the triumph of politics over security.

Chapter 5 discusses the process that led to the formation of the new South African National Defence Force, which included the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers.