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RETHINKING MILITARISM IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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Introduction

This paper argues that contemporary South Africa is marked by a co-existence of both old and new forms of militarism. It tries to move beyond the statist conception of militarism in much of the scholarly literature in order to examine social relations more broadly, and the appropriation of the means and instruments of violence by non-state groups, what Appadurai has termed the "privatization of the state".[2] 'Militarism' is thus used here very broadly to refer both to the military as a formal state institution and to various non-state forms, expressions and instruments of organised violence.

The paper argues that a shallow and uneven process of state demilitarisation was underway in South Africa from 1990 in the form of reductions in military expenditure, weapons holdings, force levels, demobilisation, employment in arms production and base closures. However, this has had contradictory consequences. The failure to provide for the effective social integration of ex-combatants throughout the Southern African region, as well as ineffective disarmament in post-conflict peace building, has provided an impetus to a 'privatised militarism'. This is evident in three related processes: new forms of violence, the commoditisation of security, through the growth of private security firms and, most importantly, the proliferation of small arms.

It is argued that small arms are highly racialised and linked to a militarised conception of citizenship. This feeds into a militarist nationalism, which claims a powerful army as an indicator of state power, which helps to explain a process of re-militarisation – evident in the R60 billion re-armament programme and increasing reliance on the military as an instrument of foreign policy since 1998. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for a regional approach to security as a further corrective to a narrow, statist focus on the South African National Defence Force.

The focus on different forms and levels of militarism in contemporary South Africa is complicated by contestations about meaning. Several analyses have stressed that 'militarism' is a contested concept;[3] but as Merryfinch observes, "like electricity, 'militarism' can best be

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[1] The main sources of data for this paper are textual analysis of government documents and newspaper commentary as well as 30 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key informants involved in defence and security issues in the Southern African region. This research methodology was adopted given the tendency of questionnaires to fracture experience and fail to provide explanatory insights. The interviews were conducted by myself and my status as a white, middle class South African woman, has obviously coloured my interpretation and the responses I received. The paper also draws on insights derived from my participant observation in the demilitarisation movement in South Africa.
[2] Arjun Appadurai, 'Deep democracy: Urban governmentality and the horizon of politics', *Public Culture*, 14:1 (2002), p24.
[3] Charles Tilly, 'War and the International System 1900 – 1992', New York: New School for Social Research, 1992; Volker Berghan, *Militarism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; Martin Shaw, *Post-Military Society: Militarism, Demilitarization and War at the End of the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

described by its effects. When military goals, values and apparatus increasingly dominate a state's culture, politics and economy, militarism is on the rise".[4] Shaw writes that "Militarism and militarization do not depend simply or directly on the role of the military in society".[5] Instead he argues for moving beyond a narrow focus on military institutions to address military culture. Similarly Mann broadens the concept of militarism beyond a narrow focus on military institutions to refer to "a set of attitudes and social practices which regard war and the preparation for war as a normal and desirable social activity".[6] In the same vein E.P. Thompson warns against a narrow focus on concepts such as "the military industrial complex". In his view, this "suggests that the evil is confined in a known and limited place: it may threaten to push forward, but it can be restrained, contamination does not extend through the whole societal body". In terms of his analysis, "the USA and the USSR do not have military-industrial complexes: they are such complexes".[7] Similarly, this paper argues that contemporary South Africa is contaminated by diverse forms of militarism, which have percolated through the entire society.

The Restructuring of the Military and the Process of Demilitarisation

During the 1976 - 1990 period the apartheid army, the South African Defence Force (SADF), was positioned at the centre of a highly militarised country.[8] It was marked by the mobilisation of resources for war on political, economic and ideological levels. Defence expenditures soared and the power of the SADF expanded to the point where it was positioned at the centre of state decision-making and penetrated deeply into many aspects of social life.[9] Throughout the 1980s the SADF suppressed resistance in arenas as diverse as education, health and labour. The Defence Force was deployed to evict rent defaulters, occupy black schools, guard polling booths, invade health clinics to identify the injured, maintain beach apartheid, monitor demonstrations, conduct forced removals, break strikes and 're-educate' political detainees. In these ways the SADF played a central role in creating a 'terrorist state', which relied on the spread of extreme fear to maintain its authority.[10]

The transition from this 'terrorist state' to democracy, between 1990 and 1994, was the result not of a 'miracle' or the seizure of power, but of a negotiated settlement that involved many explicit and implicit compromises. These compromises left key elements of apartheid privilege and power intact. Some of these are located in the new post-apartheid army, which is the product of a process of restructuring rather than transformation, reflecting the incorporation of the liberation movement into existing institutions that serve elite interests.[11]

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[4] Lesley Merryfinch, 'Militarism', in Chapkis, Wendy (ed.), *Loaded Questions: Women in the Militaries*, Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 1981, p.9.

[5] Shaw (1991), p.14.

[6] Michael Mann, 'The roots and contradictions of modern militarism', *New Left Review*, 167 (March 1987), p.4.

[7] Edward Thompson, 'Notes on exterminism, the last stage of civilization', in New Left Review (ed.), *Exterminism and the Cold War*, London: Verso, 1982, pp.21-22.

[8] Jacklyn Cock & Laurie Nathan (eds), *War and Society. The militarisation of South Africa*, Cape Town: David Phillip, 1989; Kenneth Grundy, *The Militarisation of South African Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

[9] Cock & Nathan (1989); Phillip Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians. Civil military relations in South Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984; Gavin Cawthra, *Brutal Force. The Apartheid War Machine*, London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1986.

[10] Jacklyn Cock, 'The role of violent in current state security strategies', in M. Swilling (ed.), *Views on the South African State*, Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1990, pp.85-105.

[11] Hein Marais, *South Africa. Limits to Change. The political economy of transformation*, London: Zed Book, 1998.

During the 1990-1994 period of transition, an alliance of militarists from the various armed formations emerged. This alliance took shape in the form of the post-apartheid army, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which involved an amalgamation of seven different armed formations, each responsible to a different political authority. The integration of these former adversaries is a powerful symbol and practical demonstration of the commitment to reconciliation. However, the restructuring of the military does not mean that the institution has moved to the margins of South African society. On the contrary, the SANDF continues to loom large and to cannibalise scarce resources and wield considerable political, economic and ideological power. Nevertheless, the post-apartheid re-organisation of the military was part of a process of state demilitarisation that was seemingly rudderless. Much of the movement of power and resources away from the military can best be described as what Luckham has called "demilitarisation by default", that is "military reductions forced by economic decline and the withdrawal of foreign military support after the end of the Cold War".[12] Similarly, Williams has maintained that in South Africa the "various initiatives [of demilitarisation] are uneven, asymmetrical and, in some cases, incomplete".[13]

It has been claimed that the new structure, the SANDF is a "unified force, demographically representative of South Africa, uniformly trained, combat-ready with a uniformity of purpose".[14] Boshoff along with other scholars has emphasised that the SANDF is a very different organisation from the SADF.[15] With a total of 59,000 members, the SANDF is much smaller; and in relation to its manpower procurement policy, conscription for white men has been replaced by voluntary recruitment of all South Africans. Social composition at rank-and-file level is becoming more representative of the population in ethnic, racial and gender terms, and less a reflection of the white minority, while the command structure of the SANDF has been deracialised. In 1994, less than one per cent of officers were black but by 1999 this had risen to 31 per cent. However, it has recently been alleged that the SANDF is top heavy, with 208 generals and admirals, a ratio of one general for every 293 men compared with a general for every 2,000 men in the US army.[16] It has also been admitted that, "representivity in the force is still skewed ...with middle management still mostly white colonels".[17]

The SANDF is also still not representative in gender terms, as women only constitute 13 per cent of the force and many reported problems with sexual harassment and gender stereotyping that degrade women persist. There is little evidence that the institutional culture of the defence force has changed significantly. According to several sources, along with sexism, racism is rife and there have been several incidents of racialised violence reported. Black soldiers report being subjected to 'political harassment' and ridiculed, which they believe is intended to lower the morale of soldiers belonging to *Mkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) (Spear of the Nation), the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), armed wing of the Pan-African Congress (PAC) and ultimately

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[12] Robin Luckham, 'The military, militarism and democratisation in Africa', in E. Hutchful & A. Bathily (eds), *The military and militarism in Africa*, Dakar: Codesria, 1995, p.49.

[13] Rocky Williams, 'Reallocating Defence Expenditures for Development: The South African Experience', *African Security Review*, 7:2 (1998), p.46.

[14] Henri Boshoff, 'Defence needs are social needs', *The Star*, 24 July 2002, p.9.

[15] Ian Liebenberg, 'The Integration of the Military in Post-liberation South Africa', *Armed Forces and Society*, 24:1 (Fall 1997), pp.105-132; Gary Kynoch, 'The transformation of the South African military', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34:3 (September 1996), pp.441-457; Gavin Cawthra & Bjorn Moller, *Defensive Restructuring of the Armed Forces in Southern Africa*, Dartmouth: Macmillan, 1997.

[16] *The Sunday Independent*, 14 July 2002.

[17] Defence force chief Sipiwe Nyanda, quoted in *The Sowetan*, 24 March 2003.

force them out of the SANDF. Dissatisfaction is particularly intense over the ranking procedures.[18]

The formation of the SANDF was also associated with an emphasis on professionalism. However, while the chair of the parliamentary Defence Committee, Tandi Modise, declared that "There is no need for hysteria",[19] other informants have spoken of a 'crisis' in relation to operational capability. Most informants agree that currently the SANDF is not a strong, or cohesive force. Low morale is amplified by high numbers of soldiers being medically unfit. There is a heavy incidence of HIV/AIDS within the forces, variously reported at 23 per cent in the SANDF as a whole,[20] or 60 per cent of all soldiers.[21] According to the Surgeon-General of the SADF, 21 per cent of the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS) is HIV-positive.[22]

The SANDF has not been subject to a comprehensive and far-reaching process of demilitarisation. However, steps towards demilitarisation are evident in the reduction and destruction of weapon holdings, particularly anti-personnel landmines and small arms, by the SANDF. Base closures represent another significant demilitarisation measure, though to date closures have occurred on a case-by-case basis and have not been framed within a coherent national conversion or demilitarisation strategy. In the absence of this and, despite policy commitments, with weak civilian control and uncontained downsizing and demobilisation, a 'privatised militarisism' is being generated.

Towards privatised Militarism

Among the most significant aspects of the demilitarisation process have been attempts since 1994 to secure the subordination of the military to civilian control. These include the establishment of a Defence Secretariat and the re-examination of the mission, roles and tasks of the SANDF through the *White Paper on Defence* (1996) and a defence review process. However, despite the centrality of the principle of subordination to civilian control as the cornerstone of post-apartheid defence policy, civilian control through the Defence Secretariat is weak.

While the SADF was informed by militarist and statist notions of security, the 1996 White Paper articulated a holistic understanding of security. It provided for the country's first ever National Defence Review to translate policy into a new force design, reviewing force levels, structures and equipment. The Minister of Defence claimed that, 'Public participation in the review has been extensive. It is recognised as the most open and consultative defence review in the world'.[23] However, the consultation was in fact shallow, limited and involved only 77 submissions from civil society organisations. Partly because of the secrecy in which defence and security issues were shrouded under apartheid, civil society lacked the capacity to challenge the military and there was no strong, mass-based movement concerned with militarisation.

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[18] Briefing from the SANDF to the Parliamentary Defence Portfolio Committee, 27 May 2003.
[19] Cited in *The Mail and Guardian,* 20 March 2003.
[20] Boshoff (2002), p.9.
[21] *The Sunday Independent,* 14 July 2002.
[22] Briefing by the Surgeon-General, Lt. General van Rensberg, to the Parliamentary Defence Portfolio Committee, 18 March 2003.
[23] Minister Modise, cited in *Mail and* Guardian, 8 November 1996.

The most significant aspect of the demilitarisation process has been a 'downsizing' or rationalisation, which involved reduction in force levels to 59,000 in 2003 compared to 110,000 in 1994. Altogether some 30,000 soldiers have been formally demobilised from the SANDF in recent years, with very different packages. In addition it has been claimed that more than 20 per cent of liberation army soldiers integrated into the SANDF since 1994 have left because of ill-treatment: "There is no structure of grievances for our people, except through officers who are mostly racist. They are not being taken on courses to improve their skills and are overlooked for promotion".[24]

The total number of ex-combatants in South Africa is contested. According to Department of Defence policy analyst, Dr Rocky Williams, there could be as many as 150,000.[25] This number would include those whose names did not appear on the Certified Personnel Register (CPR), which was compiled by the Department of Defence during 1993 and 1994 and which formed the basis for integration. According to a SANDF briefing to the parliamentary Defence Portfolio Committee meeting on 27 May 2003, there are some 4,000 people who claim ex-combatant status and exclusion from the CPR. It would also include those who have left the SANDF for a variety of reasons since 1996, those who returned to South Africa after the suspension of armed struggle in August 1990 (an informal process of demobilisation) as well as those formally demobilised since 1994. The number of ex-combatants will grow with the planned further reduction of the size of the army to 33,900 soldiers.[26]

Many ex-combatants are marked by their experience of war, their training in the means of violence, their lack of marketable skills and their access to weaponry. Throughout the Southern African region demobilisation has rarely involved either effective disarmament or effective social integration in the sense of restoring ex-combatants to their communities with access to employment and supportive social networks that would foster demilitarised social identities. Instead, many ex-combatants throughout the region have reported a sense of marginalisation and social dislocation. An increased incidence of banditry means that they have become the targets for much contemporary social anxiety about gun violence; and indeed, in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique demobilised soldiers have been a destabilising force.

There has been no systematic monitoring of this category, but in at least three ways they are not contributing to peace building in the region: firstly, a number of the South African mercenaries that are involved in wars in the continent are ex-SADF soldiers; secondly, a number of demobilised soldiers are now employed in private security firms; and thirdly, numerous press reports have pointed out that many of the widespread armed robberies in South Africa are being done by highly 'professional' bandits with military backgrounds. For example according to one researcher, "the increase in crime is partially due to the fact that supposedly demobbed members of MK ... turned to crime after the struggle ended in 1994".[27]

Some of this crime represents a kind of commoditisation of violence. In recent interviews with two South African ex-combatants who had been convicted of criminal activity, both stressed that they had relied on crime to survive and had been forced into criminal activity for economic reasons. As one of them said, "a hungry stomach knows no law". According to one

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[24] PAC Deputy Secretary-general, Wonder Masombuka, cited in *The Sunday Times,* 14 January 2001.
[25] Interview, Dr Rocky Williams, May 2003.
[26] Briefing by the SANDF to the Defence Joint Standing Committee, 4 March 2003.
[27] Anthony Minaar, quoted in *The Sowetan,* 29 September 1998.

key informant from Soweto, "Ex-combatants are often used as paid assassins. They will kill for a plate of porridge, R200 and a bottle of brandy".

There have been four studies on the social integration of ex-combatants in South Africa. The first survey of 180 respondents, during the informal demobilisation process that took place over the period of the transition, found that 72 per cent were unemployed and 67 per cent reported psychological problems.[28] A sample of 307 ex-combatants (of which 66 per cent claimed to be from MK or APLA) found that 37 per cent were unemployed.[29] A sense of marginalization emerged strongly from Gear's study, which reports that many ex-combatants perceived themselves to have been "wished away".[30] The most recent study involved 410 questionnaires administered to a sample of ex-combatants, defined as members of APLA and MK, who received some form of military training under the political leadership of the PAC or ANC.[31] This survey reported high levels of unemployment (66 per cent of the sample), disrupted education (close to 60 per cent did not have a matriculation certificate) and a strong sense of social exclusion. A large proportion (40 per cent) of respondents believed that ex-combatants are discriminated against in the job market: "Whites control the economy of this country and they don't like guerrillas. They say we are killers. Things will never be fine as long as they are in control".[32] This study reports a strong sense of entitlement alongside the grievance; 87 per cent of interviewed ex-combatants felt strongly that the government must establish special job creation programmes targeted specifically at them.[33] Only nine per cent reported that the skills training they received from the Service Corps helped them find employment.[34]

The Service Corps was instituted in 1995 to integrate demobilised "non-statutory force members into civilian society" by skills upgrading. It has absorbed millions but is weak. In 2000 there were reports of an independent audit into an alleged misuse and possible misappropriation of some R300 million earmarked for the retraining of ex-combatants.[35] It is estimated that between 1995 and 2002 the Service Corps trained only between 3,000 and 4,000 former APLA and MK soldiers.[36] In 1999, it was reported that the Service Corps employed 252 staff members while there were a total of 202 trainees.[37]

The ex-combatants' associations have largely failed to deliver on promises of establishing rehabilitation centres and business entities. Both the MK Military Veterans Association (MKMVA), established in 1996 and claiming some 45,000 members, and the Azanian People's Liberation Army Veterans Association (APLAVA), established in 1997, suffer from serious organisational problems.[38] Recently, the rift between the National Executive Committee of the MKMVA and its Gauteng provincial counterpart deepened when the

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[28] Jacklyn Cock, 'Towards a common society: The integration of soldiers and armies in a future South Africa', unpublished research report, 1993.

[29] Ian Liebenberg & M. M. I. Roefs, *Demobilisation and its Aftermath II – Economic Reinsertion of South Africa's demobilised military personnel*, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2001.

[30] Sasha Gear, 'Wishing us Away: challenges facing ex-combatants in the new South Africa', *Violence and Transition series*, Vol.8, 2002.

[31] Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), 'Soldiers of Misfortune', Unpublished research report, 2003.

[32] CCR (2003), p.39.

[33] CCR (2003), p.78.

[34] CCR (2003), p.51.

[35] *The Mail and Guardian*, 8 September 2000.

[36] CCR (2003), p.49.

[37] CCR (2003), p.50.

[38] CCR (2003).

Committee ordered the closure of the Gauteng office and the suspension of two of its office bearers.[39]

Overall, ex-combatants are increasingly expressing their collective sense of social exclusion in a variety of protest actions, including marches and threats to blockade roads and take hostages.[40] In August 2002 a group of 70 ex-combatants from the Soldiers Forum, a new structure affiliated to the Anti-Privatisation Forum, formed part of a protest against the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. They were tear-gassed and arrested as they demonstrated at Johannesburg station. In June 2003, about 100 members of the Gauteng section of the MKMVA marched on the headquarters of the ANC to hand in a memorandum with a list of grievances.[41] The disruptive potential of these ex-combatants is one of the contradictory consequences of the shallow, uneven process of state demilitarisation described above. In addition to the ineffective social integration of ex-combatants throughout the Southern African region, there has been ineffective disarmament in post-conflict peace building. The new armies are not strong, cohesive, well disciplined forces. In fact, a major source of the current proliferation of small arms is leakage from these formations.

Arms flows were exacerbated by the UN's failure to effect meaningful disarmament after the termination of the 16 year civil war in Mozambique in 1992,[42] a current influx of new weapons from Eastern Europe and many small arms now being dispersed throughout the population of Lesotho after the disturbance there in September 1998. More recently arms flows have been bolstered by the continued fighting in Angola until 2002, and recent reports suggest that Zambian villagers living along the Angola border are bartering goats and chickens in exchange for AK-47 rifles from Angolans.[43]

Thus the proliferation of small arms is a material legacy of thirty years of war in the region. Antagonistic social identities and an ideology of militarism are an accompanying ideological legacy. Together they form a lethal mix. The proliferation of small arms enables individuals to express social antagonisms in violent ways. Such proliferation represents a form of privatised militarism, which exists alongside manifestations of older forms of state militarism evident in the SANDF re-armament programmes and military intervention in Lesotho, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Manifestations of 'Privatised Militarism'

'Privatised militarism' refers to a range of cultural practices and social activities, which involve a systematic and extensive reliance on various non-state organised forms, expressions and instruments of violence. Three closely related illustrations of this privatised militarism are described: (i) increasing levels of highly organized criminal violence; (ii) the growth of armed, private security firms and vigilante groupings; and lastly, and most importantly (iii) individual reliance on instruments of violence – small arms.

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[39] *Business Report,* 30 May 2003.
[40] CCR (2003).
[41] *The Star,* 24 June 2003.
[42] Alex Vines, 'Disarmament in Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, March (1998), pp.35-47.
[43] *The Sunday Independent,* 14 March 2003.

New forms of organised violence and conflict

Post-apartheid South Africa has experienced rising rates of criminal violence, much of which involves small arms. Of the 24,765 murders reported in 1999, 11,130 or 45 per cent were committed with firearms. This is an average of 31 people a day.[44] A total of 22,402 incidents of attempted murder with a firearm were reported in 1999, an average of 61 people a day.[45] The number of people killed by guns is actually increasing annually from 41 per cent of all murders in 1994 to 49.3 per cent in 2000.[46] According to a United Nations survey of 69 countries, South Africa has one of the highest firearm-related homicide rates in the world, second only to Columbia. A total of 88,178 cases of robbery with a firearm were reported in 2000.[47]

Much of this criminal violence is rooted in the same patterns of economic deprivation and marginalisation that underpinned political violence during apartheid. As Simpson has written, "It is simply the forms and expression of violent conflict which has [sic] shifted in nature .... The criminalisation of politics and the politicisation of crime are really flip sides of the same coin".[48] It is aggravated by the absence of faith in a rule of law and the politically contaminated nature of institutions of criminal justice inherited from the apartheid era. There is also a danger that a sense of impunity is developing, based on the granting of amnesty to confessed killers during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process.

The privatisation of security

Despite a dramatic shift of resources from the military to the police in terms of personnel and budget allocations, increasing numbers of citizens have lost confidence in the capacity of the state to protect them. The outcome is a 'privatisation of security'. While this process takes very different forms for different groups, it is rooted in the widespread perception that the post-apartheid police force is not only unable to maintain order but is itself a source of criminal violence, for example, through corruption or as a source of illegal firearms. Police in 1997 reported 1,802 guns lost by police officials, but charges of negligent loss of a firearm were laid against only 143 police.[49] Furthermore, thousands of people with criminal convictions have legal firearm licenses.[50]

In 2003 it was announced that the total workforce of the South African Police Services (SAPS) would be increased from 131,560 to 140,560.[51] However, numerous informants spoke of widespread police corruption, one stating that: "The police are the navigators of evil; they weaken the community, they sell guns and ammunition and are very easy to bribe. Roadblocks in Soweto are an opportunity for bribery". The executive director of the Independent Complaints Directorate maintains that there has been a 100 per cent increase in police corruption cases over the past two years.[52] Within the post-apartheid police force, the

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[44] Crime Information Management Centre, March 2000.

[45] Crime Information Management Centre, January 2000.

[46] Crime Information Analysis Centre, South African Police Services, 10 April 2002.

[47] Crime Information Analysis Centre, South African Police Services, 10 April 2002.

[48] Graeme Simpson, 'Rebuilding Fractured Societies: Reconstruction, reconciliation and the changing nature of violence - Some self-critical insights from post-apartheid South Africa', Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconstruction, 2000, at http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papundp.htm.

[49] Minister of Police, cited in *The Star,* 2 April 1998.

[50] Interview with the head of the investigation into the Central Firearms Register, Sheena Duncan, 2000.

[51] *The Star,* 17 June 2003.

[52] Cited in *The Saturday Star,* 7 June 2003.

abuse of power and brutality is widespread. Since the Independent Complaints Directorate was established within the police service in 1997, an average of sixty people a month have died as a result of police action or while in police custody. During 2002 the directorate investigated 214 deaths in custody and 371 deaths resulting from 'police action'.[53] This brutality is re-enforced by an aggressive masculinity, or 'macho' ethos that is predominant within the police force. This reflects the legacy of apartheid when the police mainly adopted military methods, equipment and structures.

Demilitarisation is a key theme in police reform, which involves a concept of 'community policing', where the police are seen as being responsible to the communities they serve and the communities in turn are expected to assist the police. By making a community responsible for its own safety, this strategy is encouraging a process of privatisation of security. Implementation of this policy has been extremely uneven and patchy, but the outcome is that increasing numbers of South African citizens have come to rely on individual gun ownership, diverse forms of vigilantism and private security arrangements. In execution and practice, security is being converted into a commodity for those who can afford it.

The number of private security guards now far outstrips the number in the police force. There are currently some 4,271 registered security companies in South Africa and in June 2003 there were 248,025 registered security guards.[54] They are all men, often ex-combatants, with easy access to weaponry for which they are not always adequately trained and there is little effective regulation of their activities. According to the Centre for Conflict Resolution Study "With some exceptions private security officers earn less than R800 a month, work long hours and have no employment benefits". Some earn as little as R600 a month.[55] Increasing forms of criminal violence have fuelled the growth of this private security industry.

In poorer communities this criminal violence often produces vigilante actions such as that of the Cape Town Muslims organised into PAGAD (People Opposed to Guns and Drugs). However, PAGAD itself has been involved in numerous acts of violence. Other forms of vigilante violence are often less structured and involve collective expressions of anger, such as the beating and even killing of suspected criminals. The actors engaged in these diverse forms of vigilante violence are mostly men, often conforming to scripts of masculinity that emphasise mens' roles as 'protectors' and 'defenders' of their homes and communities.

Guns, Violence and Social Identity

Post-apartheid South Africa is undergoing a 'domestic arms race' in which sub-state groups (principally organised crime and private citizens) have acquired arms. The number of guns is increasing annually in South Africa with the Central Firearms Register receiving about 20,000 new applications monthly. As Stuart Hall argued with respect to the social phenomenon of 'mugging' in British society in the early 1970's, gun violence serves as an articulator of social distress and in the South African social order it is a potential faultline of crisis.[56] With 31 firearm deaths a day, the gun is a symbol of our failure to build a secure society.

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[53] *The Sunday Times,* 1 June 2003.

[54] Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Safety and Security.

[55] CCR (2003), p.42.

[56] Stuart Hall, *Policing the Crisis. Mugging the state and law and order*, London: Macmillan, 1978.

The proliferation of the means of violence is one of the most distinctive features of contemporary South African society. This 'diffusion' of arms, suggests the dispersion and recirculation of arms through multiple channels to all levels of society. There is no homogeneous category of gun owners. But it is argued here that small arms are often the basis of a militarised identity that is lethally connected to culture, gender, ethnicity, race and nationality.

The transition from authoritarian rule in South Africa has created a deep well of social anxiety as the familiar social identities, and traditional practices have been disrupted and breached. One consequence of this social anxiety is, as Stuart Hall has written in a different context, the "emergence of a predisposition to the use of 'scapegoats' into which all disturbing experiences are condensed".[57] In the South African context there are two categories of such scapegoats – the ex-combatant and the illegal immigrant. Much press coverage of gun violence reflects a sense of blame and indignation towards these social categories. In the vocabulary of social anxiety, ex-combatants and illegal immigrants are easy symbols of menace, social dislocation and threat.

This feeds into a militarist form of nationalism. A militarised form of citizenship characterised the apartheid era in that political citizenship involved compulsory national military service for white males. Blacks were denied access to firearms. This prohibition on arms was understood to involve a denial of African manhood as well as citizenship.[58] The outcome of this historical legacy is a militarised citizenship and militarised masculinity, which has devastating social consequences and which will be very difficult to dislodge. Among many black South Africans there is now a widespread understanding that access to all levels of a powerful army, the South African National Defence Force, as well as access to legal gun ownership, are markers of liberation and of full citizenship in the post-apartheid state.

A number of black informants emphasized specifically that gun ownership signals citizenship in a post-apartheid society: "Now that we're free it's our right to have a gun", or "Under apartheid many whites bought guns ... the law stood for whites. Now it is painful for whites to see blacks owning guns". The purchase of small arms by increasing numbers of black South Africans is thus a perverse indicator of changing power relations. Guns are also highly gendered. Men from diverse social categories are part of a robust 'gun culture' in contemporary South Africa. This gun culture feeds into and reinforces an ideology of militarism. It is not a fixed, ahistorical, essentialist entity, but a set of highly heterogeneous resources, which are used selectively by members of different social groups. Overall, this culture operates to provide a social sanction to the possession of guns, and much gun violence follows culturally defined repertoires of behaviour.

The values, social practices and institutions, which together constitute this gun culture, include what Raymond Williams called "consumerist militarism". It involves the normalisation – and even glorification – of war, weaponry, military force and violence through TV, films, books, songs, dances, games, sports and toys. All of these cultural forms constitute a kind of 'banal militarism'. Banal militarism operates near the surface of social life. It is embedded in everyday activities and works through prosaic routines and rituals to make war, weaponry and violence appear natural and inevitable. However, in local and global terms, Naylor has observed that:

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[57] Hall (1978), p.157.
[58] Ellen Hellman, 'Non-Europeans in the Army', *Race Relations* 10:2 (1943), p.45.

> Probably the single most important thing stoking the (illegal arms) market from the demand side is the prevailing maldistribution of income, wealth and ecological capital. Until these are fairly and frankly addressed, there is little hope of damping the desire of the disadvantaged to seek the tools and rectify those disparities by violent means.[59]

South Africa has one of the most unequal distributions of income of any country in the world, and this inequality is deepening under post-apartheid economic policies. Close to four million South Africans joined the ranks of those in poverty.[60] At the same time there is a process of remilitarisation underway which diverts the resources required to meet their basic needs.

A Process of Remilitarisation

Since 1998 a process of remilitarisation is evident in two developments. The first is the use of the military in foreign policy. The SANDF spent more than R30 million on its peacekeeping operation in Lesotho in 1998 – Operation Boleas – which involved several deaths. The SANDF in 2002 had some 930 people deployed in Africa in various tasks. These included a protection force of 701 personnel in Burundi, providing personal protection to some 27 politicians; 200 specialists with the UN mission in the DRC and observers in the UN missions in Ethiopia and Eritrea.[61] There are now a total of 926 SANDF soldiers in Burundi whose mission has changed from VIP protection to peacekeeping and implementing the ceasefire. South African soldiers, known as 'sauza' by locals, make up the bulk of the African force, with Ethiopia and Mozambique also participating.[62] There are some 1,500 SANDF troops in the DRC to assist the United Nations in demobilising and disarming Rwandan rebels.[63] This emphasis on peacekeeping represents a displacement of the priority to prevent war in the first place and has been used to promote and justify increased defence spending. For example, the Defence Minister recently argued that South Africa's commitment to peacekeeping on the continent means that the SANDF should receive more money.[64]

The second indicator of a remilitarisation process in the region is the SANDF rearmament programme. This illustrates a number of disturbing trends such as a concentration of power in the executive and their lack of accountability to parliament or civil society, as well as a lack of transparency and the inadequacy of current procurement policies.

Various opposition MPs and parliamentary committees, such as the Select Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA), have raised criticisms about the industrial offsets, the hidden costs, the lack of ministerial accountability and the absence of criminal prosecutions. When Inkatha Freedom Party MP Gavin Woods resigned as SCOPA chairperson over "executive interference" he released a detailed study of procurement, citing more than fifty irregularities. He said, "These many failings go beyond simply being unacceptable. This would represent a crisis of credibility for procurement transactions anywhere else".[65]

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[59] R. T. Naylor, 'Covert Commerce and Underground Financing in the modern Arms Black Market', paper presented to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 24 February 1994, p.35.

[60] As measured by people in the lowest two expenditure categories (R0 - R399 and R400 - R799 per month) between 1999 and 2002 (South African Labour Bulletin, 'Challenges of Growth and Poverty', *South African Labour Bulletin* 27:5 (2003), p39).

[61] Boshoff (2002).

[62] *The Star,* 28 May 2003.

[63] *The Sunday Times,* 4 August 2002.

[64] Reported in *The Sunday Times,* 15 June 2003.

[65] Cited in *The Mail and Guardian,* 26 July 2002.

Governmental attempts to limit transparency and parliamentary oversight are also evident in the two-year delay to amendments to the National Conventional Arms Control Bill. The Parliamentary Committee on Defence Under-Chairperson, Thandi Modise, demanded oversight by the Committee on pending arms exports (which increased to R1.7 billion in 2001) and greater detail in the annual reporting of completed reports. Modise argued that "oversight must be seen as a tool of democracy, not as competition between parliament and the executive".[66]

Other disturbing trends illustrated by the rearmament programme include:

- An intolerance of dissent - criticisms of the programme have been met with dismissal and hostility;

- A widening gap between state policy and the electorate. According to one survey only 12 per cent of ANC supporters surveyed supported the arms deal;[67]

- A militarist nationalism, which claims that the stature of a nation lies in its weaponry rather than its ability to feed and house its people. For instance, it has been claimed that South Africa's aspirations to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council "were laughable when measured against its ageing submarine capabilities. The ironic and sobering reality is that leadership claims are increasingly being measured against a country's real or perceived military prowess";[68]

- The weakness of civil society and the absence of any mass-based, indigenous peace movement;[69]

- Corruption on the part of prominent persons;

- The contradiction of state policy documents such as the White paper on Defence (1996) and the Bill of Rights, in that it is a gross misdirection of resources that are needed to fight poverty and unemployment. A challenge along these lines was launched in the Cape High Court in 2002, calling on the court to declare the arms contracts null and void. It was argued that the decision to go ahead with the deal was "financially, economically and strategically irrational and thus unlawful and invalid", and that the effect of the decision "is to unjustifiably limit the advancement of socio-economic rights in the manner contemplated in the Bill of Rights".[70]

- The lack of operational capability in the SANDF. Figures released in the latest national budget show the strategic arms procurement package will consume 45.8 per cent of the defence budget over the medium term. In this sense the package "is slowly strangling the defence force as capital spending squeezes out operational requirements";[71]

- It has provided an impetus to increased arms expenditure in the region, particularly in Botswana and in Namibia; there are demands from members of parliament from the

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[66] Cited in *The Mail and Guardian,* 16 August 2002.

[67] *Sunday Independent*, 21 July 2002.

[68] Rocky Williams, 'How does the arms deal measure up to our needs', *The Sunday Independent*, 27 May 2001, p.10.

[69] Jacklyn Cock, 'Butterfly wings and green shoots: the impact of peace organisations in Southern Africa', *Track Two. Centre for Conflict* Resolution,10:1 (2001), pp.1-23.

[70] *The Mail and Guardian*, 26 July 2002.

[71] Sam Sole, 'Arms deal cripples SANDF', *Mail and Guardian*, 20 March 2003, p.6.

South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) for increased defence spending.[72]

This last factor points to a further weakness deriving from a narrow focus on state militarism. This focus has two further serious consequences: the first is the neglect of non-state forms, expressions and instruments of militarism as described above. The second is a neglect of regional issues, which is especially serious given that over the last decade the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region has been wracked by inter and intra-state conflicts. These include civil war in the DRC and Angola, a short-lived coup in 1994 in Lesotho as well as a mutiny and external military intervention in 1998, a contested election in Malawi in 1999, a constitutional crisis in Zambia in 2001, and on-going state terror in Zimbabwe. The SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (OPDSC) is a common security regime whose functions include the prevention and resolution of conflict, but this organ itself has been a source of tension and conflict.[73]

One of the principles of the newly formed African Union (AU) is the establishment of a common defence policy for Africa. However it seems unlikely that it will become the primary peacekeeping authority for the continent. Recently South African President Thabo Mbeki pointed out that only five of the 53 AU states had ratified the instruments for establishing an African Peace and Security Council, which is intended to be "a standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa".[74] At the time of writing there is debate about whether the African Union should establish a single African Standby Force, or opt for five separate regional peacekeeping forces.[75]

Despite being halved since 1989, South Africa's defence budget is still the largest in Africa and is totally inappropriate to development needs. Certainly there have been changes. Whereas in 1989 defence spending was 4.5 per cent of GDP and 15.6 per cent of government expenditure, this fell to a total of R20.05 billion for fiscal year 2003-2004, amounting to 1.62 per cent of GDP and 6.7 per cent of government expenditure. Finance Minister Trevor Manuel made provision in his November 2003 mini-budget for nearly R5 billion towards "unforseeable and unavoidable" expenditure in 2003-2004, including R500 million for the Defence Department available to be deployed in peace support initiatives. This matches the amount overspent by the Department on peacekeeping operations in the DRC and Burundi during 2003.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to demonstrate the persistence of both old and new forms and levels of militarism in post-apartheid South Africa. Bahro, writing of a different context, has echoes for South Africa: "our whole social organism is riddled by the disease of militarism".[76] A restructured, but not transformed, post-apartheid army represents a powerful block of military interests. A process of privatised militarism – in the sense of a systematic and extensive reliance on various non-state forms, expressions and instruments of violence – is evident in

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[72] *Business Day*, 11 April 2003.
[73] Laurie Nathan, 'Organ failure: a review of the SADC organ on Politics, Defence and Security', Unpublished paper, Cape Town: Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2002.
[74] T. Matumi briefing the Defence Portfolio Committee, 1 April 2003.
[75] *The Star,* 27 May 2003.
[76] Rudolf Bahro, *From Red to Green* London: Verso, 1982, p.69.

new forms of violence and conflict. It is also evident in the privatisation of security and the accompanying growth of private security firms, as well as the increase in diverse forms of vigilantism and the proliferation of small arms. These new forms of privatised militarism co-exist with older institutional forms of militarism, in the shape of a powerful post-apartheid army in South Africa and extensive military activity by SADC member states in the region. The South African military cannot become a site of stabilisation for the country or the Southern Africa region as long as it continues to cannibalise scarce resources so that the real threats to our security – poverty, social disintegration and environmental deterioration – remain neglected.

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