

# Journal of Security Sector Management

Published by:  
Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform  
University of Cranfield  
Shrivenham, UK  
ISSN 1740-2425

Volume 4 Number 1 - January 2006

## **Civil Society Participation in Defence Policy Formulation: Academic Experts and South Africa's Post-Apartheid Defence White Paper**

Kai Michael Kenkel

## Introduction

Can civil society participate effectively in the making of policy in the security sector? Is academics' work, as an example of civilian expertise in this domain, of any relevance to decision makers? Which factors make the difference between whispering in the Prince's ear and holding forth vainly from the heights of the ivory tower? This analysis suggests three such factors, and presents evidence of their applicability in a recent case of defence policymaking. In doing so, the paper brings important insights to a number of issues at the nexus of theory and practice. Foremost among these is the effect of civil society participation on defence policy outcomes, which are an important measure of political control of the armed forces.

The three factors governing the influence of policy academics on policy formulation in the security domain are policymaker uncertainty, the attributes of successful experts, and the normative resonance of their inputs into the policy process. Uncertainty opens the otherwise closed policy process to potential participation by members of civil society. The attributes of these representatives of civil society, such as specialised knowledge, institutionalised prestige, and cogent argumentation, determine whether they will be selected for participation in the policy process. Finally, the success of their participation—measured in terms of the overlap of policy outcomes such as declaratory documents with their previous scholarship—is determined by the normative resonance of their inputs with the commitments held by policymakers.

The study investigates these concatenated factors in a context offering a high degree of policy change and ready access to the major participants: South Africa's transition from *apartheid* to democracy in the early 1990s. Policy formulation in this period is characterised by the capacity gap left by the discrediting of the *apartheid* armed forces' paradigm (and with it their technical know-how) and the both practical and theoretical innocence (though coupled with political legitimacy) of the incoming majority government. This policy vacuum was consciously filled by an academic grouping called

together for this very purpose: the Military Research Group (MRG). The best evidence of the success of this caucus in its endeavour is the prominence of two of its members: Laurie Nathan (as lead drafter of the democratic South Africa's first White Paper on Defence) and Rocky Williams, a key figure in the 1998 Defence Review. The examples of the MRG, Nathan, and Williams will be shown to illustrate the key role played by the three factors of uncertainty, attributes and resonance in determining civil society representatives' ability to influence policy outcomes.

### **A chain of three factors**

The chain of determinant factors constitutes a simultaneous triple progression: from structural factors to the content of ideas; from the notion of value-free science to the embrace of a self-conscious policy advocacy position; and a progression of types of input mirroring the advancement of the policy process. These three linked hypotheses concern the “when”, “who” and “what” of academics' interaction with the policy world as representatives of civil society.

In a first instance, the policy process is opened—at the discretion of policymakers—to outside advisors as a result of uncertainty on their part about the appropriateness or adequacy of current policy. This uncertainty has three main sources: changes in the international environment to which policy must respond; changes in the domestic determinants of a policy stance; and a perceived lack of capacity in a state to make proper policy in response to change in either of these two types of stimulus. This first determinant places emphasis on the interaction of ideas and material factors; academics serve as vectors for ideas, which “leap into the breach” when changes in structure temporarily obscure waypoints for policy formulation until they can be re-established in a process of mutual constitution.

Once uncertainty has opened the policy process, policymakers are confronted with many different sources of advice from within civil society. These sources are narrowed

to a manageable scale, and finally selected for participation in policy formulation, based on a set of attributes and faculties they possess. These characteristics build upon one another in a fashion similar to how the three explanatory variables do; an expert from outside the bureaucracy first needs a sufficient combined amount of knowledge and prestige to become known to policymakers, and then must present inputs of a certain type to move further along in the policy process.

The first necessary attribute of the successful policy advisor is the possession of specialised knowledge otherwise not available to the policymaker. This specialised knowledge can be either practical or theoretical in nature. Practical specialised knowledge consists of the type of information related to the occupational expertise of those charged with *implementing* policy in a given domain. As the moniker implies, it is largely a theoretical, and related to the everyday practice of making and implementing policy. Civil society's ability to amass updated practical specialised knowledge is highly dependent upon the degree to which societal and political factors allow this type of information to circulate to them from inside the military establishment. It is thus closely tied to issues of civilian control.

Theoretical specialised knowledge, by contrast, is removed from the everyday practice of policymaking. It consists of concepts and ideas rather than technical data or know-how, seeking to generalise and decontextualise the conclusions it draws in the interest of greater applicability and parsimony. These concepts frame the set of possible courses of action within which policymakers conceive of possible options. Rather than focussing on one issue, theoretical knowledge is of a higher order and serves to link issues and to provide an image of the entirety of the policy environment<sup>1</sup>.

Specialised knowledge is used in concert with institutionalised prestige as a criterion for the selection of experts who are initially chosen for participation. Institutionalised prestige in turn consists of two components: the prestige of a scholar within her given academic discipline, and the relative prestige of that discipline itself. Individual prestige

within a discipline accrues through the transposition of prestige gained in accordance with the academic reward structures specific to that discipline, such as publication and promotion. The prestige of a discipline itself derives, among other things, from its degree of institutionalisation and the extent to which consensus has been reached within it over its appropriate methodological and theoretical constructs.

The third and final contention is that inputs from representatives of civil society—in this case academics—must resonate with the normative commitments of policymakers if they are to have weight. These normative commitments range from higher-order value judgments to stances taken out of political expediency at specific junctures. The power to select among potential advisors and inputs rests with the decision maker. In the case of resonance, this selection is likely to be influenced by academics' positions vis-à-vis the policy status quo; by the level of agreement within a community of experts; and by the concordance of beliefs between the expert community and the policy world.

### **South Africa: of enemies make friends**

The defence policy formulation process during the first years of majority rule in South Africa provides strong evidence of the crucial role academics and other elements of civil society can play in shaping political decision-making. In the years immediately following the country's first-ever free elections, the South African transition to democracy was considered a shining example of peaceful change. This period stands out for the extent of the normative change that took place; defence issues received particular attention because it was in this area that the normative turnaround from white minority to democratic majority rule was most evident.

The country's academic community played a significant role in this sea change; this was explicitly encouraged in the policy procedures adopted by the new government. A military establishment that had exercised considerable autonomy in its decision-making was subjected to thorough-going civilian control. A culture of transparency and

accountability replaced the secretive machinations of organs such as the State Security Council. In the words of one South African analyst,

The South African process is remarkable in three ways: first, in the way which it consciously sought out a new concept or paradigm for security through engagement with academic discourse; second, in the close attention it paid to questions of security governance and management and to civil-military relations; and third, in the way in which the process was conducted.<sup>2</sup>

The point of departure for this normative shift was a highly militarised society with a regional foreign and defence policy based on antagonism and destabilisation. As apartheid's statutes grew more severe, so did resistance to them, and together with the South African Defence Force (SADF), the National Party government resorted to ever greater levels of militarisation to uphold white rule<sup>3</sup>. By the late 1970s, South Africa's white leaders were faced with serious international and domestic challenges to the continuation of minority rule<sup>4</sup>.

The search for a policy framework to describe and respond to these events yielded the reductionist and apodictic vision<sup>5</sup> of a comprehensive, monolithic Soviet-orchestrated "total onslaught" against South Africa. This onslaught, based on what can now be said was an over-assessment of the country's strategic importance, was assumed to span almost all fields of policy.<sup>6</sup> Having created the spectre of a "total onslaught", South African policymakers now responded by means of an equally sweeping—and equally reductionist<sup>7</sup>—"total national strategy". This strategy consisted of the subordination of an ever-larger number of policy areas to the needs and logic of the security establishment, which it was thought was best suited to rebuffing the "onslaught"<sup>8</sup>. Total Strategy succeeded in subjugating vast fields of state activity to the logic of security; the result has been described as "militarisation by invitation"<sup>9</sup>.

It is important to note also the crucial role played by a select few South African academics in sowing the seeds of Total Strategy. The paradigm's conceptual apparatus

rested on the writings of the French General André Beaufre; these were brought to South Africa both by academics (notably Deon Fourie and Benjamin Cockram)<sup>10</sup> and by military officers such as Lieutenant General C. A. Fraser and Brigadier General (and later Defence Minister) Magnus Malan. Beaufre's conceptual framework began to appear in the official documents of the Ministry of Defence as early as 1971<sup>11</sup>, but it was the 1977 Defence White Paper which definitively committed the country to a Beaufreian framework.

South Africa's security academics were not immune to the ever-increasing co-optation of society by Total Strategy<sup>12</sup>. The Institute for Strategic Studies of the University of Pretoria (ISSUP) played a prominent role as a vehicle for the government line. Its director, Michael Hough, produced numerous papers in which the government's views were presented under a mantle of academic rigour<sup>13</sup>. Though ISSUP was particularly closely tied to the Total Strategy effort<sup>14</sup>—digests of the apartheid military establishment's strategic perceptions were published as ISSUP papers—the co-optation of South Africa's security academics by no means ended there. In the words of one analyst,

“In virtually all of South Africa's universities there are political and strategic experts who are absorbed as sources of information and intellect into the military establishment through their research, their appearance before government commissions or, in some cases, in a contracted capacity for teaching or research purposes. This tendency to feed and articulate the mixture of myths and information upon which total strategy depends is particularly pronounced in the case of the Afrikaans universities and research organizations situated near Defence Force Headquarters in the Pretoria-Johannesburg area.”<sup>15</sup>

As it entered the negotiating process over the new Constitution and the new political shape of South Africa, the ANC found itself stripped of the bearings it had followed for

almost 40 years. While its Marxist liberation ideology<sup>16</sup> was relatively well-developed, the organisation had made very few provisions for adapting this framework to the exigencies of holding power<sup>17</sup> and suffered from a pronounced lack of specialised expertise in the defence field. At the time of their un-banning, the liberation movements had not altered their Cold-War era Marxist-inspired policies: the ANC's armed wing, UmKhonto we Sizwe (MK) considered itself a "people's army" waging a "people's war" in the classic Marxist sense<sup>18</sup>; its members had received military training in the Soviet bloc. The ANC and MK's dependence on Marxist ideology led to difficulties for the organisation in the period leading up to its entry into government:

"[t]he ANC had paid surprisingly little attention to the transformation of defence by 1990: it's [sic] policy approach had been limited by its insistence (whether merely rhetorically or otherwise) that its revolutionary army, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) 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 South African Defence Force (SADF) into which MK would at best be integrated, and possibly assimilated, led to a sudden requirement for new policy options."<sup>19</sup>

Notwithstanding the vacuum left by the end of Marxism, the ANC did develop a new platform for governance, and sought later to adapt its precepts to the security sphere. In May 1992 the organisation laid out foundational principles in its document "Ready to Govern"<sup>20</sup>. *Ready to Govern* bears strong resemblance to the human security paradigm that was being developed almost simultaneously in Canada.<sup>21</sup> While the ANC was able to amalgamate its political programme into this fundamental policy document, it lacked both the technical expertise and the conceptual apparatus to divine the specific implications for the nation's defence policy. As a result, the technical know-how of those with defence policy experience (the armed forces) was tainted by association with *apartheid*, while those representing the newly dominant political agenda—and the normative legitimacy it afforded—lacked both practical and theoretical specialised

knowledge of military matters. This led to a pronounced vacuum in policymaking capacity with regard to defence matters in South Africa during the initial transition period.

### **Uncertainty: the policy vacuum, 1990-1992**

The apartheid regime's control of information was such that at the Institute for Democracy in South Africa's 24-27 May 1990 Conference on the Future of the Military and Defence in South Africa in Lusaka, Zambia, some SADF members bluntly told progressive academics and ANC/MK delegates, "you have no idea what you're talking about"<sup>22</sup>. Many progressive attendees realised that while they were clear on their broader political vision of the new defence landscape in South Africa, they were "for sure not experts on defence policy"<sup>23</sup>. The frustrating experience of Lusaka prompted several participants, who later became influential actors in policy circles, to devote themselves to gathering and disseminating defence knowledge from that very moment forward<sup>24</sup>.

As the ANC's accession to power came closer, the organisation's lack of a viable defence policy, and its insufficient capacity to produce adequate policy options, became painfully evident. This led to a "policy vacuum"<sup>25</sup> within the ANC and MK on matters of defence policy. This situation was identical to the capacity gap that is outlined above as the third possible origin of the policymaker uncertainty necessary for an opening of the policy process. South African analyst Gavin Cawthra uses the term "window of opportunity" to describe this situation<sup>26</sup>; the window, he argues, was used by a group of Gramscian "organic intellectuals" to seize the opportunity to leave their mark on policy<sup>27</sup>. Another analyst unambiguously links this state of affairs to the emergence of the Military Research Group.<sup>28</sup>

Though independent of the organisation in name and statute, the MRG's efforts were directly aimed at helping the ANC to overcome the practical element of its insufficiency of specialised knowledge. The MRG held its first meeting at ANC Headquarters on 25

November 1991 and met approximately 30 times over the next four years. The group's long-term goal was to "provide a forum whereby researchers, academics and policy analysts could network with one another, discuss issues of common relevance and prioritise future areas of co-operation"<sup>29</sup>. It worked towards this goal by furnishing research reports, organising conferences, holding training workshops and otherwise facilitating dialogue.

As noted, the country's capacity gap in defence policymaking had come about because those who had practical specialised knowledge had been normatively discredited, and those with normative (or theoretical) specialised knowledge (or legitimacy) did not possess its practical component. The remedy lay in moving both camps towards the centre. Many MRG members individually came to realise that the time had come, in the words of one, to "lose the theory and get real"<sup>30</sup>. As the MRG became more acquainted with the responsibilities of office through feedback from policymakers (and thus gained practical specialised knowledge), there was a rapid waning of ideology in favour of more pragmatic approaches<sup>31</sup>.

In the case of the South African transition, the first factor called for above obtained, and played its assigned role: The existence of a policy vacuum and its attendant uncertainty on the part of policymakers led to the opening of the policy process, by explicit invitation, to a group of experts from civil society. Their contributions to the policy process would be determined by a critical mass of their attributes as well as the resonance of their inputs. Though these factors work simultaneously (or the use of attributes as selection criteria for expert participation may even precede chronologically the entry into consideration of their normative resonance), the chronology of the South African transition dictates that normative resonance be dealt with first in this analysis.

## **Normative resonance: the Military Research Group and the 1996 White Paper on Defence**

### *The Military Research Group*

The MRG had a membership whose origins ensured its normative resonance with the new government. It spanned the spectrum from established university professors to anti-militarist activists and current and former ANC/MK underground operatives. The group had a core membership of approximately 10-12 people, with shifts in membership as MRG personnel began to take on government and advisory posts under the new regime and new members emerged among junior academics and recently returned exiles. Much of the group's resonance implicitly resulted from the biographies of its membership, which included notably in this respect:

The group's first co-ordinator, Rocklyn "Rocky" Williams, a former MK operative while a member of the SADF Citizen Force. Williams gained the rank of Colonel in the new SANDF, playing an instrumental role in the 1998 South African Defence Review<sup>32</sup>. Williams produced the bulk of the MRG's early topical research papers and reports. A holder of a doctorate in sociology from the University of Essex, Williams later was associated with the Institute for Security Studies and SaferAfrica. He died in February 2005.

Williams' successor as the group's co-ordinator, Gavin Cawthra. Cawthra headed the London-based Committee on South African War Resistance, established in 1980. Cawthra's PhD is from King's College, London. He is the author of several influential works on the South African defence establishment<sup>33</sup>. Cawthra now heads the Defence Management Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand—a programme established under the auspices of the MRG.

Jacklyn Cock, Professor of Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand. A specialist in gender issues and social exclusion, with some expertise on defence issues, Cock was chairwoman of the MRG with Abba Omar until his departure from the group.

Her research interests were defence manpower policy and defence-related gender and environmental issues.

Laurie Nathan, Executive Director of the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) at the University of Cape Town during his time as an MRG member. His biography is discussed in greater detail below.

Riaz Saloojee, a.k.a. Calvin Kahn, who joined MK in 1983 and eventually became personal assistant to MK Commander Joe Modise. Saloojee attained the rank of Brigadier General before leaving the SANDF. Kahn served as the main MRG link to MK headquarters and articulated MK's research needs to the group. Since his involvement with the MRG, Saloojee has been employed, including as CEO, by a succession of South African defence engineering firms.

The key to the MRG's success was that it brought academics and activists together with policymakers and representatives of the ANC and MK<sup>34</sup>, allowing ANC preferences to be clearly communicated to the academic members, who then tailored their inputs to these leanings. In addition, members such as Calvin Kahn directly communicated shortfalls in ANC and MK technical specialised knowledge and practical know-how. Thus, members were able to produce recommendations that made their way into policy by filling acknowledged voids in government expertise<sup>35</sup>. Many of these positions eventually found their way—some *verbatim*—into official ANC and government policy<sup>36</sup>. Cawthra was quite optimistic about the MRG's policy influence:

The ANC's negotiators took many of these positions into the conference chambers. They were inevitably diluted during the process of negotiation, but [it] is nevertheless possible to trace the passage of many policy formulations (often word-for-word) from the MRG, through ANC conferences, and then re-emerging as policy outputs from the multiparty forums and later from government.<sup>37</sup>

Several MRG members were to play deciding roles in the development of the 1996 South African White Paper on Defence and the 1998 Defence Review. It was at the

beginning of the drafting process for the White Paper—and in the selection of an MRG member as its lead drafter—that normative resonance would act most clearly as a determinant of civil society participation in policymaking.

### **The drafting of the 1996 Defence White Paper**

The synthesis of viewpoints between the civilian and uniformed participants in the formulation process for the 1996 South African White Paper on Defence took place in a series of progressive drafts, in which Nathan and Kasrils worked in concert to align the stance of the SANDF—represented by its Chief, General Georg Meiring—with the overriding parameters set by the nation's legislators and civilian policymakers. There were a total of 17 such drafts through which concordance was progressively achieved between the viewpoints of the SANDF and the more progressive Department of Defence. Of these five or six dealt with substantive amendments to the content of the individual chapters. There was extensive debate within policymaking instances on the content of the White Paper, including a round of public consultations.

Though both men overwhelmingly favoured the civilian decision makers' viewpoints, instances did occur in which Nathan found himself defending suggestions made by Meiring. The final version of the White Paper in fact reflects numerous positions originating within the armed forces. Nathan's involvement in the drafting process presents a unique case of extremely strong influence, as he was involved not only in the drafting of the document, but also in that his advice carried considerable weight with Kasrils, who bore the ultimate responsibility for the (civilian) oversight of the document's content. Instances in which a consensus could not be reached were referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Defence.

One documented incident in particular shows the role of normative agreement in who sits at the policymaking table. The first internal efforts to redraft South African defence policy resulted in an initial draft known as the Green Paper, which was

produced under the auspices of the governmental Defence Staff Council together with Jakkie Cilliers of the Institute for Defence Policy (later Institute for Security Studies) and other academics. A meeting was convened in early 1994 to discuss this draft; in attendance, among others, were Deputy Defence Minister Ronnie Kasrils, Defence Secretary General Pierre Steyn, Cilliers, Fourie and Laurie Nathan.

According to participants the meeting was dominated by Nathan, who found the tenor of the draft reflected too much the approach of the “old establishment”<sup>38</sup>. Consequently, Kasrils rejected the first draft as “too militaristic, too Cold War in its orientation and too inconsistent with the values of the ANC”<sup>39</sup>. This opened the door for Nathan.<sup>40</sup> Kasrils’ decision was based on the greater degree of convergence between Nathan’s prior work and the needs of the ANC-controlled Defence Department, compared to that of the drafters of the Green Paper. The Green Paper draft dealt almost exclusively with concrete issues of military planning and procurement and not at all with normative issues such as affirmative action, civic education, or the principles to be followed by the Defence Force in a democratic South Africa<sup>41</sup>. Nathan proposed that the green paper draft under discussion be rejected outright as “too reactionary”<sup>42</sup>, a suggestion seconded by Fourie, despite the latter’s role in bringing Beaufre’s writings, and their utilisation in the formulation of the reactionary Total Strategy doctrine, to South Africa.

While Nathan gained acceptance with relative ease in civilian political circles due to a higher degree of normative resonance between the ANC’s progressive agenda and the progressively-oriented new security agenda (due, in his words, to the new approach’s “corresponding with their political instincts”)<sup>43</sup>, this was more difficult in the case of the military and its more conservative institutional culture. Policy experts’ audience was bifurcated into a progressive civilian community of policymakers and a conservative military establishment. There was hence a very strong impetus for academics to produce inputs that would enable the ANC to counter SA(N)DF influence and technical

superiority in the negotiating process and in policy formulation. Academics' contributions needed to combine the desire to distance policy from the previous paradigm with the transposition of ANC political values into the defence arena.

For example, there was a perceived imperative among the new civilian leaders to shift the referent object of South African defence policy from the white population to all citizens, and to establish a Defence Force representative of the entire population as opposed to what had been described by some as the "National Party's army" and to dismantle the security apparatus that had been set up based on the Total Strategy doctrine. Individual academics' influence was primarily determined—once they had in fact been included in the formulation process—by their adherence to the ANC's political commitments.

However, the ANC's policymaking vacuum should not be ignored. The MRG was highly successful in its efforts at both creating a community of expertise on defence issues in South Africa and in directly addressing immediate policy concerns in the transitional negotiations and in initial policy formulation. As a result, as a community of scholars became available to assist in policy formulation, the relative importance of actors' normative resonance waned as decision makers increasingly sought to validate attributes such as specialised knowledge<sup>44</sup>. Thus, the pool of potential actors available for testing the role of specialised knowledge consists of those who possessed a critical mass of both normative resonance and specific attributes. One such actor, who was to play a central role in the crafting of South African defence policy during the transition and for many years thereafter, was MRG member Laurie Nathan.

#### Actor attributes: Laurie Nathan and Rocky Williams

As a defence analyst, Laurie Nathan did not lack for either normative resonance or expertise. He enjoyed strong resonance within the ANC and other progressive movements, though his anti-militarist stance had garnered him some mistrust within the

SA(N)DF. Similarly, he both possessed considerable expertise (largely of the conceptual/theoretical subtype) in defence affairs and had presented its utility to policy decision-making.

Nathan had been a leading anti-apartheid activist prior to 1994; among other positions he was Secretary General of the National Union of South African Students in 1984 and co-founder and National Organiser (1985-86) of the influential End Conscription Campaign. In the late 1980s Nathan was recruited into the ANC<sup>45</sup>. Nathan eventually went into academe, taking an M. Phil. from Bradford University's School of Peace Studies in 1990 and joining the forerunner to the Centre for Conflict Resolution in 1991. He became its Executive Director in 1992, a position he held until 2003. Beginning with ANC advisory positions in 1991, Nathan held a series of influential governmental advisory posts throughout the 1990s; he was a member of key negotiating bodies on defence issues in the transition era. His decision to become a defence expert stemmed from frustration at the capacity gap, and its clear manifestation at the Lusaka Conference<sup>46</sup>.

Returning to the specialised knowledge side of the equation, Nathan's published work prior to his choice as lead drafter had been aimed at bringing the "new security agenda" to the Southern African context. Nathan's main influences in this respect were Ken Booth<sup>47</sup>, Barry Buzan<sup>48</sup>, and the Palme Commission<sup>49</sup>. Among Nathan's publications are several that contributed to his prominence in the defence sector—and thereby to his selection as lead drafter of the White Paper<sup>50</sup>.

The basis of the new approach is to be found in Buzan's *People, states and fear*, in which he broadens the notion of security threats beyond the military sphere to include political, economic and environmental "sectors"<sup>51</sup>. Where Nathan saw in the Copenhagen approach the underpinnings of efforts to demilitarise South African society, *People, states and fear* had ironically been used to the opposite ends as a teaching tool

by the apartheid-era security apparatus<sup>52</sup>. This irony notwithstanding, Nathan pursues the demilitarising possibilities of the sectoral approach in a 1992 article:

The main argument is that “security” should no longer be seen as a predominantly military concept, but as having political, social, economic and environmental dimensions. Democracy, social justice, economic development and environmental protection are ultimately more important prerequisites for lasting security than large arsenals and standing armies.<sup>53</sup>

Nathan's normative contribution to the White Paper reflects clearly the political commitments of his research since 1990. The culmination of Nathan's efforts to develop a coherent framework for the new approach to security, and to imbue it with relevance to policymakers in the South Africa and southern Africa, is *The Changing of the Guard*. Confirming again the importance of cogency in determining the utility of academic policy inputs, the monograph emphasises that:

“[...] the primary aim of the book is to promote a set of principles for defence in a democracy. If these are ignored, the new armed services may end up closely resembling the old. At the same time, an exclusive concern with abstract principles will be of limited benefit to defence planners. The book therefore translates the relevant theories into concrete and appropriate policies for South Africa.”<sup>54</sup>

The influential *Principles of Defence in a Democracy*, the basis of the arguments set forth in *Changing the guard*, were first published in a 1992 article in the *South African Defence Review* entitled “Beyond arms and armed forces: a new approach to security”<sup>55</sup>. First made public by future Minister of Defence and former MK Commander-in-Chief Joe Modise in London in May 1992. At the time, Modise listed nine principles:

1. The defence force shall be bound by the principles of civil supremacy over the armed forces and be accountable to the public through parliament.
2. The defence shall at all times act within, adhere to and uphold the constitution of the country.

3. The defence force shall respect the ideals of democracy, non-racialism, non-sexism national unity and national reconciliation.
4. The defence force shall endeavour to be reflective of the national composition of South African society. In this regard a programme of affirmative action shall be implemented.
5. The defence force shall be politically non-partisan.
6. The defence force shall respect and uphold the Bill of Rights including the rights of a soldier as citizen.
7. The defence force shall be a permanent volunteer force.
8. The defence force shall adopt a defensive military posture.
9. The defence force shall be bound by international law, treaties and conventions governing the use of force and the conduct of war in the solution of conflicts.

“These principles must bind and regulate the defence force in all of its activities.”<sup>56</sup>

These nine Principles were expanded to 16 in *The Changing of the Guard*; that list was then incorporated into the 1996 White Paper on Defence with only limited modifications. Beyond the presence of the *Principles* in the 1996 White Paper, the similarities between the relevant sections in *Changing of the guard* dealing with military professionalism<sup>57</sup>, governmental responsibility towards the military<sup>58</sup>, and the Constitutional dispositions for the structure of South African civil-military relations<sup>59</sup> go beyond conceptual affinity to virtual textual identity. This testifies not only to the fact that Nathan's possession of theoretical specialised knowledge allowed him to take decisive influence on policy outcomes, but also to the second type of actor attribute beyond expertise and prestige: the ability to indicate clearly the utility of an input to a given current policymaking problem.

Nathan was not alone in achieving policy influence through cogency of argumentation; his MRG colleague Rocky Williams frequently did so a well. One MRG

paper authored by Williams illustrates how concrete examples and policy initiatives were presented in order to implement a high-order principle within the SADF<sup>60</sup>. One of the main concerns during the transitional period with respect to the future South African military was the new Force's (normative) legitimacy:

The state was redefined on 2 February 1990: its power was now officially related to popular acceptance. The public commitment—rhetoric, in cynical terms—of the state to authoritative power altered its strength. Material assets remained the same, but official mobilization of the principle of legitimacy brought new roles and rules for the security institutions.<sup>61</sup>

In “We must take the current”, Williams isolates and defines both what he terms the “logical geography” of the concept of legitimacy as an amalgam of inter-related concepts—such as representativeness, consensus, morality, as well as institutional mechanisms, principles and sociological underpinnings<sup>62</sup>—and policy initiatives by which this cluster of norms can be implemented. He thereby transformed a relatively abstract notion similar to those common in academic research into a set of clear policy goals transformable into courses of action<sup>63</sup>.

The wording of Williams' article belies an emphasis on the practical nature of its suggestion, referring to “practical measures” and “micro-strategy”<sup>64</sup>. Following his definition of the indicators of legitimacy in the context of the South African military, Williams identifies five areas he deems “central to the process of legitimation”: the composition of a future defence force; its institutional restructuring; its future roles and missions; stable CMR and finally, transparency and accountability. For each he presents policy-grounded courses of action leading to its realisation. These courses of action later became the cornerstone of South African government policy in their respective domains, particularly following the Defence Review of 1998, in which Williams was a prominent participant.

It must be noted that as policymakers and parliamentarians in South Africa have steadily increased their stock of specialised knowledge of military affairs over the course of the past decade, the country's civil society has experienced a considerable diminution of its influence. Rather than participating from the very beginning in setting the agenda and formulating defence policy, many academics and other civil society experts are now increasingly presented with *faits accomplis* by increasingly self-assured civilian policymakers. The specific moment of the transitional period, and its policy vacuum, that had created such vast opportunities for civil society's participation appears to have passed. This does not, however, detract from the importance and validity of the theoretical insights to be gained from that opening.

### **First steps towards a theory of outside participation?**

The case of defence policymaking during the transition to majority rule in South Africa distinctly shows the applicability of all three of the variables underlying the model of civil society participation in policy formulation laid out above. In transition-era South Africa, uncertainty opened the process to outside inputs, and those giving those inputs were selected on the basis of the combination of cogently applied specialised knowledge and normative resonance they possessed.

With the advent of the Government of National Unity in 1994 all involved defence policymakers and experts had seen international and domestic events totally revamp the normative foundations of their defence policy. During the South African transition to democracy, the old had died before the new was born. Whereas the SADF possessed considerable advantages in practical specialised knowledge, this expertise was delegitimised by its connection to a theoretical doctrine based on minority rule. The ANC and MK's Marxist theory had been robbed of its legitimacy (and funding) by the fall of the Soviet Union. This demonstrably led to a policy vacuum, and a gap in the capacity to fill it, that was filled by a group of experts from civil society who set out

consciously to do just that. Official documents (public and confidential) and interviews with policymakers revealed that changes at both the international and domestic levels had led to uncertainty and to the realisation that unchanged standard operating procedure, without outside help, would lead to continued inadequate policy.

The 1990 Lusaka meeting served as a catalyst for the swift creation of specialised knowledge to fill that gap, and for the formation of the Military Research Group. Initially, while these academics certainly possessed the progressive leanings and focus on development that echoed the government's preferences, they did not have the technical specialised knowledge needed to transform these proclivities into successful policy inputs right away. Over time, they gained this expertise and, with the help of direction from ANC officeholders, began to tailor their inputs to ANC and government needs, with considerable success. Given the new rulers' strong desire to distance themselves as much as possible from the *apartheid* regime's doctrine, normative resonance played a decisive role in determining which outside outputs would carry weight within the formulation process.

One particular avenue of normative argumentation proved to possess a great deal of convincing power: linking a proposal to its role in increasing democratic legitimacy (or representativeness) led to the success of several MRG initiatives, particularly those spearheaded by Rocky Williams. Also, the episode of the Green Paper demonstrates most clearly of all cases the extent to which normative outlook shared with policymakers dictates policy success. This draft was produced by members of the defence old guard, from whom the new policymakers were attempting to distance themselves normatively, but who possessed considerably more practical specialised knowledge than other possible authors. In an almost *verbatim* affirmation of the importance of normative resonance, upon reading the draft, Kasrils rejected it insufficiently aligned with the values of the ANC<sup>65</sup>.

These three variables, on whose derivation and empirical testing more detail is given elsewhere<sup>66</sup>, represent first steps towards the theoreticisation of academics' influence on the policy process. Important findings about the role of civil society and other outside participants in decision-making is often an ancillary pursuit for many scholars, and their findings are all too frequently hidden in the interstices of the discipline.

This investigation tests empirically this first step towards their systematisation, and comes to the conclusion that these three variables indeed go a long way towards explaining how and why academics—and other representatives of civil society—can have decisive weight in policy outcomes. As defence policy outcomes are one of the most effective measures of civilian control over armed forces in societies in transition—a supposition that will be the subject of upcoming work by this author—the prospects for generating insight into ameliorating civilian control in these polities are promising indeed.

---

The author wishes to thank Richard Price, Ronald Krebs, Katharina Coleman, Brian Job and Andrés Mejía, as well as two anonymous reviewers, for their comments on earlier drafts of this work. The responsibility for its shortcomings remains entirely mine.

<sup>1</sup> See, *inter alia*, Haas, "Introduction", p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Cawthra, Gavin. "From "Total Strategy" to "Human Security": The Making of South Africa's Defence Policy 1990-99". *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Military Studies*. Vol. 1, No. 1 (2000); pp. 51-67 (hereafter, *JPCMS*). Here, pp. 51-52. NB: a previous version of this article appeared as Cawthra, Gavin. *From "Total Strategy" to "Human Security": The Making of South Africa's Defence Policy 1990-98*. (Working Paper No. 8/1999, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute). 1999. Available from <https://www.cc.columbia.edu/sec/dlc/ciao/wps/caq02/caq02.html>. Accessed 15 March 2001 (hereafter, *COPRI*).

<sup>3</sup> Grundy, Kenneth W. *The Militarization of South African Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987; Frankel, Philip H. *Pretoria's Praetorians: Civil-military relations in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. See also Vale, Laagers, p. 14. Cock, Jacklyn and Laurie Nathan, eds. *Society at war: The militarisation of South Africa*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> In 1963, less than three years after the Sharpeville shootings, the United Nations Security Council placed a voluntary arms embargo on South Africa. See Crocker, Chester A. *South Africa's Defense Posture: Coping with Vulnerability*. The Washington Papers, No. 84. Beverly Hills [Washington, D.C.]: Sage [Center for Strategic and International Studies], 1981; p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Van Zyl Slabbert, F. "The Causes of Transition in South Africa". In André du Toit and F. van Zyl Slabbert. *SA and Transition from Authoritarian Rule*. IDASA Occasional Paper No.

32. Mowbray: Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa, 1990; pp. 5-9. Here, p. 5.
- <sup>6</sup> See the chapter on strategic importance in Hough, M. and van der Merwe, M.A. *Selected Official South African Strategic Perceptions 1976-1987*. (Ad hoc Publication No. 25). Pretoria: Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 1988; and South Africa. Department of Defence. *White Paper on Defence and Armament Production 1975*. Pretoria: Department of Defence, 1975; South Africa. Department of Defence. *White Paper on Defence 1977*. Pretoria: Department of Defence, 1977; South Africa. Department of Defence. *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1986*. Pretoria: Department of Defence, 1986.
- <sup>7</sup> Cawthra, Gavin. "Guns or Butter? Growth, Development and Security". In Cock, Jacklyn and Penny Mckenzie, eds. *From Defence to Development: Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Phillip, 1998, pp. 25-40. Here, p. 27.
- <sup>8</sup> See, *inter alia*, Grundy, chapter 2; Swilling, Mark and Mark Phillips. "State power in the 1980s: from 'total strategy' to 'counter-revolutionary warfare'". In Cock and Nathan, pp. 134-148. Here, p. 137.
- <sup>9</sup> Williams, Rocky. *Back to the Barracks: The SADF and the Changing Nature of Civil-Military Relations under the Botha and de Klerk Administrations*. Paper presented at the Symposium on "Contemporary Issues in South Africa, From Apartheid to ?" held at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 30 June 1990 (hereafter, *Barracks*, draft), p. 12. NB: A later version of this paper was published and is also cited here as Williams, Rocky. *Back to the Barracks: The SADF and the Dynamics of Transformation*. Southern African Perspectives No. 10. Bellville: Centre for Southern African Studies, University of the Western Cape, 1991 (hereafter, *Barracks*).
- <sup>10</sup> Alden, Chris. *Apartheid's Last Stand: The Rise and Fall of the South African Security State*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996; footnote 39, p. 285. Roherty, James M. *State Security in South Africa: Civil-Military Relations Under P W Botha*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1992; footnotes 19-20, p. 61.
- <sup>11</sup> Alden, *Last Stand*, p. 45.
- <sup>12</sup> Interview with Laurie Nathan, 22 August 2001.
- <sup>13</sup> See Hough, M. "National Security in the RSA" and "The Strategic Importance of South and Southern Africa: The Pretoria View". Publication No. 9. Pretoria: Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 1981; and also the following compilations of government positions published as ISSUP papers: Hough and van der Merwe; and du Plessis, A. and M. Hough. *Selected Official South African Strategic Perceptions 1989-1992*. (Ad hoc Publication No. 29). Pretoria: Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 1992.
- <sup>14</sup> It is mentioned by name by Grundy and Frankel, and in Swilling and Phillips, p. 137.
- <sup>15</sup> Frankel, p. 67.
- <sup>16</sup> Cawthra, Gavin. *Securing South Africa's Democracy: Defence, Development and Security in Transition*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997 (hereafter, *SSAD*); p. 49; on the elements of ANC policy adopted from Leninist and Marxist principles, see Alden, Chris. "From Liberation Movement to Political Party: ANC Foreign Policy in Transition". *South African Journal of International Affairs*. Vol. 1, No. 1 (1993); pp. 62-81, Here, p. 66.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- <sup>18</sup> Shaw, Mark. "Biting the bullet: Negotiating democracy's defence". In Friedman, Steven and Doreen Atkinson, eds. *The Small Miracle: South Africa's negotiated settlement*. South African Review, No. 7. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1994; pp. 228-256 (hereafter, "Biting the bullet"). Here, p. 231.
- <sup>19</sup> Cawthra, *COPRI*.

- <sup>20</sup> African National Congress. "Ready to Govern: ANC policy guidelines for a democratic South Africa adopted at the National Congress held May 28-31 1992". Available from <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/readyto.html>. Accessed 9 February 2002 (hereafter, ANC, "Ready to Govern").
- <sup>21</sup> ANC, "Ready to Govern", Section Q, "Peace and Security", paragraph 2.
- <sup>22</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Military Research Group, 25 November 1991; Interview with Laurie Nathan, Cape Town, South Africa, 22 August 2001.
- <sup>23</sup> Interview with Laurie Nathan, 22 August 2001.
- <sup>24</sup> Interview with Laurie Nathan, 22 August 2001; Interview with Prof. Gavin Cawthra, 12 October 2001.
- <sup>25</sup> A situation alluded to by several analysts of the South African transition as well as MRG members including Nathan and Cawthra. Interview with Prof. Gavin Cawthra, Johannesburg, South Africa, 12 October 2001; Interview with Laurie Nathan, Cape Town, South Africa, 15 August 2001.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview with Prof. Gavin Cawthra, 12 October 2001. The term "window of opportunity"—used without an explicit link in this case—is crucial to the arguments advanced by Jeffrey Checkel about policy influence. See Checkel, Jeffrey. *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997; p. xi ff.
- <sup>27</sup> Cawthra, *JPCMS*, p. 56.
- <sup>28</sup> Shaw, pp. 232-233.
- <sup>29</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Military Research Group, 25 November 1991.
- <sup>30</sup> Interview with Laurie Nathan, Cape Town, South Africa, 21 November 2001.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Members' research interests are based on the minutes of the first meeting of the Military Research Group attended by that member.
- <sup>33</sup> Cawthra, Gavin. *Brutal Force: The Apartheid War Machine*. London: International Defence and Aid Fund for South Africa, 1986; Cawthra, *SSAD*.
- <sup>34</sup> Interview with Sandy Africa, Hatfield, Pretoria, South Africa, 18 October 2001.
- <sup>35</sup> Lacunae in ANC and MK policy were made explicit within the MRG by members such as Calvin Khan, and by representatives of the ANC Research Department and other Departments both publicly and within small fora such as the MRG.
- <sup>36</sup> Shaw, p. 233.
- <sup>37</sup> Cawthra, *COPRI*, p. 3.
- <sup>38</sup> Interview with Prof. Deon Fourie, Muckleneuk, Pretoria, South Africa, 18 October 2001.
- <sup>39</sup> Letter from Laurie Nathan to Linda Mti dated 8 March 2001, p. 1.
- <sup>40</sup> Cawthra, *JPCMS*, p. 57.
- <sup>41</sup> South Africa. Department of Defence. "Green Paper on South African Defence Policy". 24 April 1995.
- <sup>42</sup> Interview with Laurie Nathan, 22 August 2001.
- <sup>43</sup> Interview with Laurie Nathan, 22 August 2001.
- <sup>44</sup> The attribute of institutionalised prestige presents a somewhat special case in the South African context, as prestige in the earlier days of the transition often derived from

- "struggle credentials" rather than an aptitude for a given posting. The personal prestige associated with participation in the resistance to apartheid clearly overlaps strongly with normative resonance, broadly writ.
- <sup>45</sup> Interview with Laurie Nathan, 15 August 2001; Interview with Laurie Nathan, 22 August 2001.
- <sup>46</sup> Interview with Laurie Nathan, 15 August 2001. It was This conference also motivated Jakkie Cilliers and Paul-Bolko Mertz to found IDP/ISS. See <http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/ASR/5No1/Editorial.html>
- <sup>47</sup> Booth, Ken, ed. *New Thinking about Strategy and International Security*. London: HarperCollins, 1991.
- <sup>48</sup> Buzan, Barry. *People, states and fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-cold war era*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991.
- <sup>49</sup> Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues [Palme Commission]. *Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament*. London: Pan, 1984.
- <sup>50</sup> These include Cock and Nathan; *The Changing of the Guard: Armed Forces and Defence Policy in a Democratic South Africa*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1994; and *Riding the Tiger: The Integration of Armed Forces and Post-Apartheid Military*. Southern African Perspectives No. 10. Bellville: Centre for Southern African Studies, University of the Western Cape, 1991.
- <sup>51</sup> Buzan, pp. 77-82.
- <sup>52</sup> Interview with Prof. Barry Buzan, Icaraí, Niterói, Brazil, 30 July 2002.
- <sup>53</sup> Nathan, Laurie. "Beyond Arms and Armed Forces: A New Approach to Security". *South African Defence Review*. No. 4 (1992); pp. 12-21 (hereafter, "New approach". Here, p. 12.
- <sup>54</sup> Nathan, *Changing of the Guard*, p. 7.
- <sup>55</sup> Nathan, "New approach".
- <sup>56</sup> Gutteridge, William. "Role and Character of the SANDF: Changing Attitudes in the Security Establishment". In Gutteridge, *21st Century*; pp. 11-17. Here, p. 12.
- <sup>57</sup> Nathan, *Changing of the Guard*, pp. 83-84 and White Paper First Draft, p. 12.
- <sup>58</sup> Nathan, *Changing of the Guard*, pp. 63-64 and White Paper First Draft, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>59</sup> Nathan, *Changing of the Guard*, pp. 68-70 and White Paper First Draft, pp. 8-9.
- <sup>60</sup> Williams, Rocky. "'We must take the current when it serves or lose our ventures': the creation of a legitimate Defence Force in a post-settlement South Africa". Johannesburg: Military Research Group, undated (hereafter, "We must take the current").
- <sup>61</sup> Seegers, Annette. *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1996; p. 271.
- <sup>62</sup> Williams, "We must take the current", p. 3.
- <sup>63</sup> On the importance of legitimacy, see also du Plessis, Louis. "A perspective on perspectives: the expanding focus of South African thinking on security". *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*. Vol. 17, No. 2; pp. 22-55. Here, pp. 28-30. Du Plessis considers of particular salience the issues of representativeness and civilian control of the armed forces.
- <sup>64</sup> Williams, "We must take the current", pp. 4ff.
- <sup>65</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>66</sup> Kenkel, Kai Michael. *Whispering to the Prince: Academic experts and national security policy formulation in Brazil, South Africa and Canada*. Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 2005.