

SOUTH AFRICAN

GUERRILLA ARMIES

**THE IMPACT OF GUERRILLA ARMIES ON THE
CREATION OF SOUTH AFRICA'S ARMED FORCES**

ROCKY WILLIAMS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress	RENAMO	Mozambican National Resistance (<i>Resistência Nacional Moçambicana</i>)
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army	SADF	South African Defence Force
CBD	Civilian-based Defence	SAIC	South African Indian Congress
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa	SAP	South African Police
ESKOM	Electricity Supply Commission	SWAPO	South-West Africa People's Organisation
FRELIMO	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (<i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i>)	TBVC	Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei
JMCC	Joint Military Co-ordinating Council	TDF	Transkei Defence Force
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe	TSA	<i>Transvaal Staats Artillerie</i>
MKIZA	MK Intelligence Division	UDF	Union Defence Force
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (<i>Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola</i>)	UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (<i>União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola</i>)
NAT	ANC Department of National Intelligence and Security	ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
NEC	National Executive Committee	ZAR	<i>Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek</i>
NP	National Party	ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
NSF	Non-Statutory Forces	ZNLA	Zimbabwe National Liberation Army
OFS	Orange Free State		
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress		
PMC	Political Military Council		

FOREWORD

A Tribute to Colonel (Dr) Rocklyn Williams (1960-2005)

Rocky Williams, the author of this monograph, sadly passed away before its publication. It is therefore fitting that the ISS dedicate this monograph to his memory and pay a tribute to a dear friend and highly respected colleague.

Rocky devoted most of his youth to the South African liberation struggle and was a guerrilla commander in Umkhonto we Sizwe at the end of the struggle. He played a pivotal role in the negotiation of the military dimensions of the transition to a democratic South Africa. He integrated into the South African National Defence Force with the rank of colonel in 1994. During the transformation process he played a leading role in nearly all activities, including the integration of forces, the establishment of the Defence Ministry and Secretariat, the development of new defence policy and the drafting of the Defence White Paper and the Defence Review. He will always be remembered for his role as the convenor of the Defence Review Work Group and especially for his commitment to transparency and consultation in the process. The South African Defence Review (1998), which has been internationally acclaimed, stands as a monument to Rocky Williams.

Rocky worked at the ISS from 1999 to 2002 as the head of the programme on Security Sector Transformation and did pioneering work into Africa in this regard. The culmination of his work at the ISS was the publication of the book 'Ourselves to Know', which is a study of civil-military relations and defence transformation in Southern Africa. He was highly regarded at the Institute for his sterling work in the field of security sector transformation and for laying the foundation of related ISS work in Africa.

Rocky was a key member of the Advisory Group of the Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform (GFN-SSR) and instrumental in the establishment of the African Security Sector Network (ASSN), of which he was the first convenor of the Steering Committee. He was active in many African countries, assisting them to stabilise their civil-military relations and better manage their defence and security processes.

Rocky completed a PhD in Sociology at the University of Essex.

The death of Rocky Williams is a great loss to all concerned with security sector transformation in Africa and to all who knew Rocky as a friend.

Len Le Roux
Head: Defence Sector Programme
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rocky Williams has written on the formation of the Union of South Africa Defence Force (UDF) – which was the forerunner of the South African Defence Force (SADF) – and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in separate publications.¹ In this monograph, however, he expands on these previous writings and draws parallels between the impact of the Boer Commandos on the UDF and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) on the SANDF respectively. He proceeds to draw lessons from these experiences that can provide future South African defence planners and military historians with useful insights, as well as to serve other countries undergoing the creation of new national defence forces.

This monograph firstly records the histories of both guerrilla armies that fought for the liberation of South Africa in two distinct phases of South African history, the Boer Commandos during the Anglo-Boer war and MK during the Anti-apartheid liberation struggle. It does so by analysis of both the political contexts of these struggles and the military strategies and doctrines employed.

This in itself is a great contribution to the defence debate in South Africa and further afield, as the richness of these histories needs to be recorded and merits similar scholastic attention to those studies that have been commissioned on the participation of South Africans in various conventional wars and campaigns such as World War I, World War II, the Anglo-Zulu wars, and the first phase of the Anglo-Boer War.

The experiences of both MK and the Boer armies provide rich examples of how guerrilla armies, with the appropriate levels of political endorsement and support, can bestow considerable legitimacy upon the creation of new national defence forces. The high levels of legitimacy accruing to those guerrilla armies played an invaluable role in stabilising civil-military relations and legitimising the defence forces in the eyes of the populace. The amalgam of the traditions of the Boer armies and of the British colonial regiments provided the UDF with a rich strategic, cultural and doctrinal base upon which it could draw in its subsequent campaigns. Although the influence of

MK on the doctrine of the SANDF was much less marked, it nonetheless had a significant influence on the civil-military relations culture of the Department of Defence and on the achievement of popular support for the defence force during the formative years.

Unfortunately, due to the overwhelming influence of the SADF officers in the formation of the SANDF, very few, if any, of South Africa's guerrilla traditions are codified and reflected in the national defence strategy of the country, which at present relies overwhelmingly on conventional military deterrence as the primary strategy to be used against external aggression. Ideally, the national defence strategy should reflect a robust and creative integration of conventional, semi-conventional and guerrilla strategies that prove capable of complementing one another in the eventuality of war.

A key contribution of this monograph is its argument that a number of practical steps can be initiated to ensure that any future doctrinal revision attempts to integrate the diverse experiences of guerrilla armies into its discourse, for instance, the tradition of civilian-based defence (CBD) which provided the bedrock of South African mass resistance against apartheid, could be incorporated as an element of South African national defence strategy. Essentially CBD is a non-violent strategy of resistance that seeks to deny an occupying power the resources (the people and products) and legitimacy (the consent) required to govern.

MK's doctrines of an underground organisation provide a much more effective and home-grown guerrilla tradition than those counter-insurgency doctrines that the SADF imported into their counter-revolutionary strategies via the American, French and British counter-insurgency traditions. MK's guerrilla and doctrinal traditions (self-sufficiency, mobilisation of the people, effective use of both urban and rural terrain, military-combat work, and the interfacing of the political and military components of a war) can be incorporated into the rear area defence doctrines of the landward strategy (particularly the organisation of the territorial forces), special forces doctrine, and the clandestine training of military intelligence personnel.

The monograph concludes that South Africa will in time develop a military historical tradition that is more fully reflective of its diverse military past. That this has not happened to date has as much to do with historical factors and the history of conflict that has characterised this country as it does with the exigencies of the current political transition. It is a challenge that military historians, defence strategists and doctrinal experts must embrace in the future.

Note

- 1 See "Historical Parallel or Historical Amnesia? The Formation of the Union Defence Force" published in the South African Defence Review Issue No 2, 1992 and "The Impact of "Umkhonto we Sizwe" on the creation of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF)" published in the Journal of Security Sector Management Volume 2 Number 1 – March 2004

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

"Guerrilla warfare is far more intellectual than a bayonet charge."

T.E. Lawrence

There are far fewer histories of guerrilla wars than written accounts of conventional battles or modern wars. There are eminently practical reasons for this relative deficit in writing. The first is the inescapable reality that a substantial amount of guerrilla history is not recorded (in written form at least) during the conduct of a guerrilla war.

Government troops fighting guerrilla forces tend to keep general records of their counter-insurgency campaigns, their military objectives, the nature and conduct of their operations and the personnel deployed in such operations, although much of this is subsequently 'doctored' for political reasons (to justify the operation in question or to escape culpability for excesses committed during the campaigns).

Guerrilla forces, for their part, record their political objectives in some detail (a prerequisite for the successful conduct of a revolutionary war) and tend to keep records of their campaigns and their personnel while in training, but they rarely keep detailed records of the conduct of the operations and the personnel deployed in them. Unlike government armies, they lack, once deployed, the benefit of reliable resources, a fixed infrastructure, a capable administrative system and an institutionalised military-historical tradition.

An area of scholarly enterprise that is even less recorded is the impact of guerrilla armies on the creation of new, post-conflict national armies. The reconstruction of many post-conflict societies has seen the armies of the former revolutionary movements playing a major role in the command and organisation of the new defence force: the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917, the Viet Cong in Vietnam, the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZNLA) and the Zimbabwe Peoples Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) in Zimbabwe in 1980, and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in Namibia in 1989 constitute a few examples of this trend.

Even in those countries where peace was secured via political compromise and settlement, personnel from former guerrilla movements have continued their military careers as senior command and staff personnel within the structure of the new defence force: the creation of the Union Defence Force in 1912 and of the South African National Defence Force in 1994 in South Africa and the integration of RENAMO and FRELIMO military personnel into the new Mozambican Defence Force in 1992 for example.

It is important for a number of reasons to record these guerrilla struggles in more detail and to assess the impact, or lack of it, that guerrilla armies have had on the creation of new national defence institutions. The first reason is simply of a historical nature. Most accounts of guerrilla warfare from the perspective of the guerrillas themselves are kept alive through an oral tradition. Illiteracy, lack of resources, and time pressures (particularly when such persons are engaged in the task of creating a post-conflict society) mitigate against the recording of these experiences in more detail. It is important, as any guerrilla will confirm, that such accounts are captured before the memory of these campaigns quite literally dies.

The second reason is strategic and doctrinal in nature. Guerrilla armies possess military traditions that can be of considerable benefit to the creation of a new army. The innovation, flexibility and creativity that characterise most guerrilla struggles are essential doctrinal ingredients for those armies that are trying to adapt to the challenges of mobile warfare for instance. The strategic dimensions of guerrilla warfare with its emphasis on mobilisation of the people and dispersion of own and enemy forces can constitute an important component of a country's national defensive strategy.

The considerable legitimacy that accrues to popular liberation armies can be of immense benefit in constructing a new national defence force. The high levels of legitimacy accruing to such armies can play an invaluable role in stabilising civil-military relations and legitimising the defence force in the eyes of the populace. Guerrilla armies also contain a strong intellectual tradition that can be of benefit to those national armies grappling with new military roles and tasks in which an increased premium is placed upon intellectual capability and professional adaptability.

In light of the above, the aim of this monograph is essentially twofold. It strives, first, to compare the guerrilla struggles of two South African guerrilla armies, namely the Boer guerrilla fighters during and after the cessation of the Boer War in 1902 and the army of the African National Congress, MK ('Spear of the nation'), during and after the cessation of the armed struggle in 1990. It seeks

to examine the nature of these guerrilla armies, their efficacy, their traditions and the relationship of their military objectives to their political objectives.

From this comparison it strives to extrapolate 'lessons learned' on the conduct of South African guerrilla wars in general and to explore the extent to which the guerrilla traditions and experiences of both armies impacted upon the development of the South African defence strategies, military doctrines and organisational culture of the new modern national defence forces in particular.

CHAPTER 2

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT AND THE TRANSITION TO WAR

Anti-Colonial Struggles

Fighting for the right of self-determination: The Boer republics and the South African war

The armed struggles waged by the Boer republics and the African National Congress (ANC) in their quests to preserve or attain their political independence were vastly different in terms of time and context. The Boer trekkers (later mythologised as the 'Voortrekkers') left the Cape to establish their various republics for a mixture of motives. Conventionally their departure from the Cape has been portrayed as being culturally driven – an irrepressible desire to rid themselves of the pervasive political, cultural and linguistic hegemony of the newly established British presence in the Cape Colony.

In reality, the motives for the departure of the Voortrekkers were complex and related as much to the incremental abolition of slavery in the colony from 1807 onwards and the growing social stratification within the settler population, as they did to their real desire to establish a degree of political and cultural autonomy for themselves. Neither were the Boers as homogenous a community as has often been portrayed in the 'official' Afrikaner histories of the nineteenth century. This was most vividly reflected in the establishment of the republics themselves (some, such as the republics of Stellaland, Goosen, Lydenburg and Natalia, being of short-lived duration) and the political and personal differences within the successful Boer republics (the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) and the Orange Free State (OFS)).

Once established, however, the Boer republics sought to maintain their independence through the conquest of local African polities, the forging of a series of tactical alliances with African kingdoms in the hinterland or through endeavours to seek a political accommodation with the more powerful military presences on the borders of their newly established republics (the Zulu Kingdom and the British colonial presence in the Cape and Natal for example).¹

The incremental slide into the Boer War² at the end of the nineteenth century was neither inevitable nor was it necessarily desired by all Boer and British players. The British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, initially sought

to avert war with the Boer republics in general (unlike the more militant approach preferred by both Rhodes and Milner) and the ZAR in particular (the latter because of its newly discovered wealth). In preference Chamberlain advocated a federation of South African provinces within which the Boer republics could even maintain a semblance of republican status – subject to their acknowledgement of the overarching suzerainty of the British Empire in the region.³

Neither were the British driven by the more grandiose motives of other imperial powers. They did not seek to assimilate the Boers in the same sense that the French sought to acculturate their colonial subjects. Their motives were largely economic, they preferred to exercise political control in collaboration with the indigenous white elites, and they sought to replace the rustic and somewhat shambolic ZAR state with an administration that was more conducive to the demands of a modern mining industry. They were also concerned with controlling the high levels of corruption, venality and nepotism that characterised both bureaucratic and business practice within the ZAR – a task which Jan Smuts as the State Attorney had sought to confront within the police in particular.⁴

The Boer republics, for their part, and despite the provocation of the Jameson Raid, sought a political accommodation with the British and conceded valuable political space – particularly around the question of the Uitlander franchise. It was ultimately President Kruger's refusal to accede to Britain's demand for suzerainty that precipitated the ZAR's ultimatum on 9 October 1899 that initiated the war. Bound by a mutual defence treaty, and highly reluctant to enter the war, the OFS joined forces with the ZAR and entered the war on 11 October 1899.

The Boer War was an anti-colonial struggle predicated on the right of the Boer republics, as modern states and legal sovereign entities, to manage their political affairs independently and according to their own constitutional and political requirements. It was similar to the anti-colonial struggles waged against the white settlers, both Boer and British, by the Basotho, Zulu, Bapedi and Batswana polities – although the latter did not possess the formal veneer of state sovereignty as codified in various legal and juridical arrangements.⁵

Yet the Boer War was an anti-colonial struggle of a profoundly contradictory type. For while the struggle of the Boers was a fight to affirm the birthright and right to self-determination of the embryonic Afrikaner 'nation', it was a war fought by a people who had, in varying degrees, sought to deprive other nations of their own right to self-determination. Indeed, this struggle

for self-determination was not unique at the time and occurred within the context of the Mfecane, the massive demographic dislocations caused to the various black African polities within South Africa as a result of a host of political, economic, and environmental factors. Other African kingdoms in the nineteenth century were also seeking, through a combination of strategies remarkably similar to those of the Boers, to assert and maintain their own political independence.

The national content of the anti-colonial struggle of the Boer War was, thus, exceedingly narrow and was itself a national identity that was predicated on the exclusion of all black South Africans and most non-Boer white South Africans (most notably the British and the Portuguese) from its orbit. Although certainly less hegemonic and somewhat more benign (in a quasi-feudal sense) than the colonial practices of the British themselves, the Boer War was indeed an anti-colonial struggle of a special type that was significantly different in both political context and inclusivity from that of the ANC and MK in the twentieth century.

From passive resistance to armed struggle: Towards a non-racial and democratic South Africa

Although the end of the Boer War was to be characterised by considerable bitterness and resentment from the Boer side, it was, ten years later, to provide the basis for a rapprochement between Boer and Britons. In an exercise of supreme pragmatism, Boer and British leaders established the Union of South Africa, whereby both ethnic groups agreed to govern South Africa to their mutual interest and advantage. Most Africans, coloureds and Indians were excluded from this political arrangement (apart from a small number who were eligible for the qualified franchise in the Cape Province) and it was against this backdrop that the first rumblings of mass-based urban resistance to racial segregation and political exclusion occurred.

Although a number of political groupings claiming to represent disenfranchised South Africans were to emerge in the early twentieth century, the ANC, the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA, later to be known as the South African Communist Party) and the independent trade union movement were to be the most influential and effective among black South Africans.⁶ The first five decades of political resistance against Smut's initial policy of segregation and, after 1948, the National Party's (NP) policy of apartheid, however, were to be characterised by their non-violent nature (although many of the political campaigns in the 1940s and the 1950s were to become manifestly militant in nature).

The early ANC, founded in 1912, represented an amalgam of social and political interests (its founding members were largely drawn from religious quarters, professional classes and traditional leaders), non-violent strategies (passive resistance, strikes and deputations to the South African government and the colonial authorities) and a moderate political ethos (mainly a combination of liberal-democratic ideals, Christian values, the principles of *ubuntu* and the influence of *satyagraha* on its moral values and political strategies).

The growing institutionalisation of both segregation and apartheid (the passing of the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts, the removal of African and coloured votes from the voters' roll, the banning of the Communist Party, and the approval of a battery of repressive legislation by the incoming NP in the post-1948 period) witnessed the emergence of a more militant tradition in South African resistance politics in general and the ANC in particular. Greatly influenced by the experiences of hundreds of thousands of South Africans in World War II (where soldiers had been exposed to the ideals of democracy and socialism), the emergence of a militant Youth League within the ANC from the late 1940s onwards, the successful organisation of the 1944 bus strike and the 1946 mineworkers strike, and the growing grassroots collaboration between the ANC, the Communist Party and supportive democratic organisations such as the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the strategies of the ANC were to shift in terms of scope and content in the 1950s.

Although the ANC continued to eschew violence in the conduct of its mass action campaigns, the initiation of the Defiance Campaign in 1952 was significant in two respects. First, the scope of the protests on a national level outrivalled anything that the ANC had proved capable of organising since its inception in 1912. Planned in conjunction with the SAIC (by this stage, a seasoned practitioner of *satyagraha*⁷), the Defiance Campaign sought to mobilise as wide a spectrum of national opinion as possible against the NP's incremental institution of unjust apartheid laws. Protests occurred across the breadth of the country, covering all major urban areas and extending deep into the rural heartlands of the Northern Cape, the Orange Free State, the Eastern Transvaal and Natal. What was significant about the campaign was the extent to which it proved capable of interacting with and organising support from other non-congress quarters: the Torch Commando and elements within the white parliamentary opposition, for example.

Second, the Defiance Campaign was significant in that it provided a compelling example of how the principles of non-racialism could be applied in practice. White, coloured and Indian South Africans were not only arrested for defying the plethora of discriminatory national laws and municipal by-laws, they

also played a central role in the organisation of the campaign itself. It was this emerging tradition of non-racialism that was to find its expression in the creation of new resistance organisations such as the Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People's Organisation in 1952/53. These organisations were to form themselves into the 'Congress Alliance' in 1954 and, in 1955, were to convene a Congress of the People, on which occasion the Freedom Charter, the lodestar of the ANC, was adopted.

The politics of the 1950s were to provide a critical crucible within which the later political-military strategy of the ANC was to be forged. This was reflected in the guiding principles of the ANC, the Freedom Charter:

The people shall govern. Every man and women shall have the right to vote and to stand for election to all bodies which make laws. All national groups shall have equal rights. The people shall share in the country's wealth. The land shall be shared among those who work it. All shall have equal rights before the law. All shall enjoy equal human rights. There shall be work and security. The doors of learning and culture shall be opened. There shall be houses, security and comfort. There shall be peace and friendship.⁸

The final decision to embark on an armed struggle by the ANC was not reached easily by the Congress Alliance, nor was it a strategy that necessarily enjoyed the support of all sectors of the alliance itself. It was the perceived limitations of previous peaceful protest, the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, the intransigence displayed by the regime in declaring the white republic in 1961 and the banning of the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in the same year that led to the formation of MK.

Opinions were divided on the moral and practical viability of initiating an armed struggle against the South African state and, for these reasons, the birth of MK was initially not specifically linked to the ANC (in its founding speeches it proclaimed itself a people's army at the disposal of the South African masses). On the evening of 16 December 1961, a series of explosions rocked all major centres in South Africa. Although little structural damage was caused (the explosives were of a rudimentary nature, and no one was injured or killed) these explosions marked the birth of MK. The motivation for creating MK was boldly stated in the various MK manifestos distributed at the time:

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has come to South Africa. We shall

not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom ...⁹

Although this was not a formal declaration of war, and despite the restrained nature of the initial operations characterising the initiation of the armed struggle, the launch of MK marked the initiation of a de facto war between the ANC alliance, MK and the South African government.

Notes

- 1 Although the Khoi were not to offer the same level and intensity of resistance to colonial occupation that characterised the later Frontier Wars in the Eastern Cape and the Anglo-Zulu wars in Natal, they did engage the Dutch colonists on at least three significant occasions. These were the Hottentot Wars of 1657 and 1673 and the ongoing ten-year guerrilla campaign fought by Chief Gonnema before he was driven into the mountains by the Dutch. All wars ended, ultimately, in defeat.
- 2 A variety of terms have been used to describe the Boer War, ranging from the simple shorthand reference of the 'Boer War' to 'The Anglo-Boer War', 'The South African War' and, more recently during the centenary commemorations 'The Anglo-Boer, South African War'. This monograph acknowledges the context within which these redefinitions have been phrased and sees the war as being of a much wider significance and impact than simply a conflict between the Boer and British 'races', but prefers to use the term 'Boer War' for simplicity and focus.
- 3 P Trew, *The Boer War generals*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1999, pp 1–5.
- 4 See R Mostyn Cleaver's book *The war letters of an English burgher*, Protea Book House, Pretoria, 2000, for an excellent overview of his and Jan Smuts' attempts to tackle the pervasive corruption within the ZAR administration in general and the ZAR police in particular (the latter being particularly pronounced in relation to the liquor trade).
- 5 See J Guy's book *The destruction of the Zulu kingdom*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1982, for an excellent account of this period.
- 6 A number of political groupings of different political leanings and social composition emerged during this period including the ANC, the South African Communist Party, the Non-European Unity Movement, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union. The last of the traditional military uprisings against colonial rule was the Bambatha Rebellion in 1906 – an insurrection suppressed by both British and South African police and military personnel at the time. The earliest mass-based resistance of a non-military nature was Gandhi's passive

resistance campaign against pass laws in the Transvaal, followed, in time, by the anti-pass-pass demonstrations of 1913, and the mineworkers' strikes of the 1910s and 1920s.

- 7 The policy of nonviolent resistance initiated in India by Mahatma Gandhi as a means of pressing for political reform.
- 8 Quoted in E Roux's *Time longer than rope: The black man's struggle for freedom in South Africa*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, USA, 1978, p 399.
- 9 *Umkhonto we Sizwe 30th Anniversary Souvenir Magazine*, Shell House, Bree Street, Johannesburg, 1991.

CHAPTER 3
THE MILITARY STRATEGY AND
DOCTRINE OF THE BOER REPUBLICS
AND UMKHONTO WE SIZWE

Two Types of People's War

Ourselves to know:

The Boer armies and the guerrilla phase of the Boer War¹

Modern strategy is a product of the increasing sophistication of war in its diverse organisational, operational, tactical, technological and doctrinal aspects. The formulation of military strategy and the discipline of strategic studies in the twentieth century has, as a result, benefited enormously from the intellectual and academic developments of the last five decades in particular. One must therefore avoid being over-prescriptive in an assessment of the strategies adopted by armies in previous centuries and, in this case, the Boer armies in particular.²

While the ANC benefited from the intellectual, political and military currents of twentieth-century strategic thinking, the Boers tended to predicate their strategies, when such strategies were formally stated, on cultural assumptions, previous military practice, common sense and sheer intuition. It is difficult to discern in the first phase of the Boer War, and indeed in the preparations for the war itself, the existence of any detailed and integrated politico-military strategy akin to those national security strategies so common to modern states.

The assumption upon which Boer political-military strategy rested was their intention to deter any would-be aggression against the republics primarily through defensive means. This strategy was not necessarily codified in any specific form, but was more a cultural assumption, based on the history of the Boer republics themselves and the nature of the institutions entrusted with the task of ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Boer republics. Indeed the outbreak of the Boer War witnessed a degree of dissonance and disagreement within the political leadership of the republics and the command echelons of the armed forces over the desired military strategy for the Boer war effort.

From the beginning of the conflict, more junior Boer generals such as General Christiaan de Wet and some of the younger officers such as Jan Smuts

favoured the adoption of a light, highly mobile approach to waging war using the tradition of the 'flying commandos' developed by the Boers in their previous military conflicts. They also advocated the strategy of taking the war deep into Britain's Cape and Natal colonies and striving, if possible, to seize the coastal ports – thereby preventing Britain from replenishing its forces from within these colonies.

These sentiments were not to be shared by the commandant-general of the ZAR, Piet Joubert, who advocated a more defensive approach to the war, best illustrated by the positional tactics adopted in the sieges of Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley. This strategy was shared, in varying degrees, and for a number of political and other considerations, by the older Boer generals and was to result in the adoption, in the first phase of the Boer War, of a defensive strategy that was to greatly squander Boer opportunities, resources, manpower and morale and to allow the British to supplement their forces and launch a vigorous counter-offensive against the Boer forces.

Much of this strategic myopia had to do with the personality of Commandant-General Joubert himself. A man of minor military accomplishments, he was not really taken seriously by the younger or more capable Boer officers and, by all accounts, not even by the rank-and-file themselves. Even his entourage of staff officers was disparagingly referred to as the 'royal family' because of their family connections with the commandant-general, an indication of the nepotism that was prominent within the pre-Boer War military culture.³ His statement on why the Boers should not take Ladysmith and press on towards the coast once the Brits were routed (an indication of strategic ineptitude now immortalised in the annals of military short-sightedness) was "When God holds out a finger, don't take the whole hand."⁴

Despite the initial success of Boer defensive actions at Elandslaagte, Dundee, Modderspruit, Colenso, Stormberg, Modder Rivier, Magersfontein and the few offensive actions at Ladysmith, Spioenkop and the deep interdictions into the Cape Colony, the British forces were to rapidly regroup and deliver telling blows against the Boer armies. Smuts' words are cogent:

But however good the Boers were as raw fighting material, their organization was too loose and ineffective, and their officers too inexperienced and in many glaring cases incompetent, to make a resort to offensive tactics possible. The really capable organizers and leaders in the Boer armies were only slowly coming to the front and many of them had started from the very lowest grades in the organization and were only slowly, and then in spite of gross

prejudice and conservative stupidity, moving to more responsible positions ... One of the cardinal mistakes of the Boer plan of campaign was the concentration of all possible forces from all possible parts in defensive positions to stop or delay the advance of the main force of the enemy.⁵

The fall of Pretoria was to signal a low point in Boer morale as Smuts so tellingly observed:

They had found the Commandant-General and the Big War Councils powerless to punish high officers who had committed the most criminal blunders and who continued in their commands only to commit more fatal blunders still. They had lost faith in their organization, they had lost faith in most of their officers, and – what was ugliest – they had lost faith in themselves.⁶

Yet, ironically, it was the failure of this period that was to inspire the Boer fighters to resort to a mode of fighting with which they were most accustomed and which was to deliver devastating blows against the British for the forthcoming two years. The second phase of the Boer War, the guerrilla phase, after the fall of Johannesburg and Pretoria, was to unlock much greater creative military potential within the Boer military campaigns. Although much of this is still inadequately documented – a lack of record that also plagues attempts to reconstruct MK's more recent historical record – the period from December 1900 to May 1902 saw the Boer forces successfully waging a vigorous guerrilla campaign against the British forces which, despite their ultimate defeat, witnessed a creative utilisation of tactics, terrain and leadership.⁷

Disenthralled of the concepts of positional warfare and the quasi-conventional tactics that had plagued their earlier defensive strategy, imbued with a spirit of determination, and free of the inept leadership that had hampered the earlier part of the war, the remaining Boer commandos increasingly adopted an offensive strategy towards the prosecution of the war. Greater emphasis was placed on self-sufficiency in the field and mobility. Despite the continued retention of wagons in the columns – much to the chagrin of General de Wet – De la Rey, De Wet, Botha and Smuts were to hone the art of manoeuvre to a fine operational art during this period:

To oppose successfully such bodies of men as our burghers had to meet during the war demanded rapidity of action more than anything else. We had to become quick at fighting, quick at reconnoitring, quick, if it became necessary, at flying!⁸

Commandos were increasingly deployed in their own areas. Flying commandos were used to great effect (particularly in the Orange Free State). In some cases the commandos were made larger (thereby expediting the removal of ineffectual generals from the ranks of the combatants) and a generation of younger generals moved to the fore during this period.⁹

Commandos became less concerned with occupying ground and permanently seizing positions than with harassing the enemy, over-extending their logistical and communication lines and diverting their forces away from the main theatres of operation and the affected civilian populations in both the OFS and the ZAR (this being the intention behind the invasions into the Cape Colony and Natal during the second period of the war). One of the cardinal principles of war followed by the Boers was to fall back once faced by overwhelming force:

There is one law of nature ... one iron law which the Boers never forgot ... the answer to overwhelming force is greater mobility.¹⁰

Although the Boers possessed the weapons with which to fight the war, indeed the 7 mm Mauser used by the Boers was most probably a more effective weapon than the 7.7 mm British Lee-Enfields and Lee-Enfields, their ammunition rapidly dwindled once the guerrilla campaign began. The Boers compensated for this by capturing large quantities of British rifles and ammunition to such an extent that the British rifles gradually replaced the Mauser as the Boer weapon of combat.¹¹

Food increasingly became a problem as the guerrilla phase of the war continued – a situation exacerbated by Kitchener's 'scorched earth' policy and the institution of the concentration camps. The Boers who invaded the Cape Colony had relatively easy access to provisions from the local Dutch, while the Boer Army¹² tightened its hold on the countryside.

Formal doctrine, those codified texts that determine the way in which the military conducts its activities, was not particularly well developed in the Boer military culture. The manner in which the Boers fought relied more on their own environmental skills (their understanding of the terrain, their outstanding musketry abilities and their equestrian prowess) and their past military experience than it did on anything 'learned' in a formal military environment. Indeed this is by no means an unusual phenomenon and any study of the behaviour of modern armies reveals that:

Ultimately, an army's behaviour in battle will almost certainly be more of a reflection of its character or culture than of the contents of its doctrine

manuals. And if that culture – or mind set, if you will – is formed more by experience than by books, then those who would attempt to modify an army's behaviour need to think beyond doctrine manuals.¹³

The doctrines of the Boer armies, however, were not entirely laissez-faire and implicit. Shortly after their formation in 1881, the *Transvaal Staats Artillerie* (TSA) made a concerted effort to develop their own doctrines. These were based largely on the artillery doctrine of both the Netherlands, where a number of TSA officers had received their training, and Germany (the bulk of the initial officers in the TSA were of Dutch, German and Austro-Hungarian origin).¹⁴

Prior to the commencement of the Boer War, artillery officers were able to indigenise much of this training through their involvement in various campaigns against African kingdoms in the ZAR. Two important lessons were learned in this process, which were to be put to great effect in the Boer War and which directly contributed to a revision of British artillery doctrine afterwards. The first was to disperse artillery batteries rather than cluster them in larger batteries – thereby maximising the range of firepower at one's disposal. The second was to conceal artillery batteries and only open fire once it was absolutely essential to do so.

The various Boer generals endeavoured throughout the guerrilla phase of the Boer War to maintain a semblance of political and military unity in the application of their guerrilla strategies. Regular contact was maintained with the government-in-exile in the Eastern Transvaal and any decisions on the initiation of new campaigns were first vetted with this political leadership. Yet lack of resources, an under-developed politico-military strategy and the dispersed nature of Boer forces led to contradictions, strategic gaps and inconsistencies in the application of this strategy. A senior Russian officer deployed with the Boer forces during the last phase of guerrilla operations was to express incredulity:

It is hard to believe that with the communications line being as long as 170 *verstas* [an obsolete Russian unit of measurement; a *versta* was equal to roughly 1 kilometre] and the population being undoubtedly hostile to the British marching through the country, the telegraph links with the rear have not been disturbed a single time. Such enemy actions enable the British to spend very few forces for the protection of the rear.¹⁵

Yet, what the Boers did not realise at the time was that their guerrilla experience was to provide a major impetus for the development of military

strategy and doctrine in the twentieth century. Their use of mobility and manoeuvre was to impress generations of military officers and to concretely influence the development of doctrines for mobile and manoeuvre warfare in the armed forces of Europe (most notably the UK and Germany), for reconnaissance and special forces regiments,¹⁶ and for the conduct of guerrilla campaigns throughout the world.

Despite the deprivations to which the Boer forces were subjected during the guerrilla phase, the military capacity of their forces to harass, contain and inflict serious defeats on a vastly superior and better resourced military force was impressive. At the beginning of the Boer War the Boers possessed some 54,000 soldiers (both regular artillery personnel and volunteer commandos), 1,400 uniformed police and a few thousand international volunteers (2,000–2,500 personnel). By the end of the war, the Boer forces had been reduced to some 20,000 personnel, whereas British forces deployed in the country exceeded 400,000!¹⁷

The conclusion of the Boer War represented a pyrrhic victory for the British Empire in South Africa. The costs of the war itself were appalling: the British lost almost 8,000 men and 20,000 were wounded; the Boers lost 4,000 men and an unknown number were wounded. In addition, 116,000 black South Africans were kept in concentration camps, of whom 16,000 or more perished, while 115,000 Boers had been kept in concentration camps, of whom 27,027 perished.¹⁸

From passive resistance to insurrection: The development of MK strategy and doctrine from 1961 to 1994

Opinions within the Congress Alliance were divided on the moral and practical viability of initiating an armed struggle against the South African state. The inherent religiosity of the Congress Alliance and its fundamentally humanist nature saw great reluctance by many ANC members to embrace a strategy that was starkly different from previous alliance strategies and that raised as many moral dilemmas as armed struggle.

For these reasons, the birth of MK was initially not specifically linked to the ANC. In its founding speeches it proclaimed itself a people's army at the disposal of the South African masses.¹⁹ Despite these reservations, however, it was clear that the mood of many black South Africans was inclining in the direction of violent struggle, particularly as the severity of state repression increased.

Militarily, these operations were characterised by their simplicity. Homemade explosives were used, and much of the expertise was provided by World War II veterans who now found themselves within the ranks of MK (the late Jack Hodgson playing a prominent role). Anticipating coercive measures from the state, MK despatched a number of senior commanders abroad to facilitate the establishment of an external infrastructure and secure advanced training for MK combatants. Mandela himself was to feature prominently in these efforts and was himself to receive military training in Algeria and Ethiopia between 1961 and 1962.

The initial phase of armed struggle was characterised by an emphasis on sabotage. The High Command of MK, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, did not believe that sabotage in itself would bring the government to 'its senses' and maintained that even 'at this late hour' the prospects of peaceful settlement should not be ruled out. The political rationale for this approach was exemplified by the last serving MK chief of staff, the late Chris Hani, when he stated:

At its inception the High Command decided on selective sabotage as the form armed resistance would take. All efforts were made to avoid the loss of human life. We clearly stated that the aim of the campaign was to bring the government to its senses before it was too late and save our country from going down the path of war which would leave scars very difficult to heal and further polarize South African society.²⁰

Sabotage operations continued sporadically for more than a year after the inception of MK. Included among the targets were pass offices, power pylons and police stations. Most MK personnel lacked, at the beginning, specialised training in covert operations and many of these operations were, understandably, characterised by a certain degree of amateurishness. A number of MK saboteurs and would-be saboteurs were captured and imprisoned as a result.

The state was initially caught off-guard by the sabotage campaign and hastily responded on a number of levels, passing a number of laws aimed at containing and crushing the resistance. The General Law Amendment Act (also known as the Sabotage Act) provided for indefinite detention without trial. The Unlawful Organizations Act provided for banning of specified organisations if the Minister of Justice deemed fit.²¹ The ANC had anticipated these developments and in 1961 despatched Oliver Reginald Tambo (later to become the president of the ANC after Mandela's arrest and imprisonment)

to establish a mission in exile with the twofold purpose of mobilising international support for the struggle and securing military training facilities for MK abroad.

Several key cultural, political and institutional features characterised the birth of the new guerrilla army, many of which were to exert a profound influence on the reprofessionalisation of the armed forces and the stabilisation of civil-military relations in the post-1994 period. These features were all, in essence, a reflection of the political culture and normative predisposition of the Congress Alliance itself. First, the activities of MK were situated solidly within the tradition of subservience to the political and civil authority of the ANC. This was reflected on a number of political and practical levels. MK remained the instrument of the liberation movement and was driven by its political programmes (this was to assume a more concrete expression with the formal linking of MK to the ANC at the Lobatse conference in 1963). Political policy and strategy would determine MK's military strategy and the armed struggle was not an end in itself, but would strive to complement the mass political struggle.

Second, a strong element of moral restraint characterised MK's initial campaigns. This restraint was the product of the influence of two factors: the strong ethos within the Congress Alliance; and the realisation that the population had to be politically and psychologically prepared to support an armed struggle. Third, a distinguishing feature of MK was its non-racial ideology as reflected in the multi-racial and multi-ethnic nature of its echelons, hierarchy and its rank-and-file membership. Unlike any previous armed formation in South African history, MK was representative of South Africa's diverse population in both its institutional make-up and its culture and traditions.

Somewhat predictably, the sabotage campaign did not 'bring government to its senses' and waves of arrests saw many prominent ANC members being arrested, prosecuted and jailed. Rather than seek dialogue, the state began to professionalise both its intelligence operations and its counter-insurgency strategies in the light of these developments. A Directorate of Military Intelligence was established in 1960 and its officers were sent for advanced training in France, Germany, the UK and the USA.²² Some were to receive 'on-the-job' training in the conduct and pursuit of counter-insurgency campaigns (General Magnus Malan being attached the French Army in Algeria for this purpose).²³ Republican Intelligence (civilian intelligence) was formed in 1961, with its primary mission being the containment and crushing of the activities of both MK and the ANC. Specialised training in interrogation

and counter-intelligence techniques was provided to Republican Intelligence via the offices of France, Germany, the UK and the USA.

Recognising the necessity of moving to more sophisticated levels of guerrilla struggle, and acknowledging the need to devise a more complex guerrilla strategy, the ANC instructed a number of its senior members to study revolutionary warfare and theories of guerrilla struggle in more detail. Indeed, the intellectual environment within which the refinement of MK strategy occurred was infinitely more favourable than that which had faced the Boer armies at the time of their decision to launch the guerrilla phase of the Boer War.

Revolutionary struggles that integrated both mass political mobilisation and guerrilla strategies had been successfully waged in the Soviet Union (1917), the People's Republic of China (1949), and a number of socialist countries in Eastern Europe. Partisan resistance throughout Europe during World War II had left a rich legacy of underground work and guerrilla *modus operandi*. The campaigns that were being waged across the globe (Vietnam, Cuba and various Latin American countries) could draw from these experiences.

In developing their strategy of guerrilla warfare, the founders of MK had access to many texts from which they could gain insight. The writings of Lenin, Trotsky, Giap, Mao, Che Guevara, and the Boer War generals were among the first texts to be used.²⁴ MK commanders travelled abroad to the USSR, the GDR (German Democratic Republic) and China to acquire the necessary strategic, doctrinal and technical expertise with which to wage guerrilla warfare. The result of this process of strategic introspection was twofold.

First, it was to lead to the development of a sophisticated political-military strategy that sought to situate the military context of the struggle within the overall political objectives of national liberation. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon approach to doctrinal development – which sees a relatively clear-cut division between strategy and doctrine (and equates doctrine with the operational and technical aspects of war-fighting) – this approach was more consistent with the Soviet strategic and doctrinal tradition. This tradition did not stress the bifurcation between strategy and doctrine, but sought to emphasise the organic link between the two aspects, namely:

... political (sometimes socio-political or military-political) and military-technical. An understanding of the two aspects and their mutual relationship is fundamental to an understanding of the overall concept. These aspects convey an appreciation ... on various

key issues, including the nature of the political and military threat, the nature and essence of future war, and – flowing from these – changing priorities involving the composition, structure and training of the armed forces.²⁵

The political dimension of this strategy was to be articulated in such documents as the South African Communist Party's manifesto, 'The South African Road to Freedom', adopted by the party in 1962, in which the initial principles of the strategy of internal colonialism was to receive initial expression. The military components of the strategy were to be reflected more fully in the Manifesto of Umkhonto we Sizwe, which accompanied its launch on 16 December 1961.

Second, it was to lead to the development of Operation Mayibuye: a comprehensive plan designed to create and internalise the structures required for the successful prosecution of the armed struggle within South Africa. Operation Mayibuye had a threefold series of objectives. The first was to prepare an underground structure capable of ensuring the revolutionary overthrow of the state. The second was to provide for the military training of MK personnel, whether at home or abroad, so that MK would possess the capacity to confront the state militarily. The third was to ensure, via the ANC's external structures, that the necessary levels of international support accrued to the liberation struggle.

Very few of these goals were to be fully realised. Barely a year and a half after its formation, MK's High Command within the country was exposed at a farm outside Johannesburg, and virtually its entire command structure was arrested and detained. In the subsequent trial known as the Rivonia Trial, most of those arrested were sentenced to lengthy periods of imprisonment, while a few managed to escape. The rapidity with which the state responded to the emergence of MK reflected two pertinent weaknesses within its organisation, both of which had contributed to the arrest of the High Command and the effective neutralisation of MK activities within the country for the next decade.

The first was the lack of familiarity of the leadership with the basic tenets of underground work (most members were drawn from the tradition of the high-profile resistance campaigns of the 1950's. The second, related to the first, was the extent to which MK relied on the experience and leadership of publicly recognised activists, thereby facilitating the identification and monitoring of these senior commanders by the intelligence services of the South African government.

The post-Rivonia period saw the ANC concentrating on developing its external infrastructure and securing military facilities for the training of existing and prospective combatants. Initially training for the infant guerrilla army was provided by countries such as Algeria (where Mandela himself had received training during his underground period prior to his arrest), Tanzania and the Soviet Union. These training opportunities were to expand considerably in later years, with training being provided in virtually all the former socialist countries as well as in a range of African countries.

By 1964 MK-in-exile already possessed hundreds of trained soldiers available for deployment within South Africa, but was limited in its ability to do so by a number of problems. The first was the smashing of the internal High Command network referred to above. The second was the absence of friendly countries adjacent to South Africa. Unlike the Zimbabwean and Namibian struggles (which possessed the friendly borders of Mozambique, Angola and Zambia respectively), Southern Rhodesia, Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basutoland (Lesotho), Swaziland and Mozambique were either occupied by settler regimes or were too dependent on South Africa to challenge its hegemony in the region.

The effect of this regional configuration was threefold. First, it was to deny MK easy access to South Africa, and to complicate and over-extend its logistical and communications lines (a perennial problem for MK in the 1980s when its military activities within the country increased dramatically). Second, it was to retard the development of an internal underground capable of extending the armed struggle and taking it to qualitatively higher levels of development. Third, it was to lead to a partial demoralisation within MK ranks as highly motivated recruits were denied the opportunity of being deployed within the country.

The neutralisation of the MK High Command within the country was to lead to a series of operational reappraisals that ultimately, at the Morogoro Conference in 1969, led to a revision of its military strategy in general. In 1965 the ANC formed an alliance with the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and its military wing, the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA).

In the forthcoming two years both MK and ZIPRA did extensive reconnaissance within Rhodesia with the intention of launching a massive infiltration of ZIPRA and MK personnel into Rhodesia. On 30–31 July 1967 a large joint MK/ZIPRA detachment crossed the Zambezi river into Rhodesia. The intention behind the incursion had been for ZIPRA to establish itself within post-UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) Rhodesia and for the MK

contingent, known as the Luthuli Detachment, to traverse Rhodesia on its western flank, and to infiltrate South Africa across the Northern Transvaal borders.²⁶ The joint force was soon detected by the Rhodesian security forces and a series of pitched battles were to ensue in the Wankie and Sipolilo areas between 1967 and 1968. The MK/ZIPRA forces were routed, but only after Vorster had authorised the despatch of large numbers of South African Police (SAP) and South African Defence Force (SADF) personnel to assist the beleaguered Rhodesian forces in their campaign.

Undoubtedly one of the mistakes made by the ZIPRA and MK commanders in the planning of the Wankie campaign was to underestimate the importance of building a local power base among the people prior to entering into armed engagements with the enemy. Subjectivist accounts of armed struggle in which military actions provide the 'trigger' for mass mobilisation and insurrection were to be critiqued at the ANC's Morogoro Conference in 1969. The conference sought to achieve a higher level of integration between political and military activities (leading to the establishment of the Revolutionary Council), ensure better training of military personnel within MK, and establish a more effective political and military presence within South Africa. The strategy and tactics document that emerged from this conference reflected these concerns and acknowledged the critical importance of building a mass revolutionary base prior to launching a people's war.

Although military activities within South Africa were to remain at a low in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, a number of attempts were made to reconsolidate MK underground structures. Despite the high attrition rate that characterised many of these operations, some commanders remained undetected within the country for long periods (the late Chris Hani being a case in point). Externally, the focus of MK activities remained on the training of its personnel. A number of facilities were availed to the young army, including training in Algeria, Egypt, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Of these, the Soviet Union remained the most utilised and provided a range of advanced training opportunities, including intelligence, artillery, infantry, engineering and communications specialisation and staff college and academy training for selected volunteers.

The military culture that began emerging in MK in the 1960s and the early 1970s reflected a compound of influences and traditions. MK's politico-strategic parameters were informed by the ANC's strategy and political campaigns within the country and the traditions of people's war developing in the Third World. Its military-specific culture reflected an amalgam of Soviet-influenced military practices (drill, instructor and officer training, weapons techniques, etc) and classic guerrilla army traditions (a minimal rank structure

and an emphasis on self-sufficiency, innovation and mission-oriented command once deployed).

A number of factors coalesced in the mid-1970s to provide MK with more favourable operational circumstances than before. First, the release of some imprisoned MK commanders between 1975 and 1976 (Joe Gqabi, Andrew Masondo, Indres Naidoo and others) had served to popularise MK among a population increasingly fettered, and hence ignorant of the liberation movements, by the extreme censorship laws of the John Vorster administration. Second, the independence of Mozambique and Angola between 1974 and 1975 provided MK with access to training facilities and conduit opportunities through these countries that were considerably closer to home than before. Third, and most important, the 1976 uprisings saw thousands of students leaving South Africa to join MK. Known as the 'June 16th Detachment', their numbers and their experiences were to herald a new phase in MK's armed struggle.

A variety of military training programmes were initiated in newly established MK camps in Angola in the post-1976 period for MK personnel. In addition to basic training (drill, musketry, typography, tactics, political education), a number of shorter, specialised courses were offered in, among others, communications, intelligence, engineering and general 'crash' courses. Hundreds of young recruits were also sent abroad for advanced engineering, intelligence and artillery training. The political education component of MK training remained critical to the development of MK's corporate identity, and no training was complete without the inclusion of political training (as reflected in the importance of the commissar system within MK throughout its existence). By 1977 MK had begun to infiltrate hundreds of its combatants back into the country.

Despite the swelling of MK's ranks and its heightened ability to consolidate its underground network within the country (particularly in light of the students' extensive links with the community) the focus of MK work for the next few years was to remain essentially of a political nature. Recruits were instructed to contribute to the building of the ANC's underground capacity within the country and those who delegated military-specific tasks were instructed to confine their actions to acts of 'armed propaganda'. This meant, in effect, that MK actions sought to complement the various mass action campaigns within the country, and that only symbols of apartheid were to be targeted (police stations, railway lines, administrative institutions, etc).

The 1977–1980 period witnessed MK engaging in a range of operations that were to dramatically increase in the forthcoming years. Police stations were

attacked (Booyens, Soweto, Soekmekaar) and MK combatants were involved in physical clashes with the police in the rural areas (Derdepoort and Rustenberg for instance).²⁷ Arrests of MK personnel increased, and the SADF lengthened its period of whites-only national service to two years. MK bases in Angola were also targeted in South African Air Force raids and the frequent bombing of SWAPO bases was accompanied by the bombing of MK military facilities. Given the vulnerability of many MK bases in the south of Angola, it was decided to relocate most bases to the north of the country, particularly in those provinces that were accessible to Luanda. The major camps (apart from urban training facilities within Luanda itself) included Malanje, Quibaxe, Pango, Caculama, Funda and Fazenda.

The early 1980s saw MK continuing to focus on armed propaganda and political mobilisation, although the nature of MK operations was to become increasingly more sophisticated. In June 1980 an MK Special Operations unit hit the Sasol oil refinery complex, causing damage estimated at R66 million (South African intelligence personnel believed that it had been inspired by a similar operation by ZIPRA cadres against an oil refinery in Salisbury in 1979).²⁸ The operation had been well planned, had been executed by MK Special Operations personnel (known as the Solomon Mahlangu Detachment) and had demonstrated MK's capability to move beyond simpler acts of sabotage.

The year 1981 saw MK operations interfacing with the nationwide anti-Republic Day demonstrations and focusing on the sabotage of specific strategic installations. Targets sabotaged included major ESKOM power plants in the Transvaal, attacks on military bases in the rural areas, the sabotage of certain government buildings, and further attacks on the police. On 9 August 1981 MK Special Operations personnel launched a dramatic attack on the Voortrekkerhoogte military complex outside Pretoria. Five projectiles were fired from a 122 mm rocket launcher (the first time that artillery was used within South Africa by MK units) and a number of targets within the complex were struck (including a near-miss on the fuel depot within the complex).

The next year, 1982, witnessed a further range of MK actions, including a Special Operations attack on the Koeberg nuclear power plant outside Cape Town. Over a period of 12 hours, a series of explosions rocked the various security areas within the plant. In a further indication of MK's growing sophistication in the sphere of Special Operations, May 1983 saw a car bomb explode outside the headquarters of the South African Air Force and of Military Intelligence in Pretoria. Extensive structural damage was caused to both defence HQs, a number of military personnel were killed and a

number of civilians were also killed in the aftermath of the explosion. While this operation clearly indicated MK's capacity to operate deep within the country's urban areas, it reflected a shift away from symbolic military actions. As if to prepare people for this tactical shift, the ANC announced that it could not guarantee that civilians would not be injured in 'crossfire':

We further accepted that some civilians might be caught in the crossfire. Apartheid was definitely at war with our people and we understood that in a situation of war some casualties, though unintended, might be unavoidable. But we remained emphatic that we would not deliberately choose white civilians.²⁹

Criticisms of these operations, however, maintained that spectacular military operations of the Voortrekkerhoogte type were no substitute for the task of rooting the military underground in the local population. There were definite reasons for a shift to the special operations-type activities, however, and this was reflected in the fact that Special Operations, initially under the command of the late Joe Slovo, resided under the direct command of the president of the ANC, Oliver Reginald Tambo (with the commander of MK, Commander Joe Modise, retaining only nominal oversight over this division).³⁰

The Kabwe conference in Zambia in 1985 isolated three sets of problems confronting MK. The first was the urban focus of most of the military operations MK had conducted to date. The neglect of the countryside, it was argued, had allowed the state to counter-organise the population in these areas through the manipulation of tribal elders, the institution of homeland administrations, and the creation of SADF tribal battalions in these areas. The second problem was the belief that MK actions should move increasingly from those of armed propaganda to a position of people's war. This perspective was increasingly reflected in the strategic positions adopted within MK (the development of theoretical positions around the concept of the 'revolutionary army' for instance) and MK training (the emphasis on military combat work being a case in point).

The third was to redefine what constituted a legitimate military target. Particular emphasis was placed on the direct military engagement of SADF and SAP personnel and the 'taking of the war' into the white areas. This did not necessarily entail the targeting of the white population, but rather sought to ensure that strategic installations within the white areas were increasingly targeted and that those white communities who were involved in the SADF's area defence system (such as the rural farming community) were engaged on a military level. Typically this translated itself into a series of sub-strategies

whereby landmines were placed on roads in the border areas of the country, farmers who were known to be active within the SADF commando system were targeted by MK combatants, and military and police personnel and facilities within white suburbs were attacked by MK units.

Despite the declaration of a nationwide state of emergency in 1985, and the detention of tens of thousands of activists between 1985 and 1987, MK managed to maintain a steady increase in both its rural and urban operations. The strategy of taking the war into the white areas was partially realised as economic and strategic installations in white suburbs were attacked. Special Operations activities during this period included the detonation of a car bomb outside the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court (killing four policemen) in May 1987 and attacks on a number of military facilities within the mainly white areas.

Perhaps the most dramatic Special Operations exercise was launched in the rural areas in 1989. A large group of MK Special Operations personnel launched a sustained mortar attack on the South African Air Forces' secret 3 Satellite Radar Station at Klippan in the Western Transvaal. Although no SADF personnel were killed, a number were injured, and considerable structural damage was done to the radar facility itself. What was also significant with regard to MK capabilities in the late 1980s was the development of a relatively sophisticated MK Intelligence Division (MKIZA).

Despite the difficulties encountered by MK in organising and prosecuting the armed struggle within South Africa, it was to accumulate considerable combat experience within the frontline states. Apart from MK's experience of having engaged the Rhodesian Army and the SAP between 1967 and 1968, it was to participate in some of the major military campaigns in neighbouring countries. MK personnel participated with FRELIMO forces in the liberation of Tete Province in the early 1970s, and hundreds fought with ZIPRA forces in Zimbabwe throughout the 1970s (and were even on the verge of being integrated into the new Zimbabwe Defence Force in 1980 before South African Military Intelligence got wind of their intentions and prevented their inclusion).

Rallying to the assistance of their MPLA allies, in 1987 MK opened up a front in Angola against UNITA. Known as the 'Northern Front', it saw the extensive deployment of MK personnel against UNITA rebels in the area for more than two years. Responsibilities included patrols, convoys and attacks on UNITA positions. The equipment used reflected MK's growing sophistication in the field of weaponry, including artillery such as anti-aircraft artillery (ZGUs), 122 mm rocket launchers, and 81 mm and 60 mm mortars.

Dozens of MK personnel lost their lives in this conflict, and MK's involvement in the 'Northern Front' was only terminated by the relocation of its military personnel to Uganda and Tanzania in the light of agreements reached in the run-up to Namibian independence.

Although the subordination of MK to the political authority and direction of the ANC in this period was never seriously questioned, it is perhaps not unsurprising that MK developed a quasi-militaristic identity that sometimes resulted in differences of opinion between the MK leadership and those of the National Executive Committee (NEC).³¹ This was the twin product of the initial failure of the ANC to effectively integrate MK activities within South Africa into a corresponding political hierarchy and the physical separation of the bulk of MK combatants in the camps in Angola from the non-military rank and file in their various locations.

The period prior to the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 found MK undergoing a profound re-examination of its roles, missions and capabilities. This reassessment had been a long time in the making and had been reflected, in varying degrees, in the Morogoro Conference, the Kabwe Conference and the restructuring of the ANC in 1983. An observation by Ronnie Kasrils in the late 1980s reflects this strategic thrust behind this re-evaluation:

It is certainly true that the blows MK has delivered to the enemy, and the heroic sacrifices of our combatants, have played a vital role in inspiring our people and popularizing the ANC. Yet despite the tremendous upsurge of mass resistance over the past three years we were not able to take full advantage of the favourable conditions that materialized. We were unable to deploy sufficient forces at home; our cadres still found big problems in basing themselves amongst our people; our underground failed to grow sufficiently ... the incredible mass resistance and strikes were consequently not sufficiently reinforced by armed struggle.³²

Acknowledging that MK's major weakness was that it was primarily an army-in-exile, Kasrils outlined the necessity of building the 'revolutionary army' (a concept that reflected the influence of Leninist teachings on underground work, Soviet experiences of establishing clandestine units and classic guerrilla theories). The building of the revolutionary army involved three components. The first consisted of organised advanced detachments, which constituted the core of this army. These detachments consisted of guerrilla units in the countryside; underground combat units in the urban areas; and self-defence units based among the people. The latter were to become a reality, and a

problem within South Africa, particularly as political violence engulfed South Africa in the post-1990 period.

The second component was the revolutionary armed people: those advanced sectors of the population who, trained and armed, would fall under the command and control of the organised advanced detachments. The third component consisted of those units or individuals within the enemy's armed forces – whether soldiers or police – who had consciously sided with the revolutionary army. The entire process of creating the revolutionary army was known as 'military combat work' – the 'military' aspect referring to work within the enemy's armed forces, and the 'combat' aspect referring to the creation of the guerrilla units in their entirety.

The creation of the revolutionary army was only partially realised. The politics of transition pre-empted the emergence of those conditions that would have allowed its fuller realisation. There were, however, areas where aspects of this strategy were realised and these deserve individual mention. The first was undoubtedly Operation Vula: an operation that was a product of the attempts by the ANC leadership to remedy the organisational weaknesses that had been identified at successive ANC national conferences and strategy sessions. The ANC had undergone a wide-ranging organisational restructuring process since 1983 that had profound implications for both the organisation and activities of MK.

Most significantly, this took the form of a reorganisation of the ANC and MK's external and internal structures. Prior to 1983, ANC political structures and MK military structures operated separately and coordination of political and military activities, to the extent that it occurred, took place at a strategic level (the level of the Revolutionary Council) and not at an operational or tactical level (in the rear areas such as Angola; the forward areas such as Botswana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique; and the underground structures within South Africa). Although MK structures strove to harmonise their activities with those of the emerging mass resistance within South Africa, that was seldom achieved and MK units frequently engaged in military actions separate from and uncoordinated with those of the broader political struggle.

Attempts were made to rectify this situation, the most notable being the convening of a meeting of all regional front commander and commissars in Maputo in 1983. By 1986 the ANC political-military hierarchy had been substantially altered in organisational format and strategic direction. The most significant aspect had been the replacement of the Revolutionary Council by the Political Military Council (PMC), which controlled and integrated the

activities of the Internal Political Committee (responsible for the coordination of ANC political activities within South Africa), Military Headquarters (responsible for the coordination of operations, ordinance, intelligence and communications) and NAT (responsible for the coordination of civilian intelligence, counter-intelligence and security).

Political-military structures were replicated downwards at the level of external regional PMCs (Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Botswana and London), internal regional PMCs (Western Cape, Border region, and Northern Transvaal for example), area PMCs in such cities as Durban and Pretoria, and even local PMCs in some towns and villages. Some of these PMC structures worked exceedingly effectively, although others were to suffer from a degree of infiltration from the South African government's intelligence agencies (Swaziland and Botswana for example) and from often strained relations between the political and military components (for example the Zimbabwe PMC in the late 1980s).

It was against this background that Operation Vula was initiated in 1986. It involved the deployment of senior and middle-ranking MK personnel in exile back to South Africa to create and develop the internal underground structures within the country. Vula, until its untimely exposure in 1990, was to prove a successful example of how the internal underground could be strengthened and consolidated. It managed to infiltrate large quantities of weapons into the country; it maintained an effective intelligence network, managing, at various levels, to infiltrate both the Special Branch and the National Intelligence Service; and its communication system was considerably more effective than the cumbersome channels of the past, using, as it did, sophisticated computer links between South Africa and London.

The ANC's and MK's strategy of working within the enemy's armed forces admitted to varying levels of success. The ousting of the Stella Sigcau administration in the Transkei homeland in 1987 by disaffected Transkei Defence Force (TDF) officers and the expulsion of a clique of former Rhodesian officers who dominated the TDF ushered in an intriguing period in the history of the Eastern Cape. A young and charismatic officer, General Bantu Holomisa, assumed the reins of power within the homeland and, almost immediately, allowed prominent political prisoners to return from exile, unbanned the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and allowed MK personnel free transit and domicile within the territory.

Between 1987 and 1994 the Transkei was to become, in effect, a 'liberated' area governed by a de facto alliance between the Holomisa administration

and a well-established ANC/MK presence within the region. MK personnel worked closely with TDF personnel; joint training was done both within the Transkei and on courses conducted outside South Africa; and senior MK personnel from exile made use of the territory for the planning of their underground work within the rest of South Africa.

Dissatisfaction within sectors of the other homeland defence forces resulted in two coups d'état by the Ciskei Defence Force and the Venda Defence Force against their respective administrations and an abortive coup by the Bophuthatswana Defence Force against the Mangope administration. Although neither of the successful coups favoured the building of an ANC or MK underground within these other territories, it was clear that a degree of sympathy for MK existed within elements of the officer corps of the homeland defence forces.

The unbanning of the ANC and MK in February 1990 led to a de facto cease-fire emerging between MK and the security forces. This was formally ratified in August 1990 when MK announced that armed actions were to be suspended for the first time in 29 years. The suspension of the armed struggle took most MK members by surprise because little preparation had been done among MK cadres for this reality. Intensive political work among MK structures, however, ameliorated the effects of this initial confusion. As a result of the decision to suspend the armed struggle, MK activities were to assume a qualitatively different hue as peace-time preparations were made for MK's eventual integration into a future defence force.

Recognising the inevitability of integration, Military Headquarters (now located at Shell House in Johannesburg) despatched thousands of MK personnel abroad for conventional command and staff training. This training was provided at a number of locations. The first was the training of new recruits in the new MK camps in Uganda and Tanzania (relocated from Angola since the independence of Namibia). The second was the attendance by MK personnel at both junior and senior staff courses in such countries as Zimbabwe, Uganda, Ghana, India, Nigeria and even the UK.

The third was the training of MK personnel within the country, either in aspects of conventional and counter-insurgency warfare by the TDF or, at a more rudimentary level, the training of self defence units by MK personnel active within the country. The advantage of most of this training was its institutional and cultural compatibility with what appeared, at the time, to be the likely 'model' of a future defence force – a British-style defence force akin to those in other Commonwealth countries (a belief that has been confirmed

by the past six years of the integration process). But from 1993 onwards MK was to enter into possibly the most crucial stage of its history – its integration into the new South African National Defence Force.

Notes

- 1 Deneys Reitz provides a very practical example of the reluctance of white workers and rural poor to fight in the various battles of the Boer War in his book *Commando: A Boer journal of the Boer War*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1990, pp 48–50.
- 2 See D A Baldwin, National security studies: whence and whither, Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University, Paper presented at the 1993 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, 2–5 September 1993, for an excellent overview of the development of national security studies.
- 3 D Reitz, op cit, p 9 and 32.
- 4 Ibid, p 42.
- 5 J Smuts, *Memoirs of the Boer War*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg 1994, pp 69–72.
- 6 Ibid, p 52.
- 7 J D Harris, The other Vlakfontein: An action in the Anglo-Boer War: 3 July 1901, *Military History Journal* (incorporating *Museum Review*) 9 (6), December 1994.
- 8 R C de Wet, Three years war, *Scripta Africana*, May 1985, p 75.
- 9 See Smuts' account of this period, op cit, pp 69–81, as well as Trew, op cit, pp 154–155 for an overview of the initial phase of the guerrilla campaign.
- 10 T Pakenham, *Die Boere-oorlog*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1981, pp 348–349 (author's translation of quotation).
- 11 P Trew, *The Boer War generals*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1999, p 12.
- 12 Strictly speaking, 'commandos' or 'forces' is a more accurate term.
- 13 P Johnston, Doctrine is not enough: The effect of doctrine on the behaviour of armies, *Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly*, Autumn 2000, p 37.
- 14 See the review by D Friend, Training doctrines of the Staatsartillerie of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, *Military History Journal* (incorporating *Museum Review*), 11(5), June 2000.
- 15 G Shubin, Russian perceptions of the Boer and British armies: An introduction through Russian documents, *Scientia Militaria, South African Journal of Military Studies*, 30(1), 2000
- 16 Churchill was to bestow the title of 'commando' on the British Army's Special Forces units as a sign of respect for the Boer commandos that he had encountered in the Boer War.

- 17 P Meiring, *Smuts: The patriot*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1975, p 49.
- 18 J Ploeger, Die stigting en werksaamhede van die "Nederlandsch Bijstandsfonds Voor Zuid Afrika": 1900–1903', *Militaria* (professional journal of the SADF), 23(1),1993, p 35.
- 19 The late Joe Slovo, for example, observes that the former president of the ANC, Chief Albert Luthuli, never endorsed the transition to the armed struggle and neither, he speculates, would many of those in ANC leadership as a whole have done so if the decision had been presented to them in 1960, in J Slovo, *Slovo: The unfinished autobiography*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1995, p 147.
- 20 C Hani, ANC and armed struggle, Paper delivered at ANC/IDASA seminar on The Future of the Security and Defence in South Africa, Lusaka, 24–27 May 1990.
- 21 E Roux, *Time longer than rope: The black man's struggle for freedom in South Africa*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, USA, 1978, p 425.
- 22 S L le Grange, Die *Geskiedenis Van Die Hoof Van Staf Inligting* (The history of the Chief of Staff Intelligence), *Militaria*, 12(2), 1982.
- 23 D and J de Villiers, *PW*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1983.
- 24 Discussions with *mgwenya* (founding members of MK) reveal that the subsequent development of the 'M' Plan had been based on a systematic appreciation of the history, scope and content of guerrilla warfare.
- 25 B Menning, Basis of Soviet military doctrine, in *Soviet military doctrine from Lenin to Gorbachev: 1915 –1991*, edited by Willard Frank and Philip Gillette, Greenwood, London, 1992.
- 26 Many of these combatants are still alive and a number of them currently occupy senior positions in the new South African National Defence Force. They are affectionately known in MK as the *mgwenyas* ('crocodiles') and are generally regarded as the founding members of the organisation.
- 27 Many of these operations, to date, have not been chronicled and still exist, largely, within the oral traditions of MK. Unless timeously recorded, these experiences run the risk of being forgotten (particularly with the deaths of many older combatants in later years) or mythologised.
- 28 Author's own experience in the former South African Defence Force between 1978 and 1980.
- 29 Hani, op cit, p 3.
- 30 It has been maintained by former senior commanders within the Special Operations division that Special Operations activities in the post-1984 period accounted for almost 50 per cent of the military activities conducted by MK within the country. These statistics are hard to verify, but they do indicate the extent to which Special Operations was active within South Africa in the 1980s.

- 31 'Militarism' is a contested term that does not admit to easy delineation.
- 32 R Kasrils, The revolutionary army: Discussion article. Sechaba, September 1988. Available online at < <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/rkmk.html>> (Accessed August 2006.)

CHAPTER 4

THE INFLUENCE OF GUERRILLA ARMIES

The creation of modern national defence forces

The role of the Boer commandos in the creation of the Union Defence Force

With the termination of the Boer War, the military units of the former Boer republics effectively ceased to exist and were replaced with volunteer regiments modelled along the lines of those existent in the Cape Colony and Natal – forces that were woefully inadequate to deal with the demands of modern statehood.¹

The forces that had remained in the wake of the Boer War, therefore, were an eclectic combination of military forces. For almost a decade after the Boer War a variety of military structures existed in the four colonies (Transvaal, OFS, Natal and the Cape), ranging from standing indigenous permanent force regiments, British regular units and regular police units to volunteer regiments and local militias. Control was exercised by a provincial commander and little cooperation existed between the provincial military structures.²

Initially Boer participation in military structures between the end of the Boer War in 1902 and the creation of the UDF in 1912 was not extensive and was limited to the lower ranks. Most of the command echelons were occupied either by British regular officers or by South African English-speaking officers. Nevertheless, former Boer combatants continued to maintain their proficiency in musketry, equestrian skills and bush craft, and an informal commando network took root, once again, in the rural areas.

It was within this scenario that the question of an inter-colonial national defence force was first raised in 1906 after the crushing of the Bambatha uprising. This was deemed necessary, particularly in the light of the proposed withdrawal of imperial troops from the four colonies – an act that would have left only a small garrison of regular troops on the Cape Peninsula. It was under these circumstances that arguments for the creation of a ‘national’ (read Boer and English) defence force were most strongly mooted and undoubtedly exerted a strong influence over the reconciliation that was later to be effected in the ranks of the UDF.

Attempts to create a national defence force were beset by a host of immediate problems. The differences between the various defence structures were evident in the military cultures of the units. No standardisation of organisation, equipment, training, discipline, service conditions or tactics existed. It became increasingly evident to military and political authorities alike – whether British or Boer – that some form of unified defence command was required if political accommodation between the two major white groupings was to be reached.³

A number of exploratory steps were initiated. Military conferences were held in Johannesburg, Durban and Pretoria in 1907, 1908 and 1909 respectively. The 1907 conference was possibly the most significant, motivated as it was by the successful defeat of the Bambatha Rebellion and the concern of both Boer and Brit that such an incident should not reoccur. All conferences recognised the need for the creation a non-partisan, professional and national defence force consequent to the political union of the four colonies. The Durban conference in particular laid the basis for the creation of the UDF some four years later. It stressed the importance of uniformity and standardisation; the establishment of a Sandhurst-type military academy to socialise a future officer corps; the necessity of maintaining a small full-time complement of permanent force soldiers to staff and administer the UDF, and the creation of volunteer units to supplement this cadre (features that continue to characterise the SANDF today).⁴

Recognising the diversity of military traditions in the four colonies, and in an effort to facilitate unity between the military units and organisational cultures, General Lord Methuen, Supreme Commander of the Imperial Forces in South Africa, recommended the creation of the post of commandant-general and a non-partisan defence council to advise the Ministry of Defence and parliament. These exploratory contacts and conferences constituted the pre-integration phase of the UDF. They determined priorities, recommended appropriate measures and initiated a wide range of contacts from British, Boer and Imperial quarters regarding the nature of a proposed national defence force.⁵

In 1912 General Smuts, then Minister of Defence, established the UDF. In character and historical origin the UDF owed its origins to the system of burgher militias and colonial volunteer regiments that arose in South Africa after the arrival of the Dutch in the Cape in 1652. The philosophical basis of the Defence Act of 1912 stated that defence was the responsibility of every citizen – reflecting the influence of European ‘citizen-in-uniform’ (and particularly Swiss) theories on the constitutional planners in the Union

Government. Indeed, for decades the UDF was to remain an essentially militia-type organisation – a phenomenon reflected in the conscription patterns of the South African Defence Force (SADF). The Act provided for a small permanent force (consisting of five regiments of mounted riflemen), which would be commanded by a inspector general, an active citizen force, which constituted the bulk of the UDF’s manpower and would be commanded by a commandant general, and a school cadet system (the latter providing a form of ‘youth preparedness’ for later military mustering).

It was acknowledged by all parties that a future defence force would have to be politically non-partisan. General Lord Methuen reflected on this as a result of his ongoing discussions with General Smuts in connection with defence matters:

Politics would have no place in the South African Army and Mr Smuts knows perfectly well the curse this has been in other Colonial Forces.⁶

Smuts concurred with Lord General Methuen’s statement and made the trenchant observation that:

We want an organization that shall not be Boer or English, but a South African Army (sic) ... Do your duty in a broad national spirit. ⁷

On the organisational form of a future defence force – whether it be a small professional army or a conscript-based defence force – there was general agreement that the elected political representatives in parliament would have to decide on this thorny matter.

We are both agreed that there is but one sound and economical system which is that of compulsory service in some shape or form, but how far the 4 colonies will agree to the system is a question that cannot be decided until a Union Government is formed, and which having the courage of its opinion will without doubt carry South Africa with it.⁸

Smuts proceeded to utilise his considerable military expertise in determining the proposed nature of the UDF. He isolated four major issues. First, ethnic differences in the UDF had to be eliminated. Second, the UDF should utilise the military traditions of the white population in a manner constructive to the development of the UDF’s military capabilities and culture. Equestrian personnel should be drawn from the rural and mainly Afrikaans-speaking

districts (where such talents were well developed). Infantry complements should rely on the English-speaking South Africans in the towns and cities where a reasonably developed citizen force regimental system existed. Third, defence expenditure should not be a burden on the economy. Finally, the defence force should be small, efficient and well trained.

The Union Government – General Smuts, General Lord Methuen and Sir Roland Bourne (a feature of the first Defence Ministry was that Smuts's Defence Secretary, Sir Roland Bourne, had served as a staff officer with the British forces in the Cape during the Boer War) in particular – realised the importance of ensuring the impartiality of the integration process. To this end a Defence Council was legislated into existence on 22 June 1912 with the responsibility of overseeing the integration process in its entirety.

The composition of the Defence Council attempted to reflect the spirit of reconciliation that both Methuen and Smuts sought to accomplish among the various white ethnic groupings at the time. It was headed by the Minister of Defence (General Smuts) and included four highly respected senior officers who had served in the Boer War. Two veteran Boer generals – Generals Schalk Burger and Christian de Wet – and two veteran British officers – Colonel Charles Crew and Colonel Duncan Mackenzie – made up this complement. The emphasis in the Defence Council lay on equal representation and due respect being afforded to the military cultures and experiences of both British and Boer armies. This even-handedness was to be reflected in the creation of the UDF itself, though it was to prove short-lived in 1914 when both Boer generals on the Defence Council went into open revolt against the Smuts government.⁹

The institutional-legal separation of the national defence force from the body-politic of society proceeded apace with the enactment of the Defence Act of 1912. The Act of Union in 1910 had provided for the establishment of a defence portfolio, headed by Smuts himself, and the Defence Act of 1912 provided for the establishment of a national defence force in its entirety. On 1 July 1912 the posts of the Commandant-General Cape Defence Force, Commandant of the Militia (Natal) and Inspector of Volunteers (Transvaal) were subsumed under that of the UDF's headquarters in Pretoria.

The new defence force, however, reflected certain features peculiar to the political circumstances within which it was founded. No post of supreme commander was created in an attempt to avoid allegations of political bias – a decision that was to haunt the UDF in later years. The inspector-general of the UDF's Permanent Force was General Lukin – former commander

of the Cape Defence Force. The appointment of a British officer ensured the continuation of the traditions of the regular army, and provided the basis for a creation of a South African military 'professionalism'. The commandant-general of the UDF's Active Citizen Force was General Beyers – former assistant-commandant general of the armed forces of the *Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek*.¹⁰ Beyers's appointment was an attempt to provide a new defence force with a commander knowledgeable of and skilled in the tradition of a citizen force. This was imperative, given that the bulk of the UDF's part-time, volunteer manpower would be drawn from the mainly Afrikaans-speaking rural areas.

To facilitate the upgrading and standardisation of skills, it was recognised that a military college and an extensive training programme needed to be instituted. This upgrading and reorientation applied to all personnel, regardless of skills level. A number of steps were instituted. A military school was established at Bloemfontein under the leadership of General Aston to retrain and reorient all senior UDF personnel. A series of training courses were initiated for officers from both British and Boer armies. These included district staff officers' courses and infantry officers' courses. However, the most significant of these courses was the senior staff officers' course conducted at the college in 1912. Consisting of 25 British officers and 25 Boer officers (including such illustrious personalities as Generals Kemp, Brand and Maritz), all shared the feature that they had fought against one another in the Boer War. The reminiscences of an officer who participated in this course capture the poignancy of the event:

The ideas of the officers of regular and volunteer forces of the Cape and Natal differed vastly from those of the Commandants of the Commandos. The method adopted in the Union Defence Force created in 1912 allowed the older fighting commandants to take their place within the force alongside younger men who were fully conversant with organization on modern lines ...

... these officers had all served in the South African War. Nothing exceptional about this except that they had been bitter enemies. It is not possible to say that they were impressed by each other's methods but they did adapt themselves to changing conditions and laid the foundations of the South African Defence Force.¹¹

The following extract also provides an interesting account of a confidence-building measure initiated within the ranks of the UDF's officer corps:

It is interesting to note that on one such course in 1913 that Colonel Skinner, Commandant of the Military School, remarked on the sad fact that some of the officers present who had fought so valiantly in the Burgher Forces were without medal ribbons, whilst their brother officers, attending the course, who had served with the British Forces, were well decorated. Colonel Skinner subsequently made representations to Defence Headquarters to have the omission rectified and the Union Government then instituted the decoration 'Dekoratie Voor Trouwe Dienst, Anglo-Boer Oorlog' and 'Lint Voor Wonden' to cover the omission.¹²

The creation of the UDF, for all its historical uniqueness, was motivated by eminently pragmatic considerations. Much of the ideological and political 'cement' for this process of unification was provided by political and economic self-interest – the common determination by Boer and Brit to ensure the continued subjugation of South Africa's African peoples. Indeed, the history of the South African armed forces in the twentieth century has been remarkably similar in both tasking and design to those roles and tasks being foisted on armed forces in the late twentieth-century, post-modern world. Rarely, if ever, have they been used to repel external aggressors, and mostly their responsibilities have inclined in the direction of gendarmerie and counter-insurgency commitments and, on at least three occasions, rendering assistance to the country's allies in World War I, World War II and the Korean War.

A myriad logistical, administrative and political problems prevented the effective functioning of the UDF until the beginning of 1914 – problems that were to be uncannily similar to the problems encountered with the integration of the SADF and MK from 1994 onwards. The most important of these were the effects of the 1914 rebellion on the *esprit de corps* within the UDF and the extent to which the UDF almost disintegrated as a result of rival political tensions (but that is essentially another, much longer, story!).

The role of MK in creation of the South African National Defence Force

Although South Africa's negotiated settlement had been under discussion since early 1990, it was not until November 1993 that the armed forces of the two major political actors, the South African government and the ANC, became involved in direct and structured negotiations. The reasons for the 'lag' between the pace of the political and the military talks were, for the ANC and the South African government, largely identical. First, both parties

saw the retention of their armed forces as a form of 'security fallback' – a psychological and symbolic asset necessary to appease their often sceptical constituents. Second, the retention of their armed capabilities was seen, in very pragmatic terms, as a physical guarantee that could be utilised should the negotiation process falter.

The establishment of the Transitional Executive Council in late 1993 with its seven sub-councils – three of which had a broad security mandate in the form of the sub-councils on defence, intelligence and law and order – made the question of whether an integration process would take place an inevitability. The role of the Sub-Council on Defence was essentially political-strategic by nature. It was primarily responsible for maintaining oversight over the armed forces during the pre-election phase and for initiating the planning required to create a new, integrated national defence force.

The planning and staff responsibility for the management of the pre-integration planning process was delegated to a body known as the Joint Military Co-ordinating Council (JMCC), which fell under the authority of the Sub-Council on Defence. Although the JMCC did not possess the attributes of a formal command structure, it was to become responsible for the management of a strategic planning process whereby detailed plans for the creation of the new defence force were laid. The JMCC had two chairpersons who took the chair in rotation (the Chief of the SADF, General George Meiring, and the MK Chief of Staff, Siphiwe Nyanda).

To facilitate the planning process the JMCC established a range of working groups, depending on the functional area being addressed (personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, finances and non-cardinal issues) or the arm of service under consideration (Army, Air Force, Navy and Medical Service). Representatives on these committees were drawn from the statutory forces (the SADF and the TVBC armies) and from the non-statutory forces (MK and, at a later date in 1994, APLA) but, in reality, it was the SADF and MK who co-chaired these committees and/or dominated their proceedings.¹³

The SADF's mandate regarding their participation in the JMCC was to try to keep the structures, doctrines, training culture and organisational culture as intact as possible throughout the integration process. This was achieved for a number of inter-related reasons. First, the SADF's influence over the process was most manifest in its virtual monopoly of the formal staff skills and strategic management concepts, its keen sense of bureaucratic politics, and its familiarity with the practical, conceptual, strategic and doctrinal issues underpinning both the planning and the force design process.

Second, the SADF possessed the organisational, planning and budgetary capabilities that allowed them to prepare, in considerable detail, their various position papers well before their discussion with the formal structures of the JMCC. Invariably SADF positions came to dominate most of the proceedings of the JMCC.

Although MK's influence over the process was significantly enhanced by the political leverage possessed by the ANC on the national political stage – a leverage that allowed it to exact key political compromises on the ranking and placement of non-statutory force (NSF) officers, the management and oversight of the integration process in the post-election period and the participation of the British armed forces as neutral arbitrators overseeing the entire process – its ability to impact more decisively upon the process was curtailed by a range of organisational and historical problems.

MK's command and control structures within South Africa, at the time of the JMCC, were weak, with its cadres dispersed throughout the country and with many being active in non-military fields (the latter being particularly pronounced with the imminence of the country's first democratic elections). The mandate received by MK officers participating in the JMCC was often vague and MK officers frequently had to use their own political and military acumen to thwart SADF positions that would have otherwise disadvantaged non-SADF personnel in the integration process. Their ability to participate in the JMCC proceedings in a more robust manner was further limited by a range of very practical and personal problems, not least of which was that most did not enjoy the benefits of a fixed income, very few possessed their own transport, material resources to support them in the preparation of position papers were virtually non-existent, and they lacked, quite simply, the advantages of an organisational infrastructure to empower them in what was an immensely detailed, complex and, for some, alienating force planning process.

The influence of MK in the process was thus uneven and depended strongly on the area of restructuring being addressed. Within the Air Force and the Navy Workgroups the influence of MK was minimal – these being areas where MK, a primarily landward guerrilla army, had failed to build any strategic expertise. Its influence was more pronounced in the Army Workgroup (partially because of the quality of MK officers in this workgroup and partially because the SADF co-chair of this group, a charismatic conventional force officer, was well disposed towards and enthusiastic about the impending integration process) and within the Medical Services Workgroup (where MK officers and doctors proved adept at preparing detailed position papers on the integration process within their particular arm of service).

It is not surprising, for these reasons, that the force design of the new SANDF was largely based on that of the former SADF and that the strategies, doctrines and procedures remained unaltered (prompting one senior SADF officer at the time to comment that “the SADF got more than 80 per cent of what it wanted out of the JMCC process”). The imminent integration process was to be based, therefore, on SADF structures and SADF rules and regulations – a phenomenon that was to greatly undermine the capacity of non-SADF forces to influence the integration process in the initial integration period.¹⁴

With the initiation of the integration process on 27 April 1994, the integration process relied on SADF structures and practices – thereby creating the conditions for what was effectively to become the ‘absorption’ of most NSF and TVBC personnel into the structures of the ‘new’ SANDF (although this absorption process was uneven within and between the various levels of the organisation). Partially this was a product of historical necessity and partially a product of vastly disparate force levels – SADF brought some 90,000 personnel to the integration process; MK envisaged a contribution of some 22,000 personnel; the TVBC armies 11,000 members; and APLA some 6,000 soldiers.

Between April 1994 and June 1994 nine non-SADF generals (three lieutenant-generals and six major-generals) were appointed to a number of general staff positions with the SANDF. None of these, with the exception of the Chief of SANDF Staff, were appointments to critical portfolios, and the de facto power within the SANDF continued to reside in former SADF officers.

Thereafter, hundreds of senior MK officers were ranked by the organisation in preparation for their appearance before placement boards. The ranks of former guerrilla commanders were determined by MK and APLA on the basis of six inter-related criteria: command experience, operational experience, seniority, educational qualifications, military training and military qualifications, and length of service within the organisation.

Yet most of these officers were to be despatched on various courses for the next three to five years and had little impact on the restructuring of the new SANDF (a process that continued to be driven, largely, by former SADF officers).

Because none of the non-SADF forces had an institutional power base within the SADF, this created innumerable obstacles to their free and fair integration into the structures of the new SANDF. At a psychological level many SADF members regarded the activities of the new SANDF as simply being ‘business as usual’ and treated integrating non-SADF members as though they were

new members of a long-established organisation. Not infrequently, arrogance and racism were used by white officers to obstruct the activities of non-SADF officers within the SANDF. The continued use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and command and control also had the effect of distemping non-SADF officers and preventing them from contributing to or understanding the restructuring processes within which they were involved. NSF officers in particular were disadvantaged because it took, in some cases, years for them to be integrated into the SANDF – a period during which they remained on nominal salaries without the service benefits normally accruing to regular military personnel.

The capacity of the non-SADF forces to influence the restructuring process was further limited by the positions in which they were placed, the de facto authority which these posts carried, and the training requirements which they were required to fulfil before being confirmed in their ranks. Most of the influential senior command and staff positions with the new SANDF continued to be occupied by former SADF officers. These positions included the chiefs of the arms of service, the chiefs of the staff divisions (personnel, intelligence, operations, finance and logistics), the officers commanding of the territorial commands, the officers commanding the conventional forces and virtually all key strategic directorates with the defence headquarters establishment.

Areas where such a process of institutional and cultural absorption was less pronounced were in the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Secretariat. The Ministry of Defence, under the political control of Minister Joe Modise (the former Command of MK) and Deputy Minister Ronnie Kasrils, strongly resisted attempts by the Chief of the National Defence Force to determine the political and strategic agenda according to which the restructuring of the defence function should proceed. This led to heated exchanges within the Defence Council where the ministers, Secretary for Defence and the chief made their key decisions, and a fair degree of political tension ensued between the Office of the Minister and the Office of the Chief of the National Defence Force.

The capacity of the ministry to implement its proposed policies depended, critically, on its ability to secure trusted personnel to oversee and execute this process. This was found in the newly established Defence Secretariat, where a small group of former MK and liberal SADF officers had been appointed to key positions, mostly within the policy and planning and finance divisions. The process of de facto absorption referred to above began to be reversed by two processes in particular. The first was the successful manner in which the Ministry of Defence, via the Defence Secretariat, succeeded in managing

the Defence White Paper process and, more significantly, the exceedingly comprehensive Defence Review process.

The process of absorption also began to be reversed by a further series of developments that 'old guard' elements within the SANDF had not anticipated in 1993 and 1994. This was the simple but inescapable fact that non-SADF officers in general and MK officers in particular were completing their compulsory training courses and were now ready for real deployment with the SANDF. The strategy of excluding NSF and non-SADF officers from posts and processes based on their training commitments was now ending.

By late 1998, MK could claim a more reasonable representation within the new SANDF than had pertained in 1994 – especially since only 12,000 of the originally anticipated 28,000 members remained within the organisation. The uniformed component of the SANDF consisted of 39,077 former SADF personnel (53 per cent), 11,727 former MK personnel (16 per cent), 9,580 new SANDF personnel (13 per cent), 6,453 TVBC personnel (9 per cent) and 4,901 APLA personnel (7 per cent). The civilian component of the SANDF, for its part, consisted of 17,976 former SADF (91 per cent), 11 MK personnel (0.06 per cent), 790 TVBC personnel (4 per cent) and 1 APLA (0.01 per cent).

Of the total of 41 generals within the SANDF (1 April 1998), seven were former MK and ALA generals; of the 4,493 senior officers (major to brigadier general), 548 were former MK and APLA officers; of the 6 046 junior officers (second lieutenant to captain), 998 were former MK and APLA officers; and of the 62 625 non-commissioned officers and other ranks, 15,076 were MK and APLA personnel.¹⁵

Even though MK (as with the other integrating forces) ceased to exist on 27 April 1994 (the date in which the SANDF came into formal existence), the traditions upon which MK was based continue, most notably in the veterans' organisations and in the political traditions of the ANC. A key challenge for the continuation of MK traditions in future will be twofold. The first will be the extent to which these traditions and history are recorded in the form of written biographies, campaign histories and historical surveys. More academic studies can also be initiated, particularly those studies that will focus on the political relationship between the ANC and MK and the extent to which that relationship changed in the post-1994 period.

The second will be the extent to which MK history and traditions are internalised within the institutional culture of the SANDF, given that the present traditions of the SANDF are overwhelmingly based on the traditions

and cultures of the former SADF. It is important, furthermore, to ensure that all the marginalised discourses within South Africa's military historical tradition are also brought to the fore in future. This includes the history of APLA and the under-recorded indigenous African military traditions. Unless this occurs, the development of a truly indigenous South African military tradition will be severely hampered in future.¹⁶

The impact of MK and the Boer armies on the creation of new national defence forces

A comparison of the impact of the Boer armies on the creation of the UDF in 1912 and MK on the creation of the SANDF in 1994 reveals a highly disparate scenario, with the Boer armies undoubtedly having had a greater impact on their process than the later experience of MK. Much of this had to do with the fact that the Minister of Defence in 1912 was General Smuts himself: a former guerrilla fighter who had, pragmatically, accepted the necessity of ensuring an equitable compromise in the creation of the UDF.

His preparedness to ensure that the creation of the UDF was done without fear or favour was reflected in the manner in which the senior command appointments were made and the extent to which recognition was given to both Boer and British military traditions within the institutional discourses of the new UDF. The former SADF, and indeed the present SANDF, reflects the results of this compromise in the organisation of both its territorial forces, in which a strong Boer tradition continues to remain pronounced, and the citizen force regiments, which remain strongly 'British' in institutional ethos and corporate culture.

MK's ability to influence the creation of the SANDF was substantially less pronounced than that of the Boer armies. Despite the political compromise between the ANC and the National Party that enabled South Africa to successfully undergo its first non-racial and democratic elections in 1994, the battle for state power continued in the period after that. Vigorous attempts were made by MK to influence the process of institutional restructuring, although the success of the initiatives was largely limited. To date very few MK traditions survive within the SANDF. The bulk of the officer corps of the SANDF regular force (a force that is some 79,000 strong) continues to be constituted of former SADF officers and the reserve force (approximately 69,000 strong) remains virtually entirely constituted of former SADF personnel.

Much of MK's inability to influence the process had to do with the limited numbers of MK personnel, the uneven distribution of state power between

ANC and former South African government members after 1994, and the considerable influence wielded by former SADF officers within the new SANDF during and after the integration process.

Notes

- 1 History of the SADF, in the South African Defence Force Review, 1989, SADF Directorate of Public Relations, Pretoria, p 25.
- 2 J J du Toit, Die Geskiedenis van die Personeelfunksie in die SA Weermag sedert WO1 tot 31 Januarie 1981, *Militaria*, 18(4), pp 14-16.
- 3 Quoted in Van die Totstandkoming tot die Verdedigingswet van 1912, *Militaria*, 1969, op cit, p 8.
- 4 E M Meyers (Lt), Voorgeskiedenis tot die Stigting van 'n Unie-Verdedigingsmag, *Militaria*, 1982, p 3.
- 5 *Militaria*, 1969, op cit, p 9.
- 6 *Militaria*, 1969, p 20.
- 7 *Militaria*, 1969, op cit, p 28.
- 8 *Militaria*, 1969, op cit, p 20.
- 9 Document on the formation of the Union Defence Force located in the archives of the South African Museum for National Military History, Saxonwold, Johannesburg, March 1992.
- 10 Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) ie Dutch, or Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek (SAR) ie Afrikaans. The two should not be confused.
- 11 Observations of a former Union Defence Force officer who participated in the training course. Reminiscences located in archival material at the South African Museum for National Military History, Saxonwold, Johannesburg, March 1992.
- 12 J D Harris, The other Vlakfontein: An action in the Anglo-Boer War: 3 July 1901, *Military History Journal* (incorporating *Museum Review*) 9 (6), December 1994.
- 13 Author's own experiences in the Joint Military Coordinating Council (JMCC) structures, 1994-1995.
- 14 R Williams, South Africa's New Defence Force: progress and prospects, *CSIS Africa Notes* 170, March 1995, Washington, USA.
- 15 Defence in a democracy, South African White Paper and South African Defence Review, 1 Military Regiment, Pretoria, 1998, pp 78-81.

- 16 The bulk of the SANDF's traditions continue to be enshrined in the country's Part Time Force units – many of which trace their origins back to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most of these traditions, however, are overwhelmingly 'white' in origin and reflect the histories of white South Africans in such wars as the Boer War, World War I and, more recently, the South West African and Angolan campaigns.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The usefulness of comparing the Boer and the MK guerrilla campaigns derives from the insights and 'lessons learned' that it can provide for South African defence planners and military historians in future and for other countries undergoing the creation of new national defence forces.

First, while the history of the Boer War has been well documented, with a few notable exceptions there have, as yet, been few sustained analyses of the history of other South African guerrilla campaigns, a phenomenon that is largely the result of a combination of complex historical, political and resource factors. Yet South Africans have, in their history, fought guerrilla wars against various adversaries with varying degrees of success. Little of this history is recorded and even the accounts of the guerrilla phase of the Boer War are not as developed as accounts on the conventional phase of the war.

Histories that do exist are often 'official' versions and, as such, reflect the ideological bias of the ruling party. More frequently those credible historical accounts that do exist assume the form of personal accounts written by former combatants or of selected academic articles that focus on a specific aspect of the guerrilla struggle.¹ Clearly the richness of this history needs to be recorded and should at least merit similar scholastic attention to those studies that have been commissioned on the participation of South Africans in various conventional wars and campaigns (World War I, World War II, the Anglo-Zulu wars, and the first phase of the Anglo-Boer War constituting examples).

It is precisely for these reasons that southern African guerrilla armies constitute such a fertile arena of potential research. Such research can be conducted on a number of levels, be they broad historical overviews, campaign histories, regimental or detachment histories, and personal accounts by former soldiers. Such historical renditions can combine focused and 'human interest' accounts of the liberation struggle. What, for instance, were the experiences of the various units in training and combat? What campaigns were fought both within and outside the country? What

personal struggles and travails characterised its operations? What were the institutional peculiarities of the guerrilla army in question (rank, traditions, medals and decorations, etc)? And what was the nature of the military leadership that emerged within the organisation during the years of its existence?

Second, it is evident that historical accounts of MK in particular are woefully under-developed, although abbreviated histories do exist in the political literature of the 1980s and early 1990s.² More recently, particularly with the relocation of the ANC's archives to the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, a limited range of more personal accounts of former MK combatants are beginning to emerge.³ The underdevelopment of historical writing on MK in particular is attributable to a number of historical and practical factors: the lack of a written tradition inherent in any young army, the severe censorship and political restrictions characterising the period during which MK operated as a guerrilla army; and the lack of resources required at present to mount a sustained study of MK since its inception.

Third, it is important to ensure that the development of South African defence strategy and doctrine takes account of the diverse South African military traditions. To date very few, if any, of South Africa's guerrilla traditions are codified and reflected in the national defence strategy of the country – which at present relies overwhelmingly on conventional military deterrence as the primary strategy to be used against external aggression – or the current doctrine of the SANDF (which, regardless of arm of service or type formation, relies heavily on conventional doctrines of war). Ideally, any national defence strategy should reflect a robust and creative integration of conventional, semi-conventional and guerrilla strategies that prove capable of complementing one another in the eventuality of war.

A number of practical steps can be initiated to ensure that any future doctrinal revision attempts to integrate the diverse experiences of the ANC and MK into its discourse for instance. The tradition of civilian-based defence (CBD) – which provided the bedrock of South African mass resistance against apartheid – could be incorporated as an element of South African national defence strategy. Essentially CBD is a non-violent strategy of resistance that seeks to deny an occupying power the resources (the people and products) and legitimacy (the consent) required to govern. Although such a strategy can lead to high attrition rates among a civilian population when confronting a ruthless aggressor, it is a powerful weapon in the hand of an unarmed civilian populace (as the South African experience in the

Defiance Campaign of the 1950s and the mass campaigns of the 1980s demonstrated).

MK's doctrines of underground organisation (developed and honed over 33 years of sustained struggle) provide a much more effective and home-grown guerrilla tradition than those counter-insurgency doctrines that the SADF imported into their counter-revolutionary strategies via the American, French and British counter-insurgency traditions. MK's guerrilla and doctrinal traditions (self-sufficiency, mobilisation of the people, effective use of both urban and rural terrain, military-combat work, and the interfacing of the political and military components of a war) can be incorporated into the rear area defence doctrines of the landward strategy (particularly the organisation of the territorial forces), special forces doctrine, and the clandestine training of military intelligence personnel.

It is significant to note that both the MK and SADF members of the Army Workgroup actually proposed and received approval for the creation of an Unconventional Brigade during the Joint Military Coordinating Council process (1993–1994) that was responsible for the creation of the new SANDF. This proposal was ignored, largely because of the apathy of former senior SADF officers responsible for the implementation of the JMCC proposals in the post-1994 period who preferred to adhere to those doctrinal tenets with which they were more familiar.⁴

Finally, the experiences of both MK and the Boer armies provide rich examples of how guerrilla armies, with the appropriate levels of political endorsement and support, can bestow considerable legitimacy upon the creation of new national defence forces. The amalgam of the traditions of the Boer armies and of the British colonial regiments provided the UDF with a rich strategic, cultural and doctrinal base upon which it could draw in its subsequent campaigns. This process has yet to happen within the current SANDF, which is, at present, largely based on the doctrine and practices of the pre-1994 SADF. The imminent integration process that is to be initiated within South Africa's reserve forces may well constitute an arena in which these traditions can be more fully expressed.

In time South Africa will develop a military historical tradition that is more fully reflective of its diverse military past. That this has not happened to date has as much to do with historical factors and the history of conflict that has characterised this country as it does with the exigencies of the current political transition. It is a challenge that military historians, defence strategists and doctrinal experts must embrace in the future.

Notes

- 1 An important contribution to the history of MK has been *The spear of the nation – the recent history of Umkhonto we Sizwe*, in J Cilliers and M Reichart (Eds), *About turn*, Institute for Defence Policy, Midrand, 1995.
- 2 See for example H Barrell, *MK*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1991.
- 3 R Kasrils, *Armed and dangerous*, Heinemann, South Africa, 1996.
- 4 The Joint Military Coordinating Council was responsible for devising the plans upon which the creation of the new SANDF would be based after the April 1994 elections. It was co-chaired by MK and the SADF, consisted of representatives from the other armies present in South Africa at the time (the homeland defence forces and APLA) and was divided into a number of functional Arms of Service workgroups, such as the Army Workgroup.