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of Military Science

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Editorial

From a defence and security point of view, the first half of 2024 continued to be overshadowed by the continuing conflicts in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East – the most recent being the ongoing Israeli– Hamas War that broke out in early October 2023. In Southern Africa, the premature withdrawal of the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), which is set to be completed by mid-July, comes amidst several recent setbacks suffered against Ahlu al-Sunnah wal-Jamaah insurgents. Moreover, it can be argued that the untimely withdrawal of SAMIM from northern Mozambique – which the insurgents’ propaganda claims to be a victory – indeed reflects a serious political, diplomatic, and military failure in the region. The current withdrawal of SAMIM forces from Mozambique alarmingly coincides with the recent deployment of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC) that started in mid-December 2023. The geo-strategic shift of the regional organisation from Mozambique to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) coincides with the withdrawal of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which, despite its two-decade-long deployment, has failed to achieve any notable gains in terms of creating enduring peace and stability in the country. While the MONUSCO withdrawal is set to occur in stages until the end of 2024, the SAMIDRC contingent deployed in its wake already faces considerable challenges relating to its mandate, force structure, equipment, and logistical provisions. Additionally, the SAMIDRC force suffered numerous casualties and operational setbacks throughout the preceding months, as the M23 rebels strengthen their grip on the eastern DRC.

These conflicts continue to have vast geopolitical implications, not only making the immediate regions unstable and volatile, but also having no clear resolutions in sight. While these conflicts will continue to stimulate debate in academic and military circles, they also provide a unique opportunity within defence and security spheres to explore topics, such as doctrinal developments, force structure and design, military operations, defence policy, and alliances.

In this issue of *Scientia Militaria*, Volume 52, Issue 1, 2024, the articles consider both historic and contemporary issues associated with war and conflict, as well as defence- and security-related matters. As always, it is trusted that these articles will provide key insights, and that they will act as a source of influence for individuals involved in the broader ambit of military planning, operations, management, and higher education.

In the article by Kyle Bester and Danille Arendse, from University of South Africa and Stellenbosch University respectively, it is argued that cyberspace has been recognised as a new domain of warfare. Consequently, the authors contend that awareness of cyber threats is essential for military personnel. The article provides insight into potential cyber threats and cyberattacks. Additionally, enhancing cybersecurity awareness among military personnel aids in detecting cyber threats in the workplace, and helps military personnel to understand their own vulnerabilities in cyberspace. The article shows that, in South Africa, cybersecurity is a significant concern, and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has emphasised the need to improve its cybersecurity capabilities. As part of a broader study, the Cybersecurity Orientation Questionnaire was thus created by Bester and Arendse for South African military personnel with the primary goal of assessing their cybersecurity awareness. The article thus focuses on the initial validation of the Questionnaire using a sample from the South African military. The study employed a quantitative design, and analysed the reliability and factor structure of the Questionnaire using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The initial validation of the Questionnaire yielded promising results for assessing cybersecurity awareness among the South African military sample. The article underscores the importance of developing instruments specifically for the South African military context.

In his article, Carl Punt, from Stellenbosch University, maintains that books on the South African Border War (1966–1989) have flooded the popular market over the last two decades. Historians, journalists, and particularly ex-soldiers – often amateur writers – have tapped into this market. The genres of books include, but are not limited to, personal accounts, autobiographies, regimental histories, journalist accounts, and academic books. The late Colonel Jan Breytenbach (1932–2024) was one of the first South African Defence Force (SADF) officers to write about the Border War. He published seven books and paved the way for many writers to follow his example. Most of his books focus on the history of the infamous 32 Battalion. Against this background, Punt’s article, which was written before the passing of Breytenbach, reflects an analysis of Breytenbach’s writing on the Border War using a conceptual framework put forward by military historians.

In their article, Kevin Gopaul, Elma van der Lingen, and Rudolph Oosthuizen, from the University of Pretoria, contend that the South African Defence Industry has undergone several significant changes during the past six decades, with its current state being deemed unfavourable for continued survivability. To develop a robust understanding of the industry, the authors reviewed the relevant scientific literature and government policies to chart the trends in the defence industry throughout the preceding decades. The South African political ideologies in the sixties and seventies gave rise to a need for self-sufficiency in defence. By the late eighties, increased military spending resulted in a powerful and capable defence industry, but the end of apartheid and regional conflicts

saw an expected sharp drop in the defence budget. The Strategic Defence Package offered some respite in terms of exports, but the exports have declined in the recent past. The defence budget has remained at a steady low value for two decades, with no real possibility of an increase. The authors argue that, to maintain relevance and ensure organisational resilience, the remnants of the South African Defence Industry should use the Defence Industry Strategy as a baseline to develop robust local relationships to drive innovation and foster economic growth, while also strengthening international market share by enhancing unique South African technologies.

In their article, Sky Mkuti, Jo-Ansie van Wyk, and Oluwaseun Tella, from the University of South Africa and the University of Johannesburg respectively, argue that the world witnessed a drastic change in the global security landscape after the infamous 9/11 attacks on the United States of America, which influenced the dynamics of counterterrorism globally. In due course, the United States expanded its global alliances, including its financial assistance and scope for cooperation in East Africa as well. Part of this fundamental transformation was the growing reliance by the United States on African partners, such as Kenya. Despite visible power disparities between the asymmetric relations between the United States and Kenya, the two states formed an unmatched counterterrorism partnership in East Africa – even with the growing criticism of the United States militarisation in some parts of Africa, such as in the Sahel region, which remains prone to coups despite enduring counterterrorism interventions. The article shows that, despite the United States–Kenyan asymmetric relations, a stable and multidimensional implementation of counterterrorism efforts in East Africa was achieved. The dynamics of these asymmetric relations on counterterrorism demystify the perception that asymmetric relations between powerful and weak states are inherently unstable. Employing secondary data, the authors deconstructed such rhetoric by conceptualising asymmetry whilst identifying five main conceptualisations of asymmetry theory that characterise the asymmetric relations between the United States and Kenya. Thereafter, by taking stock of the multidimensional efforts by the United States and Kenya, the authors argue that triangular asymmetries are the significant force multipliers of stability and normalcy in asymmetric relations.

In her article, Janet Szabo, from the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), maintains that, because of its air superiority during the counterinsurgency conflict against the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the South African Air Force (SAAF) had neglected to build up modern air and counter-air defences. When Soviet air defence systems were therefore deployed in Angola in the 1980s, both the SADF and SAAF were forced to reconsider their tactics and responses to the war. The Soviet systems included early warning networks, surface-to-air missiles, and anti-aircraft guns to cover troops advancing in the field, as well as fighter aircraft. While this build-up was observed in neighbouring Southern African countries and had the appearance of a purely defensive stance, given Soviet air defence doctrine, South Africa viewed this as the first steps to offensive actions in Angola and possibly Namibia (then South West Africa) and the start of a dangerous escalation in the military situation. In response, Szabo contends that the South African Defence Force adopted a strong defensive stance and improved its own air defence capabilities to ensure that it was not outclassed, while the SAAF also

introduced new tactics. These included the introduction of toss-bombing, making greater use of precision-guided missiles and bombs, and investing more in research in terms of missiles and new technology for their aircraft.

In the final article, Suné Kleynhans from North-West University, shows that, while the South African involvement in the Second World War produced several high treason cases, the trials of those historical figures who worked “behind the scenes” during the war are occasionally neglected within the broader academic literature. An example of such is the cases of high treason of four Afrikaner men accused of broadcasting propaganda in Afrikaans from Radio Zeesen in Germany to South Africa, with the aim of jeopardising the South African war effort. This propaganda was carried out strategically within the context of the existing Afrikaner resistance against participation in the war. The four accused were Sidney Erich Holm, Jan Adriaan Strauss, Johannes Jacobus Snoek, and Michael Johannes Pienaar. Kleynhans’s article focuses on the trials of the four accused men as a series of lesser-known cases in South African legal history, and provides a historical narrative of these high treason cases. After providing the necessary contextualisation, the positions of the prosecution and defence as well as the verdicts of the trials are outlined. In doing so, this article by Kleynhans makes a historiographic contribution to an overlooked aspect of South African history.

A selection of book reviews by David Jacobs, Evert Jordaan, Unarine Emmanuel Maduwa, and Graeme Plint conclude this issue of *Scientia Militaria*.

The Editors

Evert Kleynhans  & *Anri Delpont* 

Measuring Cybersecurity Awareness in a South African Military Sample

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Abstract

Cyberspace has been identified as a new domain of warfare; awareness of cyber threats is therefore crucial for members of the military because it allows for greater insight into potential cyber threats and attacks. Furthermore, developing cybersecurity awareness may assist in the detection of cyber threats in the workplace, and may further assist members of the military to be cognisant of their own vulnerability in cyberspace. In South Africa, cybersecurity is a topic of interest, and the South African National Defence Force has highlighted the need to enhance its cybersecurity capacity. The Cybersecurity Orientation Questionnaire was developed for members of the South African military with the fundamental objective of assessing their cybersecurity awareness as part of a larger study. The purpose of the study on which this article is based, was to explore the initial validation of the Questionnaire using a South African military sample. The study design was quantitative, and the reliability and factor structure of the Questionnaire were analysed by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The sample size consisted of 182 military participants who were based at two military educational institutions. The Questionnaire showed acceptable reliability for research purposes ($r = .79$; $p = .000$) and the prominent three-factor structure was in line with the theorised factors envisioned during the development of the Questionnaire. Initial validation of the Questionnaire showed promising results for assessing cybersecurity awareness in the South African military sample. This study therefore emphasises the importance of developing instruments specifically for the South African military context.

Keywords: cybersecurity, South Africa, cyber awareness, reliability, factor structure, Cybersecurity Orientation Questionnaire

Introduction

Cyberspace is considered a new domain of conflict; therefore it is critical for members of the armed forces to be cognisant of cyber threats as it may enable greater insight into potential vulnerabilities within their own security behaviour, but also the risks in

the virtual reality sphere. While the emphasis is mostly on the technical features, in more recent times, the focus has shifted to the human element as a key component of ensuring cybersecurity.^{3,4} Individual cybersecurity awareness is crucial in understanding how people practise cybersecurity behaviour in organisations. It is therefore essential to highlight users' knowledge, behaviour, and perceptions, as humans are the weakest link in the security chain.⁵ For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilised the definition created by Bester as the foundation for terms of reference:

Cybersecurity is a flexible security process through which individuals are constantly interacting with a technical environment in the social context. Cybersecurity is also the immersive process through which the human factor utilises security software tools in tandem with education, training, guidelines, technical knowledge, and best practices such as awareness training, technical skills, and risk assessment. Cybersecurity also requires the notion of applying knowledge to risk perception and precautionary behaviour, while being fully aware of vulnerabilities in both the physical and cyberspace domain.⁶

In South Africa, the seriousness of cyber threats and attacks has compelled the South African (SA) government to consider the development of legislation and frameworks in order to address these contemporary threats in cyberspace.⁷ The rise of cyber threats not only signifies significant security challenges at individual level, but may also pose security challenges to organisations, various sectors, and national security.⁸ The significant increase in cyber threats has led to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) becoming increasingly resolute in enhancing its cyber resilience and digital capacity.⁹ The SANDF also recognises the importance of exploring cybersecurity from a multi-disciplinary perspective.¹⁰ This multi-disciplinary view is echoed in cybersecurity research focusing on technological advancement and on social as well as psychological development of awareness education on cybersecurity.^{11,12,13,14,15,16} Cyberspace and technology are expanding at a rapid pace. This includes extending their reach to growing numbers of individuals, governments, and other sectors.¹⁷

The rapid upsurge in malicious threats to mobile devices increases the possibility of digital exploitation of users.¹⁸ Mobile internet technology, such as mobile devices, has made it affordable for people to communicate and access information.¹⁹ Digital and technological development may have an influence on the economic and social situation in nation-states.²⁰ The development of technology has seen acceleration during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The advancement of technologies has allowed nation-states to facilitate the innovation of new services. This enables strengthening of communications for modern economies.^{21,22} Economic and technological transformation, which advances with the use of the Internet, opens users up to being increasingly vulnerable to potential attacks.^{23,24} The roles played by cyberspace, cybersecurity, and cybersecurity awareness are key to how users approach the practice of digital security and information sharing. As noted earlier, due to the rapid surge in malicious threats and evolving technological advancements, it has become increasingly important to ensure that users are equipped with the necessary skills to mitigate cyber threats.²⁵

The human element remains the cornerstone of all matters of a cyber nature as humans need to move continuously between the digital space and the physical space.²⁶ In this kind of security, the human element is susceptible to committing security-related errors and is left vulnerable to potential threats.²⁷ It should be noted that many users possibly still lack the required awareness of the nature and variety of threats in this domain. According to Zwilling *et al.*, users of cyberspace may fall victim not only to cyber threats but also to knowledge gaps, which expose them to cyber-related hazards. Moreover, these users often fail to acquire the minimum amount of knowledge necessary to protect their computing devices.²⁸ Zwilling *et al.* emphasise that in more severe cases, individuals suffer from a total lack of awareness of cyber hazards.²⁹ Not possessing sufficient awareness of cyberspace and its potential threats may put users at risk.³⁰

So far, scholarly efforts have been directed largely towards the exploration of students' perceptions of cybersecurity awareness and practices in various contexts outside the defence environment.^{31,32} Research concerning cybersecurity and online behaviour has gained some momentum in recent years, as there is an increasing need to understand the notion that the use or overuse of cyberspace may alter human behaviour.³³ The topic of cybersecurity awareness has received significant interest in the race to obtain an understanding of vulnerabilities, as pointed out by Bester.³⁴ The surge in research relating to cybersecurity awareness points to the apparent lack of education in this area among users, which is vital when noting the high level of risk associated with cyber threats.³⁵ Cybersecurity awareness has received some attention in the SA context where the following aspects have been addressed: perceptions of cybersecurity,³⁶ information warfare,³⁷ the review and development of cybersecurity policy frameworks,^{38,39} and exploring the cyber threat landscape.⁴⁰

The Role of Cyberspace

Cyberspace is described as a physical and non-physical territory, which consists of 'computers, computer systems, networks and their computer programs, computer data, content data, traffic data, and users'.⁴¹ Furthermore, cyberspace introduces new challenges to governments, and therefore demands enhanced capacity of cybersecurity and the need to address national security threats in cyberspace.⁴² Cyberspace is an invisible domain that allows users to be anonymous.⁴³ The consequences of this invisibility present a security challenge, where a hybrid (physical and digital) form of warfare may emerge as either offensive or defensive. This domain may therefore be perceived as both a potential challenge and a benefit for governments.⁴⁴ Cyberspace is considered a borderless platform that enables more sophisticated threats, such as cybercrime, cyber terrorism, cyber war, and cyber espionage.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the Internet is described as a global network of computers that enables worldwide communication and information exchange.⁴⁶

The Impact of Cyber Threats on Users and Society

As technology advances and becomes more affordable, so too does the complexity of cyber threats and attacks.⁴⁷ The importance of cybersecurity awareness becomes integral with the human element being placed in a vulnerable position.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the low levels

of cybersecurity awareness are believed to contribute to the cyber threats that African nation-states are encountering.⁴⁹ Low levels of cybersecurity awareness may also have an influence on securing cyberspace.⁵⁰ What makes matters worse is that Africa is viewed as an attractive haven for cyber criminals who operate illegally on this continent.⁵¹ Many African nation-states recognise the importance of improving their approach to developing their respective cybersecurity capacity and strategies.⁵² Some challenges related to the slow adoption of technology and the slow-paced development of cybersecurity strategies and frameworks however still prevail.⁵³ In addition, the importance of cybersecurity is underemphasised even though cyber threats have the ability to cause economic and political damage.⁵⁴

With cyberspace extending its reach into multiple sectors, the vulnerability of individual users and organisations increases as well. Cyber threats are pervasive, and are threatening to cause havoc.⁵⁵ Obtaining the necessary cybersecurity knowledge and awareness is vital when navigating the Internet while maintaining information security at the same time. Bester suggests that cybersecurity awareness is a flexible and continuous process during which the individual is cognisant of threats and his or her own vulnerability. Moreover, Bester argues that the application of knowledge, precautionary behaviour, and risk perceptions are elements required by the human element to counteract cyber threats.⁵⁶ Additionally, being aware of the limitations of certain security software may also assist an individual in being cautious when navigating cyberspace.^{57,58} If users are not properly trained in or do not have sufficient cybersecurity awareness, it may leave them vulnerable, and their technological devices might remain unsecured.⁵⁹ From a wider perspective, users who may not possess the necessary cybersecurity awareness knowledge and who have unsecured technological devices might be especially vulnerable to cyber threats and possible attacks.

The mobile Internet penetration rate increased from 51.51% in 2019 to 82.2% in 2023.⁶⁰ This growth in the mobile Internet penetration rate shows that there is a dramatic increase in the information and communications technology (ICT) capability, mainly because mobile devices have become cheaper and more accessible.⁶¹ With mobile devices becoming more affordable and cyber threats being on the rise, the human element might be vulnerable. This vulnerability might result in debilitating consequences for users. Shifting the discussion on cyber threats to the SA context, Ndlovu reports that in 2021, 220 million email threats were detected in South Africa, and that Post Bank was a victim of cybercrime where 100 000 fraudulent emails imitated the entity, causing it to suffer a loss of R18 million.⁶² When considering security incidents, based on severity in the SA context, the following issues were highlighted in the State of Cybersecurity in South Africa Report during the period 2022 to 2023: business emails compromised (37%), ransomware (18%), disinformation campaigns (17%), insider threats (15%), cloud breaches (12%), and supply chain attacks (12%).⁶³ Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, there was increased dependency on ICT.⁶⁴ Due to the increased dependency of users on ICT, their risk to cyber threats becomes greater. This potential risk faced by users of ICT is elevated when they are unaware of the potential threats they face, such as phishing, pretexting, and baiting, which are all forms of social engineering attacks that rely on deception.⁶⁵

Along with the significant increase in the use of accessible technology and cyberspace, it has been observed that individuals from various sectors in society (government, industrial, and social) have become dependent on mobile devices and the Internet.⁶⁶ The increase in the use of digital devices and the processing of personal data have resulted in an increase in cyberattacks in South Africa.⁶⁷ Regrettably, several SA government departments, state-owned entities, and citizens have recently fallen prey to cyberattacks.⁶⁸ These cyberattacks might have significant consequences for South African national security data and citizens' personal data. Furthermore, the SANDF was also a victim of an alleged cyberattack when its network system was breached.⁶⁹ Along with an increase in the use of digital technology, the armed forces in most countries are increasingly relying on emerging technologies and cyberspace to enhance their reach in relation to national security issues. Consequently, cybersecurity and the use of technology are important force multipliers for advancing defence and economic factors in a nation-state.⁷⁰ Furthermore, if the cyberspace domain is effectively integrated and maintained as an operational element, it can be considered a force multiplier.⁷¹ This additional component may help the military to gain an advantage in cyberspace operations.⁷²

The Human Element in Cybersecurity

The human element is a key component in cyberspace as it continuously alternates between the digital space and the physical space. An individual connects to cyberspace through the means provided by physical infrastructure; one cannot function without the other. The human element in the cybersecurity chain is susceptible to committing security errors and therefore becomes vulnerable to potential data breaches, malware, and cyberattacks.⁷³ The increase in the use of Internet-connected devices is linked to advancements in the ICT sector.^{74,75} It is therefore important to acknowledge that many users still lack the required awareness of the nature and variety of cyber threats. According to Zwilling *et al.*, users often fall victim to both cyber threats and knowledge gaps that expose them to cyber hazards. In fact, these users often fail to ensure that they obtain the minimum required knowledge to protect their computing devices.⁷⁶ Zwilling *et al.* confirm that, in more severe cases, individuals suffer from a total lack of cyber hazard awareness.⁷⁷ If users do not have sufficient awareness of cyberspace and its potential threats, they and their respective countries may be at risk. Moreover, when considering the response to cybersecurity incidents, the human element has an important role in identifying security management tools for responding to threats. In addition, the human element, regardless of the technology utilised, should still possess some awareness of potential cyber threats and the vulnerabilities from a technical and human standpoint.⁷⁸

In terms of positioning the human element in an organisational context, Akter *et al.* argue that cyber threats and attacks are becoming increasingly prominent in society and have targeted employees in organisational contexts. Akter *et al.* suggest that employees with limited cybersecurity awareness and knowledge may be especially susceptible to threats; practical skills and knowledge are therefore recommended for enhanced capacity.⁷⁹ In addition, flexible working conditions have been identified as a risk factor due to employees not being able to interact physically with their secured network system; their own devices might thus be susceptible to phishing. Moreover, the internal operational conditions of

an organisation may also link to the confidence in how cybersecurity is practised, which alludes to how well guidelines and secure network systems are implemented. As previously noted, the human element is the weakest link in the security chain; individual cybersecurity awareness should thus be emphasised by gauging users' knowledge, behaviour, and perceptions.⁸⁰ The practical application of knowledge transfer and simulations are components in addressing awareness.⁸¹ At individual level, the focus on cybersecurity awareness is essential for understanding how individuals practise cybersecurity behaviour in organisations.⁸² It should be noted that employees of large organisations develop higher levels of cybersecurity awareness due to the greater financial resources available to put security systems in place, and the possibility of having policy frameworks that are strictly enforced.⁸³ When linking cybersecurity awareness to an organisation that is as large as the SANDF, it is vital for security systems and policies to be in place as the military is responsible for guaranteeing national security. Emphasising cybersecurity awareness in organisations therefore remains essential when aiming to reduce cyber threats.⁸⁴ Moreover, educating and training members in an organisation may also reduce the likelihood that they will fall victim to threats, and increase the chances of a threat being reported.⁸⁵

Expanding on the latter, exploring cybersecurity awareness among people in general may have an understanding of how awareness, knowledge, and cybersecurity behaviour might be perceived differently as an outcome. Bester proposes that, to enhance cybersecurity awareness among individuals, attention should be paid to four main facets, namely malware and mitigating factors; physical security, which implies that users need to secure their devices; navigating cyberspace securely; and social aspects regarding how to communicate in cyberspace.⁸⁶

Van't Wout and Murire *et al.* suggest that organisations are able to provide training to their employees at low cost to equip them with the necessary skills to fulfil existing expectations.^{87,88} Lehto and Raju *et al.* indicate that training material and education on cybersecurity awareness might be valueless if there is not appropriate engagement in and understanding of cybersecurity risks and the effective application of security behaviour.^{89,90} Abawajy suggests that cybersecurity awareness may not necessarily be enough to ensure that users are completely secure, as it may not be sufficient to have appropriate knowledge of cybersecurity protection to decrease cyber threats.⁹¹ Training in cybersecurity awareness knowledge relating to security tools is required if individuals are to mitigate risks effectively, instead of only acquiring theoretical knowledge.⁹² An alternative training method, which focuses on enhancing users' practical understanding of cybersecurity, is the phishing simulator. Phishing simulation offers members of an organisation the opportunity to advance their knowledge and skills on cybersecurity by routinely exposing them to emails that may contain suspicious URLs and spelling mistakes.^{93,94,95} By incorporating phishing simulation into cybersecurity awareness training, the individual can acquire knowledge and practical skills that may enable him or her to distinguish effectively between legitimate emails and phishing emails. When adding these approaches to the training arsenal of users in organisations, it should be emphasised that both technical and social approaches are necessary for approaching cybersecurity training holistically.⁹⁶

Theoretical Background of the Cybersecurity Orientation Questionnaire (COQ)

The Internet plays a significant role in how people go about performing activities in both the digital and physical domains. The COQ was therefore developed for members of the SA military with the fundamental objective of establishing their cybersecurity awareness, and to take into consideration the hybrid nature of cyberspace, as the consequences of cyber threats and potential attacks may be significant in the physical domain in which individuals function as they carry out their daily activities. The COQ was designed as a tool to explore how members of the military respond to cybersecurity threats, as well as to consider the practices and behaviour adopted for securing their information. The COQ comprises four key dimensions that emphasise various aspects relating to cybersecurity awareness, namely:

- Information-Sharing Culture;
- Security Orientation;
- View on Cybersecurity; and
- Cybersecurity Behaviour.

These dimensions were informed by literature that focuses on cybersecurity awareness in organisations and the behavioural practices associated with information security.

It is important to note that the current article is based on a larger research study by Bester.⁹⁷ The article focuses on one aspect of the larger study, namely the development of the COQ, and emphasises the exploration of the factor structure and reliability of the COQ. The four dimensions were derived from findings of the qualitative phase in the larger study. The findings of Phase 1 of the larger study reflected qualitative themes, which assisted in the development of the COQ dimensions in Phase 2 of the larger study.

The first dimension focuses on the **information-sharing culture** in the organisation. This dimension of the COQ focuses on the available resources and the culture of sharing practices in an organisational setting. Information-sharing culture also deals with the exchange of information between individuals to facilitate decision-making.⁹⁸ According to Zwilling *et al.*, awareness plays a crucial role in the practice of information security.⁹⁹ The questions developed for this specific dimension of the COQ therefore emphasise users' awareness relating to security tools and cybersecurity threats. Awareness can only develop if there is understanding in relation to what is being learned.¹⁰⁰ The dimension of information sharing culture therefore also focuses on the dissemination of best practices and guidelines to members of the organisation.

The second dimension refers to **security orientation** among military officers which include the candidate officers. Security orientation denotes how members of the military use the precautionary mechanisms that dictate how they secure themselves and their organisational data based on the knowledge they have obtained from previous experience with security.

The third dimension refers to the **view on cybersecurity**. This dimension highlights how military members view the efforts of the organisation to address cybersecurity and the measures employed to mitigate cyber threats. This dimension was drawn from the research conducted by Al-Mohannadi *et al.*, who argue that awareness, monitoring, and prevention are essential for understanding the possible challenge that cyber threats may pose to employees and the organisation.¹⁰¹ Owing to this, insufficient training in the application of risk assessment relating to cyber threats may result in data loss. It is therefore important that users assess and continuously monitor their own vulnerability, as well as that of the information systems they use.¹⁰²

The fourth dimension of the COQ focuses on **cybersecurity behaviour**. This dimension relate to the practical activities of addressing security behaviour in the workplace.¹⁰³ Duman argues that, when users have been exposed to cybersecurity training, it may advance their knowledge and behaviour in terms of security risks; thus, increasing the user's cybersecurity awareness and reducing cyber risks.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the short questions in the COQ were used as the basis for exploring the deeper meanings of the scale items. Nine questions were included in the COQ, each asking the participant to provide a short description of the way they view information sharing, their view of their online behaviour, and the way cybersecurity is managed in their organisation.

The findings of the larger study allowed the researcher to establish a foundation for determining which areas in cybersecurity awareness need to be focused on in the military context. The main findings of the larger study highlighted three main themes. The first theme was **knowledge production and training**, which concentrated on cybersecurity awareness. The second theme was **challenges relating to trust** between technology and members of the military. The final theme focused on the way members of the military related to **security in the physical world**, and applied the measures attached to security using the Internet. Apart from using these main themes as the basis for the construction of the questionnaire, it is worth noting that the findings from the literature, which related to the security behaviour of students,¹⁰⁵ contributed to the development of some of the items in the questionnaire.

The study assumed that cyber threats could come in various forms as they might relate to spam and phishing,¹⁰⁶ ransomware,¹⁰⁷ spear phishing,¹⁰⁸ social engineering,¹⁰⁹ threats, and man-in-the-middle attacks.¹¹⁰ Dimension 2 of the questionnaire, "security orientation", utilised and adapted some of the focus areas identified by Du Toit *et al.*, which relate to online behaviour in schools.¹¹¹ Although the context and sample population in the current study differed from the educational setting in which Du Toit *et al.* conducted their study, the premise was the promotion of security behaviour and perceptions in cyberspace. Dimensions 1, 3, and 4 of the COQ were based on the qualitative themes that emerged from the findings derived from the larger study.

Research Aims and Objectives

The COQ was specifically developed to explore cybersecurity awareness among members of the SANDF. Recent cybersecurity research in the SA context focused especially on elements related to awareness, security management, and training.¹¹² Bester asserts that

limited research exists concerning the development of cybersecurity awareness screening tools in the SANDF.¹¹³ Bester however notes that, while there might be limited research on cybersecurity awareness in the SANDF, there are screening tools outside the SANDF context.¹¹⁴ In the context of the SANDF, limited research has so far focused on developing a cybersecurity awareness-screening tool. For this reason, it was necessary to explore the dimensions of the COQ in the SANDF context, and to emphasise the importance of the human element in maintaining cybersecurity. Consequently, the purpose of the study reported on here was to explore the preliminary validity and reliability of the COQ in South Africa using an SA military sample. This is the first time that research has been conducted on the applicability of the COQ in terms of a military sample, and the researchers believe this will promote further research on refining the measuring of cybersecurity awareness within the military context.

The research question of this study was whether the COQ was applicable in terms of the SA military context. The two objectives of the study were the following:

To explore the factor structure of the COQ for an SA military sample; and

To explore the reliability of the COQ for an SA military sample.

Method

The study used a quantitative cross-sectional design. The quantitative data analysis method chosen for this study was exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and reliability. The factor structure and reliability of the COQ were analysed by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). These data analysis methods were essential for establishing the initial validation of the COQ, as no previous research has been conducted in terms of the questionnaire.^{115,116,117}

Participants

The cluster sampling technique was used in the study, as the research required two samples, which were obtained from two senior military educational institutions in South Africa. *The* military sample for the COQ comprised 182 military participants. Table 1 indicates the participant demographics. The majority of the military sample was aged between 20 and 54 years, with an average age of 35. This South African military sample included candidate officers (COs) based at the Military Academy. Most of the participants in the study were 25 (6%) or 27 (6%) years old. Based on the distribution of ages as reflected in Table 2, most of the participants were young enough to have been exposed to technology in their careers compared to the older participants. In addition, many of the participants were males, and in the SA Army.

Table 1: Participant demographics for the COQ military sample

Gender	Percentage	Age distribution	Arm of service	Percentage
Male	62	20–54 years	SA Army	59
Female	34		SA Navy	17
Missing	4		SA Air Force	15
			South African Military Health Service	6

Table 2: Distribution of ages for COQ military sample

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20	2	1.1
21	5	2.7
22	7	3.8
23	6	3.3
24	8	4.4
25	10	5.5
26	6	3.3
27	10	5.5
28	2	1.1
29	5	2.7
30	8	4.4
31	5	2.7
32	6	3.3
33	6	3.3
34	6	3.3
35	7	3.8
36	5	2.7
38	6	3.3
39	2	1.1
40	1	.5

Age	Frequency	Percentage
41	4	2.2
42	3	1.6
43	5	2.7
44	5	2.7
45	7	3.8
46	5	2.7
47	4	2.2
48	7	3.8
49	3	1.6
50	5	2.7
51	1	.5
52	5	2.7
53	1	.5
54	3	1.6
Total	171	94.0

Instrument

The COQ is a measurement tool that was designed to assess the cybersecurity awareness of military members in an SA context. The COQ has four dimensions, which comprise multiple-choice questions and short questions after each dimension. The short questions were inserted in the questionnaire to ascertain a deeper perspective from participants. The multiple-choice questions in the COQ have four answer options, namely “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”. Although the COQ is still in development, it was administered to the South African military members to assess its potential as a measurement tool. The COQ was thus only used for research purposes. The initial version (version 1.1) was used in the larger study as a tool to ensure triangulation of the qualitative themes that emerged from Phase 1 of the larger study.

The COQ does not focus on factors such as age or rank in the military. Instead, the questions were constructed in such a way that all members of a military organisation would be able to evaluate their level of cybersecurity awareness. The purpose of the COQ is to encourage military members to engage actively in advancing their knowledge of cybersecurity awareness. The COQ highlights elements related to their security behaviour and their views on cybersecurity threats in the organisation. The COQ has been designed as a self-assessment tool for military members to obtain information about their behaviour and perspectives, which will ultimately promote interest in cybersecurity awareness and facilitating learning.

The COQ version 1.1 has 44 multiple-choice items, and takes 25 to 35 minutes to complete. When the COQ was administered to the participants, no time limit was imposed. Table 3 shows an example of the structure and question style of the items used for the COQ.

Table 3: Example of questions in the COQ

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel that it is safe to share information on social media.				
I feel that using a storage device (USB) is the best way to store information.				
I change my passwords on my laptops, cell phone, and computer on a regular basis.				

Data-Collection Procedure

Of the 182 officers (including candidate officers), 80 officers were located at the South African National War College (Pretoria), and 102 (which included the candidate officers) were located at the South African Military Academy (Saldanha). All the respondents were military officers (and candidate officers) who had been exposed to cyberspace in their daily functioning in their organisations. Before the administration of the COQ commenced, the participants completed an informed consent document. The respondents were informed of the purpose and nature of the COQ, and were asked whether they would agree to take part in the research voluntarily. Once the administration of the COQ had been completed, the respondents were provided with the researcher’s contact details if they had additional questions about cybersecurity in organisational settings.

Ethical Considerations

Applying and maintaining ethical considerations in the study were considered imperative. The lead author ensured that the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were maintained throughout the study. All personal information regarding the respondents was stored safely in an area where strictly access-controlled measures were in place. This significantly increased securing the confidential data. The safeguarding of data in this study was considered important, as it not only reflected military knowledge, but also confidential information of military officers. The participants in the study were informed of their right to withdraw at any point during the study without penalty, and emphasis was placed on their participation being voluntary. It should be highlighted that the data that were collected for this study may only be accessed by the lead author of this study. Access to the data was therefore limited strictly to registered professionals. Ethical clearance for

this study was obtained from Stellenbosch University, South Africa. The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the lead author of the article. The data are not publicly available due to the confidentiality attached to it.

Data Analysis

The factors included in the COQ were analysed by conducting EFA and using principal axis factoring in SPSS. Missing data were handled through the deletion of pairs in SPSS. As the factors in the COQ were theorised to be related, the Promax oblique rotation method was followed.^{118,119} The suitability of the COQ data for EFA was evaluated with the following indices: correlation matrixes, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO), and Bartlett’s test of sphericity.¹²⁰ The KMO value was .725, which indicated that the sample was adequate for factor analysis. Bartlett’s test for sphericity was significant ($p = .000$), which indicated that the data were suitable for factor analysis.^{121,122,123} The suitability of the data was important since the sample size was quite small.

Cronbach’s alpha was used as the reliability coefficient, and was calculated in SPSS.^{124,125} This measure was selected to assess the internal consistency of the COQ and to provide information about the intercorrelation between the items in the COQ.^{126,127,128,129} Cronbach’s alpha applies a scale that ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating that the COQ was reliable and that the items in the COQ were consistently measuring the intended construct.^{130,131,132}

Results

The next section of the paper indicates the results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) performed on the COQ. It is important to note that the factors derived from the EFA analysis are not the same as the four dimensions stemming from the creation of the COQ. Although some of the factors may share similar labels to the dimensions of the COQ, they are different due to the items loaded within the factors. To avoid any confusion, factors refer to the EFA generated COQ scales and dimensions refers to the initial theorised scales that led to the creation of the COQ.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The choice regarding the assessment of factors for the EFA was done by consulting the scree plot (indicated in Figure 1), which pointed towards three factors. Consequently, the EFA was rerun, and a three-factor solution was selected. The total variance explained by these three factors was 32%.

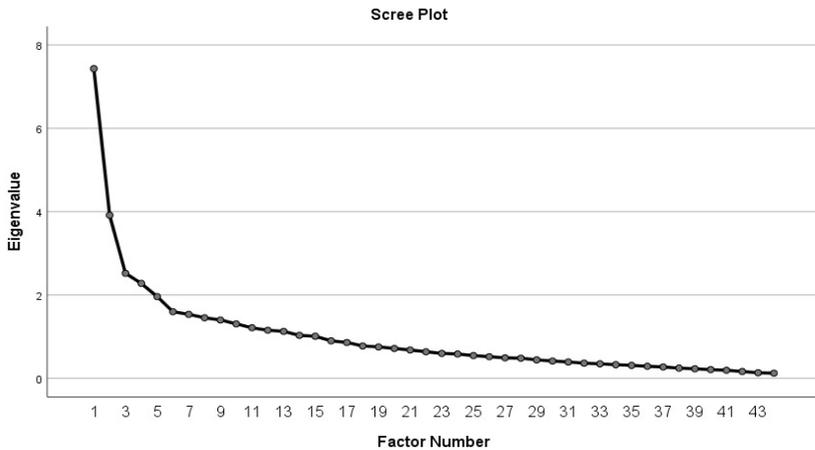


Figure 1: Scree plot for the COQ

The pattern matrix was evaluated to assess how the different items loaded on the factors of the COQ. Based on the loadings of the items, the factors were labelled as follows in Table 4: Cybersecurity Awareness factor, Security Orientation factor, and Information-Sharing factor. These three factors accounted for 38 items in the COQ. The Cybersecurity awareness factor had a loading of the most items (16 items), while the Information-Sharing factor had a loading of the least items (eight items). This similarly mimics the scree plot of the factors.

Table 4: Pattern matrix of the COQ

Questions	Cybersecurity Awareness factor	Security Orientation factor	Information-Sharing factor
Q50	0.873	-0.104	
Q51	0.853		
Q49	0.797		
Q34	0.675		
Q32	0.618		
Q48	0.600		
Q35	0.565		
Q44	0.549		
Q36	0.451		
Q10	0.441	0.113	-0.172
Q39	0.441	0.202	

Questions	Cybersecurity Awareness factor	Security Orientation factor	Information-Sharing factor
Q46	0.409		-0.145
Q47	0.401		
Q33	0.395		
Q43	-0.312		0.166
Q19	0.303	0.204	-0.101
Q20	0.276		
Q2	0.202	0.177	-0.178
Q41		0.622	
Q24	0.134	0.585	
Q40		0.572	0.377
Q23		0.559	
Q37		0.515	0.456
Q22	-0.102	0.503	
Q13		0.489	
Q31		0.488	
Q30	-0.118	0.471	
Q42		0.442	-0.153
Q18	0.142	0.410	-0.278
Q5		0.357	
Q25		0.343	
Q11		0.325	0.166
Q45		0.270	-0.142
Q1			0.559
Q6		-0.147	0.489
Q8	0.175	-0.201	0.464
Q9		-0.258	0.435
Q29		0.149	0.403
Q38		0.295	0.393
Q12	0.256		-0.324
Q4			0.305
Q3		0.107	0.272
Q7	-0.111	-0.223	0.247
Q21			0.187

*Promax rotation converged in four iterations.

Two items (Q37 and Q40) were cross-loaded on the Security Orientation and Information-Sharing factors. These items however loaded slightly more on the Security Orientation factor. The items nevertheless measured both constructs. There were only two negative loadings – one (Q43) on the Cybersecurity Awareness factor and one (Q12) on the Information-Sharing factor. The six remaining items of the COQ that did not load on any of the three factors had below acceptable loadings.

Table 5 shows that the three factors are correlated with one another. There was a moderate yet negative relationship between the Cybersecurity Awareness factor and the Information-Sharing factor (-.366). This indicates that the participants' responses to these factors were opposites; thus, when participants agreed with items relating to the Cybersecurity Awareness factor, they disagreed with the items of the Information-Sharing factor. The Cybersecurity Awareness and Security Orientation factors had a small relationship, which indicates some similarity between these factors. The Security Orientation and Information-Sharing factors appear to have a negligible relationship, which indicates that these factors are not related.

Table 5: Factor correlation matrix for factors of the COQ

Factors	Security Orientation factor	Information-Sharing factor
Cybersecurity factor	.281	-.366
Security Orientation factor	1	-.095

Reliability

Table 6 indicates that the full-scale reliability of the COQ was .79, which is acceptable for research purposes. If the COQ is to be used with greater confidence, the reliability would need to be improved. The revised reliability of the COQ was .867, which is very good reliability, and indicates that there is good internal consistency in the COQ. The revised reliability, however, required the removal of 12 items, thereby settling on a scale of 32 items.

Table 6: Reliability statistics for the COQ

Instrument	Cronbach's alpha	Total items
Full-scale COQ	.787	44
Revised COQ	.867	32

Table 7 indicates the 12 items that had been removed along with their associated Cronbach's alpha values. Based on the removed items, most of the items were from the theorised and observed Information-Sharing factor.

Table 7: Items removed from the COQ

Removed items	Cronbach's alpha
Q7	.799
Q6	.808
Q9	.818
Q43	.828
Q21	.834
Q1	.841
Q3	.847
Q8	.854
Q4	.859
Q29	.864
Q38	.866
Q45	.867

Four dimensions were theorised as part of the COQ in the composition of the questionnaire. Since these four dimensions were theoretically envisioned as factors in the COQ, their reliability was evaluated. As shown in Table 8, the Cybersecurity Behaviour factor had the least number of items but was the only dimension acceptable for research purposes. The Information-Sharing Culture dimension had the lowest reliability, with the second most items in the COQ. When assessing the performance of the theorised dimensions in the COQ, it became clear that the arrangement of these dimensions did not produce consistency among these groupings of items.

Table 8: Reliability statistics for the four dimensions of the COQ

Dimensions	Cronbach's alpha	Total items
Information-Sharing Culture	.417	13
Security Orientation	.578	8
View on Cybersecurity	.647	16
Cybersecurity Behaviour	.765	7

Since the EFA identified three factors, the reliability of these factors was important for further development and refinement of the COQ. As Table 9 shows, the reliability of the three different factors was indicated. The Cybersecurity Awareness (.847) and Security Orientation (.807) factors presented with very good reliability, which indicates that the items for these factors consistently measured the construct. The Information-Sharing factor presented with very low reliability, which similarly mimicked the low reliability of the theorised Information-Sharing factor. This could possibly be an indication that the items in the Information-Sharing factor did not consistently measure this construct.

Table 9: Reliability statistics for the three factors of the COQ

Factors	Cronbach's alpha	Total items
Cybersecurity Awareness factor	.847	16
Security Orientation factor	.807	14
Information-Sharing factor	.495	8

Discussion

The EFA indicated three factors that accounted for most of the items in the COQ. There were two strong factors, namely Cybersecurity Awareness and Security Orientation. Based on the strength of the factor loadings, it should be highlighted that, theoretically, these two linked very strongly with each other as they fundamentally dealt with cybersecurity awareness threats and knowledge pertaining to cyberspace, and the precautionary measures to mitigate cyber threats.¹³³ The Security Orientation factor referred to the information security practices that users applied in cyberspace, whereas the Cybersecurity Awareness factor highlighted the overall knowledge that users might possess concerning cyber threats in the workplace. The literature shows that there is a consistent link between online behaviour and user knowledge of cyber threats.¹³⁴ Furthermore, while there might be emphasis on knowledge and online security behaviour, it is recommended that routine awareness training and the implementation of skills are necessary to be proficient in practising cybersecurity.¹³⁵ Kovačević et al. argue that individuals who have prior experience of threats will adhere to stronger security practices.¹³⁶ It may thus also be suggested that in this study, the link between the Cybersecurity Awareness and Security Orientation factors, both having higher factor loadings, was apparent. The aspect of knowledge and that of the presence of cybersecurity awareness are required to advance a user's approach to mitigate cyber threats; however, these two aspects are insufficient to change online security behaviour.¹³⁷ This view is strengthened by the idea that, even when users are aware of certain risks in cyberspace, it does not deter them from engaging in risky online activities.¹³⁸ Adding to this, users navigating cyberspace may also interpret risk-related information differently, which is due to the perceived emotional state of the individual. This implies that, when individuals have a positive attitude when they share information online, they may be less likely to be aware of the security risks and thus less likely to adhere to security-ensuring behaviour. Zwilling et al. suggest that a risk factor in establishing information security is the level of cybersecurity awareness displayed by an individual.¹³⁹ Behaviour that is attributed to a low level of awareness includes generally not paying attention to security practices, such as accessing an open-source Wi-Fi service when using a personal Internet-enabled device. On the other hand, a high level of awareness is associated with knowledge of cyber threats and the required skills to mitigate these threats effectively.¹⁴⁰

The Information-Sharing factor had the smallest loadings and negative and negligible relationships with both the Cybersecurity Awareness and Security Orientation factors. In addition, two items cross-loaded on the Security Orientation and Information-Sharing

factors. On inspection of these two items (Q37 and Q40), the content suggested that there might be an overlap between these two constructs. It must however be highlighted that cybersecurity behavioural practices and the knowledge of cyber threats might go together. This view may lend itself to the stance that the acquisition of knowledge and awareness regarding cybersecurity is an important component for users to safeguard themselves against cyber threats.¹⁴¹ It is however worth noting that this alone is insufficient to elicit a change in security behaviour. Moreover, it is essential to note that the effectiveness of these strategies is enhanced when combined with other influencing factors. The Information-Sharing factor emphasises how military members engage in the electronic exchange of information in their organisations. Moreover, the Information-Sharing factor focuses on military members' views of how well security information is promoted across the organisation.¹⁴² In addition, the efficacy of information sharing was argued to have a direct link with online security behaviour and vice versa. Furthermore, the reason for the low score of the Information-Sharing factor could be the lack of awareness relating to cybersecurity practices. Contextually, a shift in attention to information-sharing practices is essential in government institutions, such as military organisations, which are notorious for having top-down structures. When connecting to the individual in the organisational setting, it is necessary to note that the procedures that govern the sharing of information may provide a member of an organisation with the necessary peace of mind when engaging in virtual information sharing.¹⁴³ It is worth noting that, when there is a high level of information sharing between members of an organisation, operations and participation may increase. The level of privacy attached to the information may however also be a reason for why information does not reach all levels of an organisation.¹⁴⁴ In terms of the findings related to the Information-Sharing factor, this appears to be a cause for concern as it may not contribute to the overall construct of the COQ.¹⁴⁵ In addition, understanding the questions that are related to Information-Sharing Culture as a dimension could possibly have been a challenge for the participants. Furthermore, it is important to note that the scale items were informed by the qualitative themes extracted from Phase 1 of the larger study. It is also important to note that a major portion of the development of the questionnaire relied on literature that fell outside the African domain.

The removal of 12 items to obtain improved reliability for the COQ provided insight into the problematic items that had lowered the internal consistency of the COQ. When evaluating the items that lowered the reliability, it became apparent that they belonged to the Information-Sharing factor. All the questions that lowered the reliability focused on the security practice of sharing information in a public or secure space. This may also be linked with the knowledge of how information should be shared in settings where strict adherence to security measures applies.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the practice of sharing information in the military context depends on the available technology systems. This availability may however be affected to a certain degree by contextual challenges, such as budgetary constraints.¹⁴⁷ In terms of the impact that financial constraints may have on the cyber defence capacity of the SANDF, one needs to focus on four strategic objectives, namely developing capabilities, creating awareness initiatives regarding cybersecurity, conducting research and training, and coordinating and participating with both national and international stakeholders.¹⁴⁸ The SANDF may find that budgetary constraints have

an influence on the execution of these strategic goals, especially on the objective that focuses on training, as this connects with the development of cybersecurity awareness and knowledge.

The Information-Sharing factor, however, showed poor reliability, which was consistent with the theorised scale of the COQ. The Information-Sharing Culture dimension of the COQ therefore appears to be problematic, and might have hindered the measurement of the intended construct. The act of sharing information can be defined as the transfer of information between a sender and a receiver.¹⁴⁹ In the context of cybersecurity, information sharing plays a crucial role in establishing trust in an organisation. Trust and information sharing are indeed closely connected.¹⁵⁰ Information sharing is therefore a fundamental element in promoting a secure environment for organisations and their employees alike. Information-sharing practices also refer to best practices, policies, and guidelines relating to cybersecurity in the SANDF context. While the sharing of pertinent information is central to organisational settings, it may be a discouraging aspect of their jobs for members of the military to share information electronically. The hesitancy of information-sharing practices executed electronically in the SANDF context may explain why the dissemination of information did not load very high in the COQ. Mohammed *et al.* argue that attitudes towards technology could potentially be an indicator of how information sharing is conducted by individuals in organisations.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the military is a unique context in which certain pieces of information can be identified as sensitive. Sharing information on digital platforms can therefore be considered a risk, and the respondents might be less likely to share information online.¹⁵² This was evident from the questions removed from the COQ, as indicated in Table 7, namely Questions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

When the theorised dimensions of the COQ were evaluated, the Cybersecurity Behaviour scale was the only scale that showed acceptable reliability. The factors indicated by the EFA, however, presented with good internal consistency, particularly the Cybersecurity Awareness and Security Orientation factors. It is therefore no surprise that these factors had good internal consistency, as the literature indicates that the security measures and practical steps utilised by users have a strong link with awareness of cyber threats and attacks, as well as knowledge of cyberspace.¹⁵³ Precautionary online security mechanisms and education are highly significant in the context of the armed forces, and it is essential for members of the military to be aware of cyber threats and possible risks. The Cybersecurity Awareness factor highlighted the elements of cybersecurity views and knowledge. Zwilling *et al.* argue that, in order to advance knowledge on the subject of cybersecurity awareness, attention must be paid to training programmes in order to mitigate the risks.¹⁵⁴ It is therefore of the greatest importance to emphasise that these two factors had a level internal consistency owing to the fundamental connection between precautionary mechanisms and awareness.¹⁵⁵ In addition, individual cybersecurity awareness may be influenced by top management in organisational structures.¹⁵⁶ Given the current findings, it should be highlighted that contextual factors, such as attitudes and possible managerial support, might influence how cybersecurity awareness is approached in organisational contexts.

Based on the EFA and reliability results, it is clear that the COQ is a very promising measurement instrument. The full-scale COQ showed acceptable reliability, and once the problematic items had been removed, the COQ showed very good reliability, which indicated that it consistently measured the intended constructs. The EFA and reliability indicated that the COQ had two strong factors with very good internal consistency. Furthermore, the EFA and the reliability results highlighted an important issue relating to the Information-Sharing factor that was present in both analyses. The Information-Sharing factor presented negligible reliability and appeared to have contradictory relationships with the two stronger factors in the COQ, namely the Cybersecurity Awareness and Security Orientation factors. When considering the above findings, it is argued that the COQ may be a useful screening tool for military units, as it shows good potential.

Limitations and recommendations

This study was limited to a select sample only, mainly for the reasons relating to accessibility and availability of military officers. A restriction on range prevailed; the findings derived from this study therefore cannot be generalised to the entire SANDF. Due to the nature of the recruitment for the larger study, the sample size of this study was small, and follow-up studies on the COQ will thus require a much larger sample. Although age and rank are regarded as potential factors that could affect cybersecurity awareness, these were not evaluated in this initial exploration of the COQ due to a predominately young sample and limited number of each rank category present. Rank and age were, however, noted as potential factors that may have affected the results.

The findings also suggest the necessity for further investigation of the items relating to the different factors and possibly the elimination or revision of ill-fitting items. As a result, the statements in the COQ will be revised as part of the further development and refinement of the questionnaire. The authors recommend follow-up research in terms of the COQ be done and that a pre-knowledge survey of cybersecurity awareness be conducted. The focus on pre-knowledge will group the data based on a three-cluster classification, namely as a high level of pre-knowledge, a medium level of pre-knowledge, and limited pre-knowledge or a lack of such knowledge.

The development of the COQ is ongoing and flexible to accommodate new technological trends and expected security behaviours that may emerge. Furthermore, the COQ may be used as a valuable component in contributing to the development of a curriculum that focuses on cybersecurity awareness in the SA military context. This curriculum could target the cyber education of members of the military at all levels. The COQ provides a foundation through which military officers could evaluate their level of awareness of cybersecurity. In addition, the COQ may also be used before and after cybersecurity education to determine whether members acquired knowledge. Furthermore, future research could explore the complexities of a digital culture in the SANDF, as this may serve as a contextual view on technological integration. Further exploration and development of the COQ scale items are therefore necessary. Moreover, while psychology was not the focus of this article, a recommendation for future research on cybersecurity awareness is to investigate how psychologists in the SA armed forces context may explore the behavioural aspects of cybersecurity awareness.

Conclusion

The COQ showed acceptable reliability for research purposes ($r = .79$; $p = .000$). The prominent three-factor structure was in line with the theorised factors envisioned during the development of the COQ. The initial validation of the COQ delivered promising results for assessing cybersecurity awareness in an SA military sample. The findings of this study indicate that the COQ may provide valuable information on cybersecurity awareness among military members, and it is thus considered a promising screening tool to be used for military units.

In summary, this article emphasises the importance of developing measuring instruments specifically for the SA military context. Cybersecurity will continue to be a pressing issue that gives cause for concern in the context of the SA armed forces. It is therefore important to develop future military officers who have a comprehensive skill set inclusive of cyber-related aspects, such as cybersecurity awareness and education.

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are the authors' own and are not the official position of any institution.

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Colonel Jan Breytenbach – Military Historian or Storyteller?

An Analysis of Breytenbach’s Work using a Military History Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Books on the South African Border War have flooded the popular market in the last two decades. Historians, journalists, and particularly ex-soldiers – often amateur writers – have tapped into the market. The genres of books include, but are not limited to, personal accounts, autobiographies, regimental histories, journalist accounts, and academic books. Jan Breytenbach was one of the first South African Defence Force officers to write about the Border War. He published seven books, and paved the way for many writers to follow in his footsteps. Most of his books focus on the history of 32 Battalion. Against this background, the study on which this article is based, aimed to analyse Breytenbach’s writing using a conceptual framework put forward by military historians.

Keywords: Jan Breytenbach, SADF, South African Border War, Angola, South West Africa, Conceptual Frameworks, Military Historian

Introduction

Colonel Jan Dirk Breytenbach was a well-known officer of the South African Defence Force (SADF). He earned a reputation for being an excellent and sometimes controversial soldier while fighting in the South African (SA) Border War. He turned full-time writer after retiring from the SADF, and has published seven books. The study, reported on in this article, aimed to analyse the literary work of Jan Breytenbach critically using mainly the conceptual framework put forward by Morillo and Pavkovic in *What is Military History?* as a lens.¹⁵⁸ The aim was not to assess Breytenbach as a soldier, but as a writer of military history.

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

- Who is Breytenbach?
- About what does he write?
- Where does his work fit into the historiography of SA military history?
- What did he aim to achieve with his writing?

- Which style does his writing take?
- Where does his work fit into the theory and practice of military history?
- What are the limitations of his work?

The contextual framework used to answer these questions focuses on the different types of narratives, philosophical views, and writing styles used in military history. According to the framework, narrative types can fall into one of three groups: 'Portrait of the age', the 'Career of a subject', or 'Genetic'.¹⁵⁹ Alternatively, narrative types can also be determined through 'Storytelling' or 'Statistical analysis'. The framework puts the philosophical view of a writer within one of three categories: 'Great man'/'Decisive battles', 'Chance'/'Contingent history', or 'Structured contingency'.¹⁶⁰ The framework is not uniformly used but provides a starting point to analyse the literacy work of authors.

Personal Background

Colonel Jan Breytenbach was a career soldier who served in various branches of the military throughout his career of nearly four decades. His military career started in 1950 when he joined the armoured corps of the SADF. He left the SADF after serving it for five years, and joined the British Royal Navy Fleet Arm as a navigator. He re-joined the SADF in 1961, and became a paratrooper.

His career took him to great heights. Breytenbach became famous for forming three of the SADF elite units: 1 Reconnaissance Commando ('1 Recce'), 32 Battalion ('Buffalo Battalion'), and 44 Parachute Brigade ('44 Para Bde'). He also formed the SA Army Guerrilla School, which he commanded until his retirement in 1987. He did not only create these elite units, but also served with them in South West Africa (now Namibia) and Angola. He was involved in many battles, and saw plenty of action during the Border War.¹⁶¹ Breytenbach received seven service and merit medals,¹⁶² as well as four decorations (the Van Riebeeck Decoration [DVR], the Southern Cross Decoration [SD], the Southern Cross Medal [SM], and the Military Merit Medal [MMM]) for bravery and leadership in action.¹⁶³ He became a well-known soldier who earned the respect of many men who served with him, and developed a reputation for being a superb soldier and fearless officer.

Breytenbach pursued a career as a full-time writer after retirement.¹⁶⁴ His writings expound his experiences of battle. Breytenbach published seven books over a period of about twenty-five years: *Forged in Battle* (1986), *They Live by The Sword* (1990), *Eden's Exiles: One Soldier's Fight for Paradise* (1997), *The Plunderers* (2001), *The Buffalo Soldiers* (2002), *Eagle Strike! The Story of the Controversial Airborne Assault on Cassinga 1978* (2008), and *The Tempered Sword: Forged in Battle Revisited, Operation Savannah and the Birth of 32Bn* (2011).

Motivation for Writing

There are many reasons for writing military history. Military historian Peter Grey classifies these reasons into four categories: entertaining, critical, educational, and prescriptive.¹⁶⁵ Financial incentives apply to all these categories. Breytenbach mainly writes to entertain. Firstly, he became a full-time writer after retirement from the army, and writing books

earned him an income. Writing military-themed books thus became his second career, although he was not a trained historian. General Jannie Geldenhuys, former Chief of the SA Army, and Chief of the SADF, describes Breytenbach's writing in the foreword to *Forged in Battle*, 'it is as if one is sitting under a camel-thorn tree listening to interesting stories told by this extraordinary and sometimes controversial man'.¹⁶⁶

Soldiering is not Breytenbach's only passion in life. He has a deep love for nature and conservation. Breytenbach initially planned to become the park warden of the Western Caprivi Game Park, which fell under the South West African Conservation Department. His job offer was however withdrawn due to what he calls 'security reasons' and 'stepping on the wrong political and military toes'.¹⁶⁷ He did not let the disappointment and setback of being turned down for the position discourage him from becoming involved in conservation. Breytenbach decided to investigate large-scale wildlife poaching and smuggling via a clandestine military intelligence supply route to Savimbi's UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola).¹⁶⁸ He eventually published his findings in *Eden's Exiles: One Soldier's Fight for Paradise* (1997) and *The Plunderers* (2001). These two books are his only writings that are not purely combat-orientated.

Breytenbach's second motivation for writing is to be critical. He wishes to tell his story and experiences to the world, and wants to shed light on events that are unknown to the public. Breytenbach has a strong personality, is not easily intimidated, and will speak his mind and share his opinions. According to Mike MacWilliams, who served under Breytenbach, Breytenbach's primary reason for writing *Eagle Strike* was:

[T]o counteract and refute the barrage of propaganda launched by a variety of people who had political or personal motives to paint a false picture of what actually happened on Ascension Day in 1978 (Battle of Cassinga). The Colonel's indignation at the lies and half-truths directed at his Paratroopers and the South African Air Force is the reason why he put aside other projects in order to complete this book (Eagle Strike!) in time for the 30th anniversary of the battle.¹⁶⁹

The Historiography of the South African Border War

Breytenbach's books fall in the military history genre. More specifically, they all share the same topic: the South African (SA) Border War.

Writings about war are usually produced in a specific order. Journalists and war correspondents are typically the first to write about and report their experiences during or after a war. They are often employed by governments to record events, sometimes to produce propaganda. Appointed historians soon follow with instructions to write the official history of a country. These writings have a top-down view, and neglect personal experiences. Regimental histories and personal stories appear a few years after the official histories. These histories are usually written by ex-soldiers who served in a particular war. They might have a biased and one-sided view in favour of the regiment. The regiment and its soldiers are often portrayed as the "heroes". Personal accounts appear next. These have a bottom-up view, and adopt a more informal approach. Lastly, many years later, scholars

write about wars in an academic way. Most of the soldiers that fought in those wars had by then retired or passed on, leaving academics to analyse certain topics critically from a distance. Popular writing usually appears at the same time as academic writing. These books are often written by academics and writers who turn their research into a more “readable” popular work with the goal of selling books.

The historiography of the SA Border War however does not follow the same trend. The Border War, also known as the Bush War, lasted from 1966 to 1990. South Africa experienced a radical political transition in the early 1990s, leading to a democratic dispensation in 1994. The then SADF was transformed into the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) that same year. No fewer than eight forces, including Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Azanian People’s Liberation Army (APLA), were integrated into its ranks.¹⁷⁰ The Border War became a controversial and somewhat taboo topic. No official histories appeared. Most official documents were classified, and it was nearly impossible for historians to get access, especially in the first two decades after the war. A few personal accounts appeared during the war and shortly after it had ended. Some of these accounts are a mixture of autobiographical and regimental histories. Breytenbach’s work falls into this latter category. He and others opened the door for a flood of personal accounts that appeared later.

Esterhuysen argues that there are two main reasons why the literature on SA military history, particularly the Border War, is currently enjoying reader popularity. Firstly, most men and women who served in the SADF during the Border War are now retired. They have time to read, to do introspection and reflection, and to write about their experiences. Secondly, there is a specific interest in special operation forces. According to Esterhuysen, “[t]he daring nature and cloud of “we cannot talk about our operations” are precisely the reasons why the public are more interested in what these kind of soldiers have to say.”¹⁷¹ Esterhuysen is also of the opinion that ‘in most cases, Special Forces literature contains all the basic elements of a good story: adventure, excitement, courage, unprecedented hardship, secrecy and heroes’.¹⁷²

Between the 1980s and the early 2000s, a few historians and journalists published books about the war. Military historian Willem Steenkamp’s *Borderstrike: South Africa into Angola* (1983), *Suid-Afrika se Grensoorlog: 1966–1989*, and military commentator and analyst Helmoed-Römer Heitman’s *South Africa’s Armed Forces* (1985), *War in Angola: The Final South African Phase* (1990), and *South Africa’s War Machine* (2001) are examples. Their books reflect a type of overview approach that differs in that regard from Breytenbach’s work. Military correspondent Al J Venter’s *War in Angola* (1992) appeared in the same period. Venter’s impressive list of publications relating to the Border War grew in the last fifteen years: *Barrel of a Gun: A War Correspondent’s Misspent Moments in Combat* (2010), *War Stories: Up Close and Personal in Third World Conflicts* (2011), *Gunship Ace: The Wars of Neall Ellis, Helicopter Pilot and Mercenary* (2012), *African Stories* (2013), *As the Crow Flies: My Bushman Experience with 31 Battalion* (2015), *Battle for Angola: The End of the Cold War in Africa 1975–89* (2017), and *Takka Takka Bom Bom: A South African War Correspondent’s Story* (2022).¹⁷³ Venter writes from a unique angle on the war as a military correspondent. Like Breytenbach, much of his work is also autobiographical.

Historian Francois Spies wrote a campaign history on Operation Savannah, the first large-scale cross-border operation by the SADF into Angola. In 1989, he published *Operasie Savannah, Angola, 1975–1976* – alas, only in Afrikaans.¹⁷⁴ Military historian and journalist Leopold Scholtz made a remarkable contribution to the historiography of the Border War. He published four well-researched books about the war between 2013 and 2022: *The SADF in the Border War, 1966–1989* (۲۰۱۳), *The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale: Cold War Angolan Finale, 1987–1988* (2016), *Ratels on the Lomba: The Story of Charlie Squadron* (۲۰۱۷), *The SADF and Cuito Cuanavale: A Tactical and Strategic Analysis* (2020). Jeremy Black is of the opinion that battlefield accounts are very popular in all major military history markets.¹⁷⁵ The same is true of the SA market, and Scholtz tapped into the market. He wrote about the conventional battles fought by the SADF around Cuito Cuanavale in 1987–1988. He analysed the outcomes of the battles on operational and strategic level from an academic perspective.¹⁷⁶ Scholtz used primary archival sources to research the topic, something most other writers on the Border War, including Breytenbach, did not do.¹⁷⁷

The work of historians differs greatly from that of Breytenbach. Not only did they write in a more academic way and use especially primary sources in their research, but they also considered the outcomes and the consequences that the battles and operations had on the development of the Border War. Breytenbach tends to be more descriptive and less analytical.

Geldenhuis published his autobiography in 1993, *Die Wat Wen: 'n Generaal se Storie uit 'n Era van Oorlog en Vrede*. An English version was published two years later. Geldenhuis also wrote *Dié Wat Gewen Het: Feite en Fabels van die Bosoerlog* (2007), *We Were There: Winning the War for Southern Africa* (n.d.), and *At the Front: A General's Account of South Africa's Border War* (2009). General Magnus Malan, also a former Chief of the Army, Chief of the SADF, and Minister of Defence, published his autobiography in 2006, *Magnus Malan, My Life with the SA Defence Force*. Historian Gary Baines criticises Malan's autobiography for its lack of insight into his personality or character when he says, '[t]his work is not a conventional autobiography or memoir. Even after more than 500 pages, General Magnus Malan's private life remains a closed book.'¹⁷⁸ Although Geldenhuis and Malan set the example, not many high-ranking officers of the SADF followed their example by producing autobiographies. The gap in literature remains. Although Breytenbach's work shares a few similarities with Geldenhuis' work, it is only semi-autobiographical in nature.

Quite a few semi-official regimental histories saw the light. Many of them have a similar style to that of Breytenbach's work, although each of them is unique in its own way. It can be argued that Breytenbach set the example and paved the way for similar works to follow. Piet Nortje's books on 32 Battalion act as examples. He writes about his time spent in the notorious and sometimes controversial unit, *32 Battalion: The Inside Story of South Africa's Elite Fighting Unit* (2003), *The Battle of Savate* (2015), and *The Terrible Ones: A Complete History of 32 Battalion* (2012).¹⁷⁹ Although the last title makes a very ambitious claim, as no historical writing is ever complete, this two-volume edition boasts comprehensive content. A regimental history also worth mentioning is

Steenkamp and Heitman's *Mobility Conquers: The Story of 61 Mechanised Battalion Group, 1978–2005* (2016). At the forefront of most conventional operations in Angola, 61 Mech, as the Battalion Group was commonly referred to, was the premier conventional fighting unit of the SADF.¹⁸⁰ Major General Roland de Vries also wrote about 61 Mech indirectly. His books, *Mobiele Oorlogvoering: 'n Perspektief vir Suid-Afrika* (1987), *The Eye of the Firestorm: Strength Lies in Mobility* (2013), and *Mobile Warfare for Africa: On the Successful Conduct of Wars in Africa and Beyond – Lessons Learned from the South African Border War* (2017),¹⁸¹ have a “lessons learned” approach. He analyses the SADF doctrine of mobile warfare by using 61 Mech as a lens to study the Border War. Peter Stiff's *The Silent War: South African Recce Operations, 1969–1994* (1999) can be considered the first semi-official history on South African Special Forces Operations. Paul Els followed in Stiff's footsteps with *We Fear Naught but God: The Story of the South African Special Forces, “The Recces”* (2000).¹⁸² More recently, Douw Steyn and Arné Söderlund made a contribution with *Iron Fist from the Sea: South Africa's Seaborne Raiders 1978–1988* in 2015. This latter book tells the story of 4 “Recce” Commando, later named 4 Reconnaissance Regiment, and its secretive and daring missions during the Border War. The Regiment was arguably the most elite Special Forces unit of the SADF.¹⁸³ The book is best described as an unofficial regimental history.¹⁸⁴

Most books on the Border War revolve around elite units, such as 32 Battalion, 1 Parachute Battalion,¹⁸⁵ Koevoet,¹⁸⁶ the “Recces”, and 61 Mech. The last decade, however, has seen an explosion in memoirs and popular writing by “ordinary soldiers” flooding the market.¹⁸⁷ Baines suggests why many low-ranking SADF veterans have ‘found their voices and the silence well and truly shattered’,¹⁸⁸ and have published their memoirs in recent years:

Alongside these military histories, memoirs by former national servicemen about their experiences in the SADF, and especially about the “Border War”, have recently proliferated. No sooner had I suggested that veterans had been “silenced” by a combination of political circumstances and self-imposed restraints, than the floodgates opened and the pent-up stories grew from a trickle to a stream. Like WG Sebald, who reckoned that German writers failed to engage with the issues of suffering and trauma after World War II, I probably overstated my argument that ex-conscripts were caught up in a cycle of guilt and shame that made them reluctant to tell their stories. If such a “taboo” ever existed, it has been overturned. Indeed, the subject of the war has become commonplace in artistic, literary, dramatic and visual representations.¹⁸⁹

A brief overview of Breytenbach's books is required to understand where his work fits into the historiography of the Border War. Breytenbach published seven books over twenty-five years, from 1986 to 2011.

Forged in Battle (1986) tells the story of 32 Battalion during Operation Savannah in Angola in 1976. The narrative revolves around key battles fought by the battalion, each covered in a short chapter. Breytenbach also dedicates chapters to answer some key topics, such as, ‘Is UNITA the enemy?’, ‘Courage and Cowardice’, and ‘Making Time’.

They Live by The Sword (1990) provides an overview of the actions of 32 Battalion during the Border War, from 1975 to 1989. Chapters have catchy titles, such as ‘Baptism of fire’, ‘Orphans of war’, ‘Jacks of all trades’, ‘And masters of war’, and ‘Tangling with tanks’. The book comprises only 271 pages. In this case, Breytenbach could have delved deeper into the content and produced a two-volume series.

Eden’s Exiles (1997) does not fall in the military history genre. Breytenbach investigates large-scale looting of wildlife in Southern Angola during the war. He describes how he discovered that Military Intelligence was involved in illegal wildlife trade with Jonas Savimbi of UNITA, and how his attempts to stop the looting and bring the perpetrators to justice were ignored and derailed. Breytenbach wrote *The Plunderers* (2001) next. This book is also about ivory and rhino horn poaching in Angola, and aims to create awareness for conservationism. It is, however, a work of fiction, and therefore very different from Breytenbach’s other books.

The Buffalo Soldiers (2002) is a compilation from *They Live by The Sword* (1990) and *Forged in Battle* (1986). The first 16 chapters of *The Buffalo Soldiers* comprise a verbatim repetition of *Forged in Battle*. Breytenbach only made a few minor changes in sentence constructions. He added a retrospective chapter on Operation Savannah. Chapters 18 to 31 comprise the contents of *They Live by The Sword*. Breytenbach added four chapters to explain the move of the unit to Pomfret at the end of the Border War, and their whereabouts until their eventual disbandment in 1993. *The Buffalo Soldiers* presented an opportunity to remarket and republish the previous two books.

Eagle Strike! (2008) tells the story of the airborne assault by 1 Parachute Battalion on Cassinga on 4 May 1978. The book comprises 23 chapters, stretching over 587 pages. Breytenbach spends 16 chapters on the build-up to the assault by referring to the background and development of the airborne capabilities, political developments, as well as planning by and training of the SADF for the assault. The assault itself is then covered in six chapters.

Breytenbach’s latest book was published 2011. *The Tempered Sword: Forged in Battle Revisited; Operation Savannah and the Birth of 32Bn* draws heavily on Breytenbach’s previous books. Twenty-five years have passed since the first publication of *Forged in Battle* (1986). As in the case of *The Buffalo Soldiers*, this book was an opportunity for Breytenbach to remarket his literature. The inclusion of accurate battle maps is arguably the best contribution to the new edition of the book.

Breytenbach was one of the first and few authors to write about the Border War, especially between the year the war ended in 1989 and 2000. His books are best described as a mixture between semi-autobiographical and campaign history, as they include elements of both. One can argue that Breytenbach was ahead of his time, as most other personal accounts appeared much later. It can, however, also be argued that Breytenbach paved the way by encouraging other soldiers to write about their experiences. Many of these authors write in a style similar to that of Breytenbach. Breytenbach’s work therefore deserves a central place in the historiography of the Border War.

Determining the Audience of Military History

According to Morillo and Pavkovic, there are three audiences for whom military writers cater: popular, academic, and military. The first group, the **popular** audience, refers to readers who find military reading interesting and recreational. They want a good story or angle on a specific military topic or event. Writers focus on this group to sell books for financial gain, and therefore write military-themed books due to their marketability. Academics, military personnel, professional authors, and popularisers can all cater for this group to sell a “good story”. The second group is the **academic** audience. Academics cater for their peers or students who want to do research or keep up with academic developments. The writing is more formal than for the popular audience, and academic in nature. This writing therefore does not appeal to the public, and is limited to academic institutions. The third group is the professional **military** personnel. This audience consists of military staff who want to learn lessons from past events to apply them in the future. Literature that caters for military personnel is usually written specifically for military institutions, such as staff colleges or military faculties.¹⁹⁰ The boundaries between the three audience groups, as described by Morillo and Pavkovic, are sometimes vague and often overlap. Writers who cater for a specific audience could therefore attract readers from the other audiences.

Jessup and Coakly argue that the ‘professional military personnel’ group can be further divided into three categories:

Operational: combat or military aspects; encompasses logistics, tactics, military strategy and leadership includes campaign studies and operationally oriented biography.

Administrative and technical: generally functional and professional activities of armed forces; includes studies of doctrine and organisational structure, procurement and training of manpower, and weapons developments; involves both peacetime and wartime developments.

The military and society: in an historical sense, considers the entire spectrum of military affairs throughout the cycle of war and peace; deals with institutional problems, solutions, and developments; explores the relationship between civil and military authority.¹⁹¹

Breytenbach caters mostly for the popular audience. He wants to sell books to generate an income, and wants to share his stories and experiences in a semi-autobiographical way. His writing on 32 Battalion and 44 Para Bde also has an element of regimental and operational history. Using the parameters set by Jessup and Coakly, Breytenbach’s writing therefore also overlaps with the “operational” group of military history.

Breytenbach writes in a semi-formal way, which makes his work easy to read; hence, widening his potential audience base. His writing comprises a mixture of opinions, experiences, and personal memories. He mainly caters for people interested in the Border War and related military topics. His biggest audience is former soldiers who served

during the same war and who can relate to his stories, but he also aims to attract readers from the public who did not serve in the military, and he says, '[a]s far as possible I have unfolded the story against the historical backdrop of the times, to lend understanding to those not familiar with the war.'¹⁹²

Writers, including academics, often cite Breytenbach's work, although his books are not of an academic nature. This proves that he is considered a respected and reliable source of information among academics and other writers alike. It might, however, also indicate that there is a limited number of academic sources available to use as references and that Breytenbach is one of the few authors to write about the Border War.

Breytenbach's work however falls into a specific genre, and therefore it has a limited potential audience pool. In the last few years, popular writing about the Border War has become quite popular, based on the number of publications that have appeared. The market is flooded with similar military-themed books, especially those relating to the Border War. It is unfortunately unclear how many of Breytenbach's books have been sold so far. One could argue that he would not have been able to publish seven books if there had not been a demand for such books and if they did not sell. The audience – despite being relatively small and limited – therefore has consumer potential.

Types of Narratives of Military History

According to Suganami, historical work falls within one of three types of narratives. The first type is called the 'Portrait of the Age'. This type is cross-sectional with respect to the passage of time. It characteristically takes a narrative form. The second kind of narrative is called 'the Career of a Subject'. In this case, the historian decides which events are worth mentioning and whether they had an important influence on the career of the subject. This narrative type aims to explain what happened to the subject during a given period by focusing on key events. The third kind of narrative is called 'Genetic'. This type explains how the end state came to be by going back in time. It focuses on the origins of an event or an institution.¹⁹³

Breytenbach writes in a semi-autobiographical way about the history of 32 Battalion and his own experiences serving with the unit. In this case, the narrative style can be described as a mixture between 'Portrait of the Age' and 'Career of a Subject'. He explains the birth and growth of the unit in a cross-sectional way. He however does not explain the history of the unit by going back in time, such as in the case of the 'Genetic' narrative. He starts at the beginning, and then tells the narrative all the way to the end of the war. The narrative is thus connected to the passage of time. Breytenbach does not focus much on specific dates, although the events unfold in a chronological order. He focuses especially on important events that took place, for example battles in which the battalion fought. These battles were paradoxically important to the development of the Border War, and Breytenbach's narrative can be seen as 'the Career of a Subject'.

According to Suganami, narrative types can also be explained by using a scale that has "facts" at one end of the scale, and "theory" at the other. "Storytelling" lies at one end of the scale, although the concept is ambiguous. The emphasis is on providing factual

evidence to support a story. This type of narrative can be used in both fiction and non-fiction. The inclusion of military fiction in the model complicates matters, since “factual evidence” strengthens the narrative. The lack of “factual evidence” might bring the reliability of the narrative into question. The writer tells the story by giving as many facts or detail as possible. He or she might, for example, give specific names and numbers of troops and weaponry, and the exact locations and times of movements. These facts might be historically correct and well researched, but they might overwhelm the reader, and the writers do not give their own views or interpretations of the events. Their personal interpretation of the events might only become clear in the compilation of facts that they have produced to tell the story. This form of writing has a very narrow and focused viewpoint. Reynolds is of the opinion that ‘ideally, a historical narrative or interpretation is a process of reasoning based upon a selection from surviving evidence of past events or “facts” which is organised into a logically consistent argument, rendering its subject both intelligible and communicable’.¹⁹⁴

“Statistical analysis” falls on the other end of the narrative scale. The emphasis is on theory building. Writers use graphs and statistics to interpret events. They focus on the picture they wish to paint to the audience, they try to build a general view of events, and their opinions come through strongly in the narrative. This writing style runs the risk of being too general or wide-angled. Humanity studies, such as political studies, often use statistical analysis in their narratives. Writers readily approach their research questions by using models that attempt to isolate and quantify the variables of a problem. According to Morillo and Pavkovic, historians are mostly suspicious of political science models due to their ‘inclination to see the particulars and exceptions embedded in specific narratives clashes with the generalisations and simplifications necessary for constructing broad schemes and models’.¹⁹⁵

Analysing the Conceptual Framework

Military historians use a wide variety of philosophical and methodological perspectives when they practice military history. According to Morillo and Pavkovic, ‘the conceptual core of military history lies at the intersection of specifically military ideas and methods increasingly common to many areas of contemporary historical inquiry’.¹⁹⁶ The authors are of opinion that there are three possible philosophical viewpoints that military historians can take. These are ‘Great Man’ or ‘Decisive Battles’, ‘Chance’ or ‘Contingent History’, and ‘Structured Contingency’.¹⁹⁷ In the first viewpoint, the ‘Great Man’ perspective, the victories of great generals are studied. The actions of these “great men” changed history. They put history on a new path with their ‘decisive battles’.¹⁹⁸ The focus of the writing revolves around a main character. This “traditional” view of history offers a view from above.¹⁹⁹

The second viewpoint falls on the other end of the conceptual scale. It can be described as one of “chance”. According to the ‘Contingent History’ view, the actions of leaders are virtually irrelevant to the course of a battle.²⁰⁰ Battles are complex and impossible to control or predict. There are multiple paths that they could take. These different possible paths are dictated by chance. Paths should not be seen as random because they can be traced backwards. Battles and the actions of commanders are therefore not decisive.

There are other factors that could have influenced the outcome, or the path history takes. The “contingent” view of causation views war as a complex scenario that can be studied, but not predicted.²⁰¹

Lastly, ‘Structured Contingency’ forms a paradox with ‘Great Man’ and ‘Contingent History’. Over the last sixty years, social inputs and views have had a considerable influence on military history. These social inputs cannot be defined and they do not fit into the previous perspectives. According to the ‘Structured Contingency’ view, social factors, demographics, historical experiences and the agency of common people, and deep constraints imposed by the environment and modes of production, must influence the outcome of events.²⁰² A single person or event “great man” or “decisive battle” alone cannot be responsible for change. This theory brings the “contingent” view into question.²⁰³

Furthermore, within ‘Structured Contingency’, there is a view that military technological advances are the most important factors in shaping history. This view is known as ‘Technological Determinism’.²⁰⁴ Historians adopting this view tend to overemphasise the importance of technology in the outcome of a war. They believe weapons are more important than leaders and social influences. Social historians disagree with the view, and believe that technology is shaped by social and cultural factors. Social historians have therefore undermined both technological determinism and the ‘Great Man’ view.²⁰⁵ According to Black, historians focus too much on the ‘weapons used in conflict, with far less attention devoted to machinery and other systems important in logistics, communication and other aspects of war’.²⁰⁶

Breytenbach’s work falls mainly within the first category of ‘Great Man’ or ‘Decisive Battles’. It is important to understand that Breytenbach wants to tell his story. He does not attempt to interpret or explain the outcome of events in the bigger picture. He does not explain the overall consequences; he merely describes events as they unfolded. Yet, his stories revolve around units, such as 32 Battalion and 1 Parachute Battalion. These units became the “great men” whose actions and decisive contacts with the enemy influenced history, even if was only on a regional level. It can be argued that, since Breytenbach’s work is largely semi-autobiographical, he himself becomes the “great man”. It can further be argued that Breytenbach does not try to explain the outcome of battles or skirmishes as random and complex events with many possible routes of development, as stipulated by the “contingent” view. According to Breytenbach’s narrative, the protagonist’s aggressive tactics and superior firepower will determine the same outcome in the battle, namely victory. Breytenbach’s work also does not have a ‘Structured Contingency’ view either. Although he had much social interaction with the men of 32 Battalion, and the unit formed a brotherhood, his work is not social in nature. His writing therefore does not focus purely on social aspects of the war, such as how the men experienced the war, and how it affected them and society in general.

Breytenbach gives credit to the SADF for procuring certain technological developments during the Border War. He explains, for example, the impact that Russian aircraft had on the battlefield. He claims that the South African Air Force lost air superiority in 1987, and could not provide adequate air support to ground forces.²⁰⁷ This loss of air superiority influenced and limited the SADF ground campaign. The ground forces worked around these limitations. Breytenbach mentions the advantages of certain weapon systems, for example G5 and G6 artillery units destroying FAPLA (People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola) targets,²⁰⁸ or Ratels equipped with ZT3-missiles destroying Russian T55 tanks.²⁰⁹ Although Breytenbach gives credit to these and many other systems for their influence on the battlefield, this does not suggest that they were responsible for changing the outcome of the war. The 'Great Man' view is therefore most applicable to the conceptual framework of his writing.

Style of Writing

Breytenbach's writing style can be described as semi-formal storytelling. In the context of the conceptual framework, this classification refers to his style of creating a narrative of events. Most of his work is military non-fiction. He would, for example name soldiers who were involved in a battle, where and how they tactically fought, the number of casualties would be given, and long lists of weaponry used. His writing is thus very factual. According to Black and MacRaidl, books written in the narrative form have two advantages over other writing styles: firstly, they sell best; and secondly, they are most accessible to the general reading public. They explain why the narrative form is so popular:

Narrative history is especially popular. This can be seen in child, adolescent and adult reading patterns, and there is an interesting parallel in literature, where the continued preference for stories, and a narrative approach, defies powerful academic literary fashions. The persistent popularity of the detective novel is especially noteworthy. This genre stresses the role of individuals and chance, has little directly to say about social background, and thrives on strong narrative structure. It offers exciting, often exemplary, stories, which are precisely what are sought by most readers of history ...

Narrative, of course, has the advantage of being readable. At the same time, narrative often overlooks causation, and, more specifically, there is a risk that the narrative of events becomes the history of many biographies, and that colourful characters of little historical importance might obscure our overall view.²¹⁰

The narrative style of writing comes naturally to Breytenbach. His stories are exiting and readable, and he successfully keeps the attention of his reader. Breytenbach sketches the role of the individual (he often uses a military unit as the protagonist) in the described events without focusing on the social background surrounding the events. In the foreword to *Forged in Battle* (2015), Geldenhuys says, '[Breytenbach] starts at one point and work his way systematically through a series of events to arrive at another point. He succeeds masterfully in refraining from a cold and impersonal discussion of this segment of history.'²¹¹ Breytenbach's personal imprint is indeed clear in his writing.

Breytenbach writes about events in a chronological order by starting with one discussion point and working to the next point or chapter. He does not often use specific dates but rather vague timeframes, for example ‘from the middle of 1977’,²¹² ‘during 1979 and 1980’,²¹³ and ‘during December 1987’.²¹⁴ This tendency can make it difficult for the reader to form a specific timeline and cross-reference with other sources. This writing style corresponds with what is said in the foreword to *Forged in Battle* where Geldenhuys gives an almost warning-like expectation, ‘[w]ith material like this, an author can easily fall into a trap of “and then this happened, and then that happened”’.²¹⁵ In general, Breytenbach reflects a more informal writing style rather than an academically “correct” approach.

Geldenhuys also comments on Breytenbach’s writing style in the foreword to *Forged in Battle*, ‘[t]he excellent way in which the author uses language lends finesse to the book’.²¹⁶ Academics and authors might disagree with Geldenhuys’ assessment. Black and MacRailld provide history students with some general points on proper writing style of history literature:

How you write is as important as what you write. Badly constructed sentences, errant punctuation and poor spelling will prevent the award of high marks ... The language you use in history essays is very important. Try to use the correct language, but not the slang, of everyday speech. Do not try to be clever with your writing style just for the sake of it ... It is worth bearing in mind the nostrums of political correctness when you are writing.²¹⁷

Breytenbach’s literature can be criticised based on Black and MacRailld’s guidelines if judged from an academic perspective.²¹⁸ He uses “proper” English, and his grammar is correct, but that is expected of any writer hoping to publish and sell books. There is, however, a very informal side to Breytenbach’s writing. He uses language such as ‘the noisiest crap I have ever heard’,²¹⁹ ‘[s]hoot, you bastards! Look at the enemy you dumb idiot’,²²⁰ ‘our crapped-out three inch mortars’,²²¹ ‘what the hell are you doing? ... the bloody Portuguese army’,²²² ‘there were bodies lying around ... begin to add a rather “pongy” contribution’,²²³ ‘[w]hooooo-ooop! Whooooo-ooop! The sound was rapidly drawing closer.’²²⁴ At one point, he refers to a certain captain as ‘moronic’.²²⁵ The use of language like this could grab the reader’s attention and add excitement to the story. It might, however, also bring the formality and quality of Breytenbach’s writing into question. It is therefore necessary to understand that Breytenbach makes no claim to produce academic literature or to receive “high marks”, and he does not pretend to be a professional writer. The writing guidelines and criticism set forward by Black and MacRailld should therefore not be used as the sole judgement of the quality of Breytenbach’s writing. It merely underscores the view that Breytenbach is not a formal writer and military historian, but rather a good storyteller that caters for the general public.

The Use of Humour and Nicknames

Breytenbach has a good sense of dry humour, which makes his books enjoyable to read. He sometimes tells jokes between describing action scenes, for example:

Well, I personally never received a bottle and sometimes had to make do with an Angolan whiskey which was, believe it or not called “Shell” whiskey. It tasted more like petrol than whiskey. Presumably the “distillery” filled their bottles at the refinery in Luanda.²²⁶

He would also write, ‘[w]hile no recommendation for the stopping power of the R5 rifle, it was unqualified proof of the protection that army bully beef can provide against rifle fire’,²²⁷ and ‘[t]he FAPLA troops, as a whole, were thus never too keen to face the uncertainties of a lead-polluted battlefield.’²²⁸ Breytenbach also used humour in the third person. In *The Plunderers* (2001), he describes, for example, a dialogue between a “Bushman” (nowadays “San person”) named Shuttle Foot and a Major Richard:

When I was in Pretoria I was taken to see the rugby between Northern Transvaal and Western Province. There was one man who kept on kicking the ball. He was called Naas Botha, probably a son of Mr Botha (Prime Minister) because every time he touched the ball everyone either cheered or booed. Rugby is a stupid game that only the Boers can understand.²²⁹

Breytenbach also uses sarcasm in his writing. He writes for example, ‘[f]or supper we were served the treat of warmed-up tinned peas, tinned green beans, tinned mystery balls and, horror of horrors, large dollops of cold smashed spuds. An over-sweetened cup of cold coffee finished of this gourmet feast’,²³⁰ and ‘I think particularly of the Cubans who always left the battlefield first, in fact deserting their black FAPLA allies to our not-so-tender mercies.’²³¹ Breytenbach further comments on the name given to Operation Reindeer:

I learned that the operation had been given the code name ‘Bruilof’ (Wedding in English). What a stupid code name it was to allocate to a “gung-ho” parachute assault! Later the code name was changed to ‘Reindeer’ by someone with a warped sense of humour. Was it to be Christmas time with the paratroopers taking some really nasty “presents” to SWAPO [South West Africa People’s Organisation]?²³²

The use of humour is a clear attempt to entertain his audience. It also underscores the idea that he uses an informal writing style, and installs his personal touch in his writing.

Breytenbach likes to use first name or even nicknames when talking about his fellow soldiers. Names, such as Toom, Dries, Schalky, Corkey, Piet, Willie, Jack and Shuffle Foot, are used instead of calling the soldiers on their surnames or ranks. In the back of *Forged in Battle* (1986), there is a list with the full names and ranks of the characters in the book. The primary reason for using first names and nicknames instead of ranks, surnames, or titles is most likely to connect with the reader and to give the story an informal touch.

Interpretation of the “Art of War”

Marillo and Pavkovic are of the opinion that a military historian can explain the art of war in many ways:

The historian can look at war in terms of how it fits into larger political aims of a country or leader, what strategies leaders adopted to fit their larger aims, and how these strategies were executed, or what the results were ... The focus at any of these levels might be on the decisions made by leaders, the institutions that put those decisions into operation, the experience of individuals far from decision-making but close to the action generated by the decisions, or the world of ideas, beliefs and ideologies, including religious beliefs and practices, that shaped the plans, decisions, and actions of individuals and groups.²³³

Breytenbach has a very clear idea of how to use guerrilla tactics to achieve strategic outcomes. He is not afraid to speak his mind, and diplomacy is not his forte. For example, Breytenbach describes an encounter with Jonas Savimbi, leader of UNITA:

Suddenly, across the border stepped the emaciated and exhausted Dr Jonas Savimbi and four or five of his high command. I rescued them, just in time, from being lynched by one of my FNLA [National Front for the Liberation of Angola] patrols. Perhaps I should have arrived an hour or two later, because Savimbi was destined to become a big, and very bad apple in the future conservation barrel, exerting a baleful influence on rhino horn and ivory smuggling in particular.²³⁴

Breytenbach often criticises officers' lack of vision for the use of guerrilla tactics. He also criticises the tactical and strategic decisions made by both generals and lower-level officers during the conventional battles fought by the SADF in 1987–1988. Breytenbach is of opinion that too many generals gave unwarranted orders and advice, '[a]s Napoleon put it: "There is only one thing worse than one bad general and that is two good generals."' ²³⁵ Breytenbach also criticises the orders and actions of the commanding officer of Battle Group Charlie during Operation Modular, '[t]he commander of Battle Group Charlie, for reasons best known to him, had given 16-Brigade the opportunity to escape to lick its wounds', ²³⁶ and '[i]t was a pity that the commander of Battle Group Charlie had not been made of sterner stuff. A better leader would not have allowed FAPLA to escape.' ²³⁷ He is very outspoken about this officer, but he never reveals his name. Breytenbach's opinion on the art of war is mostly limited to the tactical and operational levels of war. He does not focus much on strategy or grand strategy of generals and politicians. The aim of his writing is not to analyse the Border War in the way academics do, but to talk about experiences.

Comments on Reliability

Geldenhuys comments on Breytenbach's excellent memory in the foreword to *Forged in Battle*:

Jan has an eye for detail and he must have an excellent memory. I have never seen him taking notes and am not aware of him keeping a diary at all, but the precise detail with which he describes the circumstances, environment

and incidents is almost unbelievable. This becomes more stunning if one bears in mind that many of these incidents took place under severe pressure, leaving little time for taking down notes for a book. When one reads the book, however, it is amazing how vividly one is able to remember the actual scenes and events.²³⁸

Breytenbach thus shows an amazing ability to remember events in detail, especially given the time-lapse of many years between the events taking place and the writing of the books. There are, however, a few critical points to raise. Firstly, he does not use any footnotes in his writing. It is therefore not easy to compare the information he gives with other sources. Secondly, Breytenbach could not have been present during all the events, for example, the deployment and battles of 32 Battalion. The reader is left with questions of where and how Breytenbach obtained his information. Breytenbach gives some credit to writers, such as Fred Bridgland, Helmoed-Römer Heitman, and Peter Stiff, for using the books that they had written about similar topics to gain background knowledge and to get insights.²³⁹ He provides a few 'top secret' handwritten notes on Operation Reindeer and flight manifests as examples of sources,²⁴⁰ but nowhere in his books does he use footnotes to acknowledge sources. There is no way to determine which information is his personally, or to verify the authenticity of the sources. Thirdly, Breytenbach hints at a lack of memory, '[i]f memory serves me right ...'²⁴¹ and 'I cannot remember which route was which colour, but for the purpose of this narrative we will call the southernmost road the green route and the northern one the blue route.'²⁴² This brings the reliability of his experiences, together with not taking notes (as mentioned by Geldenhuys) into question. Fourthly, Breytenbach sometimes contradicts himself. For example, after calling a misfire from an RPG-7 rocket a 'dud', he later refers to the same incident, and says, '[i]n fact, the reason why the RPG-7 rocket that hit him never exploded was because it was fired from less than 15 meters, the distance it had to travel before it could arm itself.'²⁴³

Is this contradicting or correction a case of poor memory or sloppy writing? It is perhaps a little bit of both. Breytenbach can however be forgiven for "sloppy writing" as he does not claim to be a professional writer or a military historian. The way in which he narrates battlefield experiences underscores his unique style of writing. Breytenbach clearly has a great memory, and his narrative is mostly reliable. Unfortunately, due to a lack of evidence, the reader cannot be completely sure about the facts or to what extent they are reliable. The reader might also ask from where Breytenbach obtained the information. Breytenbach claims to have conducted and recorded personal interviews with members of 32 Battalion but provides no further detail.²⁴⁴ Personal interviews can be conducted formally but they may also be informal conversations. Both types of sources fall under the wider category of "oral history". The oral history classification is broad, and generally refers to stories carried over through generations. This is, however, not the type of oral history that is applicable to Breytenbach's research. He made use of what is referred to as 'personal reminiscence'. This latter type refers to oral evidence specific to the life expectations of the informant.²⁴⁵ Oral sources might have questionable reliability as evidence. Prins has a negative opinion about oral source:

Historians in modern, mass-literate, industrial societies – that is, most professional historians – are generally pretty sceptical about the value of oral sources in reconstructing the past ... But historians are literate people, *par excellence*, and for them the written word is paramount. It sets the standard and methods. It downgrades spoken words which are rendered utilitarian and flat compared to the concentrated meaning of text. The nuances and types of oral data are not seen.²⁴⁶

According to Prins, historians look for three qualities in sources and oral sources, and Breytenbach's work conspicuously lacks all three:

They demand precision in form. It is important to see the stable nature of the evidence. A document is an artefact. There are no doubts about what the testimony is, physically: the form is fixed. It can also be tested in various ways, physically (again) but also by a battery comparative, textual, structural and other means. This gives the second quality its sought: precision in chronology.²⁴⁷

Oral sources – especially if interviews were not conducted under formal conditions and transcripts had not been made – have limited reliability as historical evidence. This does not mean that all oral sources should be disregarded as evidence, as there are various factors that contribute to their reliability and usefulness, for example, the number of interviews, the conditions under which they were undertaken, and their format could influence their reliability. It would have been better if Breytenbach had provided specific information about the interviews he conducted.

It is difficult to assess the accuracy of numbers reported by Breytenbach, as he is not consistent in the way he provides evidence. It is also difficult to compare the data that he provided with other sources, since his books have no footnotes to indicate where he had obtained the data. Breytenbach would sometimes be very specific. He would, for example, indicate exactly how many enemy soldiers had been killed. At other times, however, he is vague. He would, for example, write, 'SWAPO lost 201 men killed' during Operation Super.²⁴⁸ Heitman provides the exact number in his book *South African Armed Forces* (1990), '201 terrorists were killed ...'.²⁴⁹ Nortje writes in *The Terrible Ones* (2014) that the number of enemy soldiers killed during Operation Super is estimated, and that no one can know for sure how many died, since the SADF soldiers never counted the bodies due to these being spread out over a wide area. Nortje is of opinion that the claim of 201 was only a 'psychological number', presumably for propaganda purposes.²⁵⁰ Similarly, Breytenbach reported on another battle, '[r]esults were monitored and confirmed by Recces on the ground, so the figures can be regarded as accurate. More than 400 tanks and soft-skinned vehicles were destroyed during this period.'²⁵¹ Breytenbach describes the aftermath of the airborne assault on Cassinga, '[w]e killed more than 600 guerrillas and wounded another 1 000 in the base that was brimming with between 2 000 and 3 000 armed Swapo Cadres.'²⁵² No references are given, and therefore it is difficult to compare the data to other sources. Why does Breytenbach not give a specific number here as well instead of saying 'more than' or 'between' if the figures are accurate?

There are also numerous vague descriptions of smaller skirmishes, while it would in fact have been easier for Breytenbach to give an accurate account. It seems that Breytenbach provides specific “big numbers”, such as 400 tanks destroyed, but then he cannot give details on the “small numbers”. He would write, for example, ‘shortly afterwards Double 0 led Danny and some of his men into an ambush. Some were killed’,²⁵³ ‘[h]e [a “Bushmen” named Kampembe] took a toll almost every day, killing at least one guerrilla with either his rifle or his poisoned arrows’,²⁵⁴ ‘[t]he next morning we cleared the battlefield, collecting 75mm and B10 guns and some 12,7mm heavy machine guns’,²⁵⁵ and ‘FAPLA tanks knocked out several Ratel-20s’.²⁵⁶

Tosh is cautious about the use of historical “facts”:

Objection is sometimes made to the idea of “facts” in history on the grounds that they rest on inadequate standard of proof: most of what pass for the “facts” of history actually depend on inference. Historians read between the lines, or they work out what really happened from several contradictory indications, or they may do no more than establish that the writer was probably telling the truth. But in none of these cases can the historian observe the facts, in the way that a physicist can. Historians generally have little time for this kind of critique. Formal proof may be beyond their reach; what matters is the validity of the inferences.²⁵⁷

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. provide a few critical ideas on evaluating the reliability of research:

Reliability is linked to the findings of research. When assessing if a research method or instrument is reliable, you need to ask whether the same results would be produced if the research were to be repeated by a different researcher at a different time using the same method or instrument. Therefore, reliability is about the credibility of your research, will it stand up to this scrutiny? In other words, reliability is if someone else is able to retest your data and obtain the same results.²⁵⁸

Using the aforementioned authors’ guidelines, the reader is left with a few critical questions about Breytenbach’s work:

- To what extent can the data and facts Breytenbach delivered be considered reliable?
- Will the data and facts remain the same when retold by another researcher?
- One might imagine Breytenbach sitting next to a campfire and telling his war stories to his friends and ex-colleagues. Will the stories be told and re-lived consistently, or will the action “grow bigger and more intense” when retold?

There are, however, a few points to be raised in Breytenbach’s defence. One must acknowledge the difficulty of collecting accurate battlefield data on, for example, the number of weapons captured, the number of enemy encountered, and the number of kills and losses during a battle. The view of a battlefield is often obscured by the “fog of war”. The Border War is not special or unique in this regard when compared to any other war. Most official SADF documents that Breytenbach could have used to gather and confirm

data were restricted when he wrote his books. The other role players in the war, such as SWAPO, UNITA, FAPLA, the Russians, and the Cubans either did not keep accurate data, or have not made their data available to the public. Breytenbach was therefore left with a limited variety of sources, of which personal recollections and interviews were most likely the only available sources. There are also witnesses that could collaborate Breytenbach's stories. For example, Rifleman Mike McWilliams writes, 'I can vouch for every word written as I was witness to the events covered in this book.'²⁵⁹ Lastly, Breytenbach made no attempt to produce evidence-based or academic-style writing, '[t]his book is not a detailed and strict military history, for it would have been impossible to cover all the operations, let alone the battles, the Battalion was engaged in.'²⁶⁰ Questionable, incomplete, or inaccurate data therefore do not necessarily make the narrative unreliable.

Conclusion

Breytenbach is not a trained historian, journalist, or writer. He does not mention any tertiary education, and he needed help typing the manuscripts.²⁶¹ He gives thanks to his wife for assisting him with his writing process, 'Ros, my wife, had the thankless task of continually calling up chapters from the computer to allow me to fiddle with them until I was satisfied. I am not at all computer literate!'²⁶² He did not let his lack of computer skills stop him from writing, and he produced his first books on the Border War at a time when professional writers and historians hardly dared to do so. Breytenbach paved the way and opened the floodgates for many ex-conscripts to tell their stories. His work could have motivated other soldiers, who were also not professional writers, to write about their wartime experiences. Breytenbach achieved what he had set out to do: to tell stories about the experiences of a few units and about developments during the Border War. He does this very well, and entertains and informs his audience. All his books follow the same writing style, and he writes consistently. His writing is not perfect, but there are many positives. His readers will keep on supporting him because he delivers on their needs. Breytenbach's writing deserves a place in the historiography of the Border War, since he provides unique angles, and sheds light on information that would otherwise remain unknown to the public. Breytenbach is not a military historian, but a very experienced soldier writing about South African military history.

Endnotes

- ¹⁵⁷ Carl Punt is a Subject Advisor for History (Senior Educational Specialist) at the Western Cap. Department of Education. He completed his MMil in the Department of Military History, Stellenbosch University, and is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Military History, Stellenbosch University.
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- ¹⁶⁶ J Breytenbach, *Forged in Battle* (Pretoria: Pretoria Book House, 2014), foreword.
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- ¹⁷⁰ IJ van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Jeppestown: Johnathan Ball, 2015), 285–286; TJ Stapleton, *A Military History of South Africa: From the Dutch-Khoi Wars to the End of Apartheid* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 191.
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- ¹⁷³ Also see works by British correspondent F Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1987); *The War for Africa: Twelve Months that Transferred a Continent* (Gibraltar: Ashanti 1990); *Cuito Cuanavale: 12 Months of War that Transferred a Continent* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2017); *The Guerilla and the Journalist: Exploring the Murderous Legacy of Jonas Savimbi* (Johannesburg: Delta Books, 2022).
- ¹⁷⁴ Spies was assisted by Lt Col SJ du Preez, who also published a book on Operation Savannah the same year: *Angola, Die Verhaal van Suid-Afrika se Soldate in Angola, 1975–1976* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1989). [*Angola, The Story of South Africa's Soldiers in Angola, 1975–1976*]
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- ¹⁷⁶ Also see L Scholtz, 'The Lessons on the Border War', *Scientia Militaria*, 40, 3 (2012), 318–353.

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Reflecting on the Rise and Decline of the South African Defence Industry

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Abstract

The South African Defence Industry has undergone several significant changes during the past six decades, with its current state being deemed unfavourable for continued survivability. To develop a robust understanding of the industry, a review of the scientific literature (and government policies) has been undertaken to chart the trends in the industry through the decades. South African political ideologies in the sixties and seventies resulted in a need for self-sufficiency in defence. By the late eighties, increased military spending resulted in a powerful and capable defence industry, but the end of apartheid and regional conflicts saw an expected sharp drop in the defence budget. The Strategic Defence Package offered some respite in terms of exports, but this has declined in the recent past. The defence budget has remained at a steady low value for two decades, with no real possibility of an increase. To maintain relevance and ensure organisational resilience, the remnants of the South African Defence Industry should use the Defence Industry Strategy as a baseline to develop robust local relationships to drive innovation and foster economic growth, while also strengthening international market share by strengthening unique South African technologies.

Keywords: South Africa, South African Defence Industry, Strategic Defence Package, defence budget, innovation, economic growth, organisational resilience, technologies

Introduction

In recent years, scholarly publications and popular sources have observed that the South African Defence Industry (SADI) has declined over the past number of decades, with a handful of defence companies remaining in the country. This downturn is also reported to be present in the state-owned entities (SOEs) that have performed defence-related work (the Denel Group being a prime example). As described below, due to the lack of investment in the SADI and the subsequent loss of skills and expertise, commentary is rife with “doom and gloom” predictions regarding the industry and the impact this downfall will have on South Africa. In 2020, the SA Secretary for Defence, Gladys Sonto Kudjoe, made several declarations regarding the state of the SADI, maintaining that the reduction in the defence budget resulted in the SADI facing challenging times, that more

investment and innovation were required as defence is a sovereign capability¹ that can generate foreign income, and that the SADI is seen as a driver of the development and incubator of advanced technology that spills over to other areas.²⁶⁶

While academics and the media have come to seemingly foregone conclusions that the SADI has been extraneously eroded, it was deemed prudent to conduct an academic study of the reasons for the changes in the defence budget through the decades, with an analysis of the funding trends from the past to the present, and the consequences these trends have had for the SADI. The two outcomes of this historical perspective were envisaged to be addressing the fundamental question of *why* the SADI is considered to be in a decline, as well as whether the constant comparison to the past is indeed warranted. The past-to-present correlation was expected to provide a platform from which to forecast the possible future trajectory of the SADI, and informed speculation subsequently intended to address the resilience of the SADI. Organisational resilience is a critical factor that allows organisations to cope with adversity, such as natural disasters, financial crises, and epidemics.²⁶⁷ At the very least, the aforementioned commentary was to be evaluated from an intellectual perspective, and a fresh outlook had to be gained by reflecting on six decades of history. Figure 1 below depicts this approach, with key events highlighted to chart the journey through the rise and fall of the SADI. The analysis behind the approach was based on an extended literature review of scientific publications (the vast majority being qualitative journal articles), conference proceedings, books, and government policies. With the universal emphasis placed on arms production by many Commonwealth countries during the Second World War, the period after the war was seen as being relevant to a study on the development of SA defence industrial capabilities. In addition, as will be shown below, the political climate from the 1960s onwards played a considerable role in shaping the SADI.

Defence Industrial Origins

The SADI was effectively established with British support shortly before the Second World War. The war resulted in many civilian firms participating in the war effort, with most of them returning to their roots after the war.²⁶⁸ A few factories were maintained, such as Defence Ordnance (later Lyttelton Engineering Works) and the SA Mint Ammunition Factory.²⁶⁹ In 1951, talks of domestic production of armaments gained momentum when the Defence Production Board was established, which was tasked to liaise between the Department of Defence (DoD) and the private sector. The mandate of the board was to provide advice to the DoD regarding arms procurement as well as the create a domestic arms production capability. This resulted in the establishment of new defence-capable industries, although expansion was not significant.²⁷⁰

¹ “Sovereign capability” is defined by the 2015 Defence Review as the ability to ensure, under full national control and without reliance on any direct foreign assistance, certain capabilities identified as vital to national security.

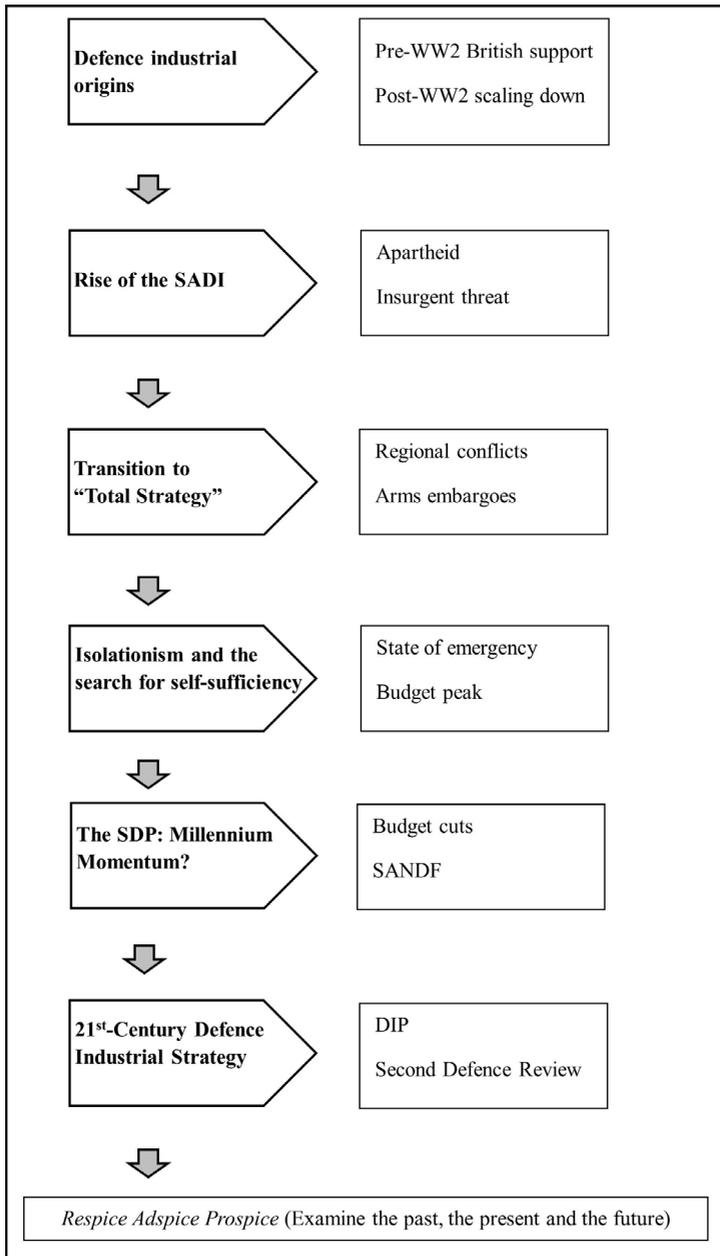


Figure 1: Approach to analysing the rise and eventual decline of the South African Defence Industry.

Rise of the SADI

The 1960s saw a drastic change in the defence environment. Violent uprisings suddenly became increasingly common as the black majority fought against everything the apartheid regime represented. These protests were met with force.²⁷¹ The gross human rights violations imposed on the majority of the SA population at the time resulted in international condemnation, with the United Nations (UN) Security Council imposing a voluntary arms embargo on South Africa.²⁷² This severely limited SA access to arms and related equipment and technology. South Africa also began expanding its supply chain by engaging with nations willing to ignore the embargoes, including France, Italy and Israel.²⁷³ At this point, it is reported that close to 1 000 firms were involved in various aspects of arms production, from research and development (R&D) to component production and final assembly of certain weapons systems. Technology development was also vital as many firms engaged in activities to keep abreast and ahead of arms advancements.²⁷⁴ The early 1960s further saw civil wars take hold in the neighbouring states of Angola and Mozambique, with the Soviet Union supplying arms to insurgents.²⁷⁵ South Africa, therefore, took a firm anti-communist stance, resulting in technology transfers from Western countries (in particular the United States and Britain), boosting the economy and starting an expansion of the manufacturing sector.²⁷⁶

The anti-apartheid protests required force to quell the resistance, and communism was seemingly at the doorstep with the conflicts in other Southern African countries. While sanctions did fuel innovation in specific sectors, especially defence, they hindered capability of government to repel these threats fully. A robust solution was therefore needed.

In the early 1960s, military spending amounted to just over 1 per cent of the SA gross domestic product (GDP).²⁷⁷ This increased to about 3 per cent by the mid-1960s.²⁷⁸ The increase in military spending was also related to the growth of the South African Defence Force (SADF), which almost doubled in size between 1960 and 1970.²⁷⁹ Evolution on government level came in the form of the 1968 amalgamation of the Armaments Board and the Armaments Development Corporation, which resulted in the establishment of the Armaments Development and Production Corporation (Arm Scor). Arm Scor was responsible for procuring armaments for the SADF and ensuring optimal utilisation of the private sector for arms production.²⁸⁰ During the next few years, Arm Scor took over various private sector companies and established several production and R&D facilities.²⁸¹ Examples include Atlas Aircraft Corporation and rifle manufacturer Musgrave being acquired in 1969, with Kentron established to develop missile technology, and the Institute for Maritime Technology (IMT) created to provide naval R&D support.²⁸²

The military spending, coupled with establishing an effective local defence capability, resulted in the government successfully containing the domestic political opposition to apartheid to a large extent, with the SADF playing a significant role in helping the South African Police (SAP) to quench the violence. The literature points to this success eventually reducing the defence budget to around 2 per cent of the GDP by 1970.²⁸³ With regard to the external threat, the 1969 Defence White Paper however stated that although an unconventional threat already existed in the form of terrorism, the possibility of a

conventional attack was not excluded. This was based on a threat analysis conducted by the SADF, which concluded that insurgencies similar to those that took place in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Angola or Mozambique could occur à la the Korean War;²⁸⁴ thus began the roots of the Border War.

The primary reason for the increased defence budget in the early to mid-1960s was, therefore, a political one strongly influenced by the perception of a threat, both from a domestic perspective and from an international (anti-communist) perspective. It was however also an economic, social, strategic and geopolitical threat. The sustainment of the apartheid ideology and keeping the insurgent communist threat at bay (in the face of arms embargoes) made self-sufficiency concerning all matters relating to defence paramount. An assumption that can be made is that, even if an arms embargo did not come into play, an increase in defence spending would indeed have taken place to quell the resistance, albeit not to the extent that it did due to the need for self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, history has shown that this template formed the basis for developing the SA security and defence capability that became a formidable force by the late 1980s.

Transition to “Total Strategy”

Military spending began to increase in the early 1970s due to a concomitant increase in internal and external opposition to apartheid. The independence of both Angola and Mozambique contributed to the threat perception, and thus added momentum to increased defence spending. From the early 1970s, the SADF was deployed in South West Africa (now Namibia) in support of the SAP against insurgent infiltrations, and in 1975, South Africa became involved in the Angolan Civil War.²⁸⁵ A further significant development came in 1973 with the establishment of the Defence Advisory Council (DAC) to co-ordinate involvement by the private sector in domestic arms production. The DAC was chaired by Minister of Defence PW Botha, and included the president of the Armaments Board and representatives from many of the major private sector companies in the country.²⁸⁶ Establishing the DAC represented the growing institutional links between the state, the military, and private industry, and is often regarded as the point at which the local military-industrial complex in the country actually began.²⁸⁷

These events led to key procurement programmes in the mid- to late 1970s that propelled the SA military as well as defence industrial base forward at lightning speed. A large number of weapons systems were procured in 1975, the most noteworthy being the Dassault Mirage F-1 fighter aircraft from France.²⁸⁸ In 1976, the UN changed its voluntary arms embargo into a mandatory one, thereby making the acquisition of arms seemingly impossible.²⁸⁹ The same year saw the fierce Soweto uprising occur, a watershed moment in SA history.²⁹⁰ From a strategic defence perspective, Armscor assumed responsibility for procuring and producing armaments for the SADF. This made Armscor the central player in the SA domestic defence industry. It not only determined the size, structure, profitability, and many other aspects of the local defence market, but it simultaneously functioned as one of the largest domestic arms producers in the country, with private firms acting as subcontractors. As Dunne reports, Armscor was both a player and a referee in the domestic defence market.²⁹¹ These events, coupled with communist expansionism,

prompted the SA government to adopt the “Total Strategy” policy.²⁹² First suggested in the 1977 Defence White Paper, the policy was led by Defence Minister PW Botha.²⁹³ The result was the unprecedented political influence of the military establishment and the actual militarisation of SA society in which the SADF played a central role.²⁹⁴

The expansion of military power and influence as a social institution became evident on political, economic, and ideological levels.²⁹⁵ “Total Strategy” addressed both the domestic and the regional security situation, with the SADF becoming the primary vehicle for the destabilisation of most neighbouring countries. The security situation inside the country continued to deteriorate and, although the SAP remained the leading agency for internal security, the role of the SADF inside South Africa steadily increased.²⁹⁶ The rise in military spending in 1977–1978 peaked at 5 per cent of the GDP, and totalled over 18 per cent of total government expenditure.²⁹⁷ The SADF and SAP grew substantially in terms of service members and equipment and, as expected, the arms industry systematically expanded. The late 1970s also saw the start of the SA nuclear weapons programme.²⁹⁸ It is worth noting that a self-sufficiency parallel to the SADI can be drawn with the SA energy requirements during the 1970s and beyond, both areas deserving additional in-depth exploration.

Isolation and the Search for Self-Sufficiency

After a decline in military spending at the end of the 1970s, it began to increase again during the mid-1980s as a result of the increasing involvement by South Africa in Angola, Namibia, and Mozambique, as well as the deteriorating internal security situation, which saw increasingly violent domestic opposition to apartheid.²⁹⁹ More stringent arms embargoes were implemented in conjunction with other economic sanctions and boycotts.³⁰⁰ Alsheh states, ‘by the late 1980s, South Africa had become the single most ostracised, sanctioned and universally condemned regime in the history of the international community and the paradigmatic pariah state’.³⁰¹

President Botha politically modified the role of the defence force through his “Total Strategy”, and created the military-dominated State Security Council (SSC), which effectively replaced Cabinet, and became the centre of national decision-making and official power in the 1980s.³⁰² The effect was a guaranteed supply of weapons of ever-increasing sophistication. The arms industry became a “strategic” one, with Armscor benefitting from massive state investment and receiving privileged access to various state resources.³⁰³ In the mid-1980s, Armscor had contracts with more than 2 000 private sector companies.³⁰⁴ At the time, it was estimated that about 400 of these firms were wholly reliant upon Armscor contracts, providing insight into the extent to which such companies were dependent upon the needs of the SADF.³⁰⁵ By the late 1980s, Armscor had emerged as one of the largest industrial companies in the country, employing over 30 000 people.³⁰⁶ The SADI employed an estimated 131 750 people, constituting some 8,3 per cent of the total employed in the SA manufacturing sector.³⁰⁷ This is further demonstrated by the fact that the SADI absorbed a relatively large proportion of the scarce skilled labour in the country, a prime example being that more than 10 per cent of the total number of R&D scientists and engineers were employed by Armscor itself.³⁰⁸ South Africa had, therefore, established a substantial defence industry, which offered products

and equipment developed for use in the difficult terrain in the region. The country became self-sufficient in terms of systems integration capabilities with more than acceptable product lines at various levels.³⁰⁹ The industry manufactured most calibres of arms and ammunition, military vehicles, communications and electronic warfare equipment, as well as air-to-air and anti-tank missiles. It was also capable of assembling military aircraft and constructing and arming strike craft and minesweepers.³¹⁰ Moreover, in an attempt to push the envelope further into military capabilities, South Africa started a chemical and biological weapons project in 1981.³¹¹ Military spending peaked again in 1989–1990 at 4 per cent of the GDP and 13 per cent of total government expenditure.³¹²

Self-Sufficiency “Case Study” – The South African Air Force

During the mid- to late 1980s, the South African Air Force (SAAF) was considered to be at its peak both in terms of size and proficiency. It is therefore prudent to reflect briefly upon the most capable air force in sub-Saharan Africa at the time. This is done to draw a parallel to the immense effort of developing and maintaining a capability that could support the SAAF, as the undertaking of military aircraft support is highly specialised and resource-intensive. A similar analysis could be performed for the SA Navy and Army, with examples being the SAS *Drakensberg* and artillery systems, but the conclusion would be the same; the SAAF is therefore used to illustrate the concept.

The major development that led to this impressive aerospace capability was the establishment of the Atlas Aircraft Corporation at the then Jan Smuts Airport (now OR Tambo) in the late 1960s. A considerable infrastructure had to be created to support and sustain this capability.³¹³ In 1966, the first Impala Mk I was produced (150 followed). The Mirage F-1, Mirage III, and the Alouette III assembly processes were initiated as the years went by. In 1974, the first Kudu light transport and the Impala Mk II were built (99 followed). This continued unabated into the 1980s.³¹⁴ It was claimed that Atlas created an aviation industry from a zero base, and that very few companies could support a mixed fleet of jet trainers, helicopters, and fighters without proper backup from the manufacturers.³¹⁵

In 1985, the SAAF Order of Battle consisted of the aircraft as per Table 1, as adapted from Heitman,³¹⁶ and Becker,³¹⁷ and based on the first author’s own experience and research while being a member of the SAAF:

Table 1: South African Air Force Order of Battle (1985)³¹⁸

Squadron	Location	Type	Role
1	Hoedspruit	Mirage F1AZ	Ground attack, fighter
2	Hoedspruit	Mirage III CZ	Ground attack, fighter
3	Waterkloof	Mirage F1 CZ	Fighter-interceptor
4	Lanseria	Impala Mk II	Ground attack
5	Durban	Impala Mk II	Ground attack
6	Port Elizabeth	Impala Mk II	Ground attack
7	Cape Town	Impala Mk II	Ground attack
8	Bloemspruit	Impala Mk II	Ground attack
11	Potchefstroom	Cessna 185	Liaison, battlefield reconnaissance
12	Waterkloof	Canberra	Bomber, reconnaissance
15	Swartkop	Super Frelon	Transport, search and rescue
16	Port Elizabeth	Alouette III	Battlefield support, counterinsurgency
17	Bloemspruit	Alouette III	Battlefield support, counterinsurgency
19	Swartkop	Puma	Transport, search and rescue
21	Waterkloof	Mercurius Viscount	VIP transport
22	Ysterplaat	Alouette III Wasp	Anti-submarine warfare, search and rescue
24	Waterkloof	Buccaneer	Bomber, naval strike, interdiction
25	Ysterplaat	Dakota	Battlefield support
27	Ysterplaat	Albatross	Maritime patrol Search and rescue
28	Waterkloof	C-130 C-160	Transport
30	Ysterplaat	Puma Super Frelon	Battlefield support Counterinsurgency
31	Hoedspruit	Alouette III Puma	Battlefield support Counterinsurgency
35	Cape Town	Shackleton	Maritime patrol
40	Dunottar	Impala Mk II	Ground attack
41	Lanseria	Kudu	Light battlefield support

Squadron	Location	Type	Role
42	Potchefstroom	Bosbok	Battlefield reconnaissance
44	Swartkop	Dakota DC-4	Transport
1 Central Flying School (FS)	Dunottar	Harvard	Training
2 Flying Training School	Langebaanweg	Impala Mk I	Training
84 Advanced FS	Potchefstroom	Bosbok Kudu C-185	Training
85 Combat FS	Pietersburg	Impala Mk I, Mk II Mirage IIIEZ, BZ, DZ, D2Z	Training
86 Advanced FS	Bloemfontein	Dakota	Training
87 Advanced FS	Bloemspruit	Alouette III	Training

The number of aircraft, different aircraft types, as well as the geographical distribution of squadrons that the SAAF operated in the mid-1980s is astonishing, especially when compared to the current inventory. Impalas numbered 251, and the Mirage family, just over 100, with similar numbers for helicopters and transport types. While the number of aircraft indicates the need as perceived by government at the time, it is also a testament to the capability created to support these aircraft and to the productive and innovative capacities of the people of this industry. South Africa did manage to acquire aircraft during the arms embargo years and, during these years of isolation, the SADI took up the gauntlet of adequately supporting the execution of the defence component of the Total Strategy policy.

R&D – Trying to be a Step Ahead

The advances made by the SADI regarding aerospace technology during the apartheid era were not just the assembly and maintenance of aircraft and related systems, but also the R&D required to ensure that South Africa was at the forefront of technology and maintaining a strategic advantage. It is also theorised that the level of economic sanctions and the arms embargo resulted in the systems in service by the SAAF being deemed irreplaceable; thus, perpetuating the drive to be self-sufficient.³¹⁹ From the 1970s, the South African R&D effort, spearheaded by the SAAF, Armscor, industry as well as academia (as stated by Campbell, the ‘ideas and research agenda of the SADF drew heavily from the institutions of higher learning’),³²⁰ resulted in various aerospace technology projects that were internationally competitive – with the impact still felt in South Africa today. The upgrade of the Mirage III to the advanced Cheetah fighter saw South Africa work closely with Israel, with the type first revealed to the public in 1986.³²¹ Similarly, the Atlas Aircraft

Corporation upgraded the Puma helicopter to the Oryx during the 1980s.³²² Closely related to the Oryx was the development of the Rooivalk combat support helicopter, a project that began in 1984, and had its first flight in 1990. Budget cuts saw the aircraft eventually entering service at the end of the decade.³²³ “Smart Bomb” development, such as the TV-guided H2 glide bomb, was used in combat when a bridge was destroyed in Southern Angola after the bomb had been launched from a Buccaneer bomber in January 1988.³²⁴ Electronic Warfare (EW) expertise, which is still being used today, came into operation during the Border War to counter the surface-to-air missile threats faced during operations in the theatre.³²⁵ A final example is the SA air-to-air missile design and development capability, which started in 1969. Initially based on the US Sidewinder missile, this experience soon blossomed into a world-class capability.³²⁶

The End of the Decade – The Cost of Self-Sufficiency

The SADI emerged as a significant creator of employment during the 1970s and 1980s.³²⁷ There was massive investment by the state, and large-scale involvement of the private sector. Total industry employment as a percentage of total manufacturing employment increased from less than 1 per cent in 1961 to over 9 per cent in the late 1980s. Military spending peaked at 4 per cent of the GDP in 1989, and comprised 13 per cent of total government expenditure.³²⁸ There have however been observations that the SA self-sufficiency drive came at the expense of the greater economy, and that the end of the decade saw an increasing number of modern Soviet weapons entering the theatre of operations in Angola and further afield. The competitive pressure to respond to the perceived threat was slowly becoming overwhelming. SA leadership was lulled into a false sense of security, believing they had achieved self-sufficiency and could henceforth design new weaponry at the forefront of technology.³²⁹

As early as the mid-1970s, Schieber reported, ‘apartheid is economically and politically unpracticable’.³³⁰ A by-product of the apartheid dogma was the construction of an autarkic² defence industrial complex, which further drained the SA economic revenue streams that could have been used for social development projects. Saba quantitatively examined defence spending and economic growth in South Africa over the period 1960–2018 and concludes, ‘in the long- and short-run, defence spending retard[s] economic growth’.³³¹ In another article based on a quantitative study, Dunne and Vougas categorically state, ‘the military burden of the apartheid regime did have a bad effect on the economy’.³³² In a later article, Dunne states that the strategy of attaining self-sufficiency in armaments left South Africa with an advanced and comprehensive defence industrial complex but at great economic and fiscal cost.³³³ The government allowed the employment of scarce skilled human resources in defence, when they could have been used more effectively in other areas, thereby contributing to the national economy. Further, new forms of dependency on foreign technology sources absorbed increasing amounts of scarce foreign exchange resources.³³⁴ Arms exports increased during the 1980s, but export subsidies resulted in the SA trade balance in armaments remaining negative. The defence sector thus remained a net user of foreign exchange resources throughout the decade.³³⁵ By the mid- to late

² **Autarkic**; specifically national economic self-sufficiency and independence

1980s, scholars were analysing the long-term prospects of apartheid, and whether the SADF and the SADI could successfully support the ideals of government (in other words, the cost of self-sufficiency).

The SDP: Millennium Momentum?

The end of apartheid in the early 1990s marked the end of the need for self-sufficiency. Military spending was at an all-time high when this occurred, and the SADI performed at its full capacity. At the time, scholars, such as Campbell, postulated that a new society needed to be created in South Africa, one that was inextricably linked to the demilitarisation of society ‘from top to bottom’.³³⁶ The process of “conversion” needed to be investigated and implemented, ‘dismantling of the SADF and the laying of the basis for the conversion of the factories producing weapons ... to build bridges, transportation systems, houses, new communities’.³³⁷

During the early 1990s, the international community also experienced considerable changes from several perspectives. The end of the Cold War in 1991 resulted in defence cuts in many countries, with hundreds of thousands of defence industry personnel being retrenched.³³⁸ Several historical conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa ended, changing the SA external threat perception, and armed forces were withdrawn from Namibia and Angola in 1989.³³⁹ There was no longer a clear need for maintaining a strong military, resulting in an SA defence budget that “suffered” the most. SA defence funding decreased by 40 per cent between 1989 and 1994, while procurement expenditure declined by 60 per cent³⁴⁰. The share of defence spending in GDP declined from over 4 per cent to less than 2 per cent between 1989 and 1996, while the share of defence in total government expenditure declined from 13 per cent to less than 6 per cent over the same period.³⁴¹ The SA socio-political transformation in the early 1990s occurred during the most severe economic recession in the country since the 1930s.³⁴² Dunne and Vougas report that employment and investment declined over this period, and exports showed little growth, mainly because of the continued presence of trade and financial sanctions. Inflation remained high, averaging 13,6 per cent per annum.³⁴³ Accompanying the budget cuts were several related disarmament measures – conceptually, the “demilitarisation of South Africa”. Jordaan states that a call was made to restructure the military along non-offensive defence lines.³⁴⁴ The SADF was rationalised and restructured (the Interim Constitution approving the creation of the South African National Defence Force [SANDF] on 26 April 1994),³⁴⁵ with various bases and units scaled down and/or shut down. Major weapons projects were cancelled or postponed. Obsolete and surplus military equipment was sold or destroyed, and the SA nuclear weapons programme was terminated.³⁴⁶ It is thought-provoking that the literature contains no counter-arguments to the scaling-down process; political will might have been too strong to consider other options, but given the benefit of hindsight, a revisionist approach could be considered as a matter of interest.

The dramatic defence cuts affected the SADF, which, in turn, significantly affected the size and – more importantly – the innovative and industrial capabilities of the SADI. Arms production declined by just over 40 per cent between 1989 and 1996. The contribution of the SADI to the national economy also declined, with the value of domestic arms

production in total manufacturing output declining from nearly 7 per cent in 1989 to around 3 per cent in 1996.³⁴⁷ Many firms exited the defence market. It became increasingly concentrated, with a few large firms occupying monopoly positions. In 1991, a study was undertaken to determine how the Armscor assets and technological abilities could be retained. The solution was to separate the production roles and the procurement roles of Armscor, and to form a new company capable of managing the production assets. Cabinet approved the formation of a new public sector industrial group, Denel Pty (Ltd) in 1992, to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Enterprises. Armscor remained part of the Ministry of Defence, and was responsible for procuring SADF armaments.³⁴⁸ (Recent history has not been kind to Denel, and a comprehensive examination of the Denel Group is warranted to understand the current state of this organisation fully).

With the drastic cuts, total employment in the SADI declined by more than 55 000 (from 130 000) between 1989 and 1996. During the recession, employment fell faster in the defence industry than in the overall economy. Batchelor and Willet conclude that government made no attempt during the 1989 to 1994 period to channel the funds saved by reducing the defence budget to create means to employ those affected by the cuts or to implement a national conversion and industrial strategy (conversion was already identified by authors, such as Campbell).³⁴⁹ The absence of government initiatives for defence industrial adjustment resulted in skills and technologies being lost or wasted as firms attempted to downsize and adjust to the shrinking domestic defence market.³⁵⁰ There was a lack of national policy, and the SADI was left to fend for itself. Interestingly, despite the funding cuts, South Africa remained one of the most significant military spenders on the continent, and in 1996, accounted for nearly 65 per cent of total military spending in Southern Africa, and 27 per cent of total military spending in Africa.³⁵¹ This is probably in part because of the robust autarkic nature of the industry and the resistance to changing this approach to an open market approach, or at least a hybrid approach, that allows for more joint ventures and collaborations. Another reason for these statistics could be attributed to the SA peacekeeping operations on the continent.³⁵²

The White Paper on South African Defence Related Industries (1999)

The DoD eventually promulgated the White Paper on Defence in 1996 (i.e. the 1996 White Paper), which was built upon to develop the White Paper on South African Defence Related Industries in 1999 (i.e. the 1999 White Paper).³⁵³ This latter White Paper aimed to “review the role, nature and current status of defence industries... to provide government’s vision for the future of these industries and to prepare policy options for the governance of the industries”.³⁵⁴ The document states that the SA defence industrial capability is not viewed as a distinct sector of the economy; hence adopting the term “defence-related industries”. The White Paper on Defence (1996) acknowledged, “the greatest threats to the South African people were socio-economic problems like poverty, unemployment, poor education, the lack of housing and the absence of adequate social services, as well as the high level of crime and violence”.³⁵⁵ Sylvester and Seegers explain that the DoD had to keep costs to a minimum, given the SA socio-economic problems.³⁵⁶

The White Paper on South African Defence Related Industries (1999) recognised that the reductions in the defence budget since 1989 and the likelihood that the budget would remain restricted for the foreseeable future created a situation where the maintenance of extensive military capabilities was neither necessary nor affordable. To this end, the SADI was encouraged to “convert production capability to civilian manufacture without losing the key technology capability needed for military production” – hence the term “dual-use technologies”. In addition, it was explicitly stated that the SADI had to have access to international markets to facilitate cost-effective performance and that the government had to support export initiatives.³⁵⁷ The control Armscor previously had over the functioning and structure of the SADI therefore had to be diminished.³⁵⁸ The 1999 White Paper made the ultimate recommendations that the SADI had to be restructured to become internationally competitive and that government would support export and international joint ventures.³⁵⁹ This was the first indication of movement towards a hybrid approach to development of the defence industrial base of South Africa.

Notwithstanding the depleting defence budget, in the 1990s, South Africa had already recognised the need to allow the SADI to compete on international level in the face of globalisation. In addition, several recommendations were made to government to allow this transition, and certain products and industries had been identified as niches in world markets.³⁶⁰ It is, therefore, unfortunate that the recommended “conversion” process suffered from a lack of government support, which further exacerbated the negative growth of the SADI: companies were “in it for themselves”, leading to a loss in the economic performance of the nation.³⁶¹ In summary, government did not execute the recommendations made by the White Paper on Defence Related Industries.

Even though the White Paper on South African Defence Related Industries (1999) is hailed as a positive step in the right direction, it has been observed that it might have come too late for the SADI. Batchelor and Willet state in their seminal Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) publication that the failure by government to introduce a national conversion strategy, taking into account industrial, science and technology policy, resulted in the possible gains of disarmament and demilitarisation being inextricably wasted.³⁶² The White Paper on Defence (1996) was used as the basis for the 1998 Defence Review, which was developed to establish a force design for the SANDF, ensuring that the core-force capability was maintained and affordable.³⁶³ Many authors, such as Le Roux, assert that this first Defence Review was an essential phase in the overall transformation of the SA defence function, and that the Defence Review process was hailed as the ‘most consultative and transparent in modern history’.³⁶⁴ Mills even goes as far as to say that the Defence Review should have left South Africa technology-rich;³⁶⁵ however, it takes political will to exploit the benefits of sound analysis and recommendations.

The Strategic Defence Package (SDP)

Commencing in the late 1990s (and continuing into the late 2000s), the SDP had a value of R30 billion, the most significant defence transaction that the country had experienced in its history.³⁶⁶ In summary:

Table 2: *The Strategic Defence Package*³⁶⁷

System		Number	Supplier country	Supplier organisation	Value (R billion)
Submarine	4	Germany	German Submarine Consortium	4,3	
Corvette	4	Germany	German Frigate Consortium-Thomson (GFCT)	5,5	
A109 utility helicopter	30	Italy	Agusta	1,5	
Hawk fighter/trainer	24	United Kingdom	BAE Systems	3,7	
Gripen fighter	28	Sweden	Saab	10	

Otherwise known as “the Arms Deal”, the SDP has not been without controversy. For example, Sylvester and Seegers label it the largest public controversy of the post-apartheid era. These researchers analysed the necessity and affordability of the acquisitions critically and assessed how the decisions were made concerning the platforms and companies involved. They state that the 1996 Defence White Paper called on the DoD to keep costs to a minimum given the socio-economic problems in the country and that, ultimately, the DoD failed in this regard.³⁶⁸ It failed to the extent that the contracting did not make the through-life costs of these capabilities visible. What the public thus perceived as a R30 billion transaction, was only 30% of the through-life costs associated with the capabilities (e.g. upgrades, maintenance and repair, disposal – a 30-year life cycle) that were acquired. What seemed to be a new beginning, was therefore the commencement of a long road of fiscal commitment to defence capabilities that South Africa could ill afford.

Twenty-First-Century Defence Industrial Strategy

Defence Industrial Participation (DIP)

DIP is a form of countertrade used by governments for the domestic industry in a country in return for weapons or high-value civil purchases. While general controversy surrounds such offset programmes, they may play a positive developmental role, especially in the defence industry.³⁶⁹ South African leaders took this positive view regarding the SDP, where the belief that foreign arms procurement could be a vehicle for economic growth was rife. The SDP incurred R15 billion worth of DIP obligations.³⁷⁰ Managed by Armscor, the DIP programme expected the potential supplier to propose a combination of DIP activities, such as workshare, technology transfer, training, investments, and exports.³⁷¹ Armscor, on its own, even considered new ways of working, as illustrated by Potgieter and Steyn in their article on new product development (NPD), where it is stated that Armscor had to be flexible in its policies and practices to accommodate the new South Africa. NPD was therefore proposed to embrace this change and to establish superiority in a competitive and dynamic environment.³⁷²

While there has been condemnation regarding the DIP programme, Van Dyk et al. argue that the objectives had been met. Some of these include retaining direct and indirect jobs, promoting exports for the SADI, and ‘like-for-like technology transfer’. Armscor awarded DIP credits to the value of R4 billion, which was seen as a reason for the growth in exports. SA defence companies, therefore, became ‘entrenched into global supply chains’, and there were also a substantial number of mergers with European defence companies, which contributed to the sustainability of the SADI. The authors however note that the policy was criticised for not having a much wider impact on the broader industrial base.³⁷³ DeVore asserts that cultivating foreign direct investment (FDI) into SA defence companies diminished the ability of the state to influence decisions or to control the use of intellectual property generated by domestic R&D investments.³⁷⁴ He also comments on the viability of small and medium states achieving self-sufficiency in defence, a direct reflection of the failed attempt to achieve this by South Africa during the apartheid years, asserting that the defence industries of such nations need government support to function in the global arms market.³⁷⁵

It has however been reported that the downsizing of the SADI nevertheless saw many institutional manifestations of militarism from the apartheid era, such as that the centrality and influence of the military–industrial complex within the SA economy remain intact.³⁷⁶ Dunne did a comprehensive study on how Armscor and Denel had been restructured, and believed that (in 2006), the “continuing legacy of apartheid” was reflected in the current form of the public-sector defence industry. The downsizing of the SADI looked set to continue; yet, Dunne found it surprising that such a high level of militarisation was maintained despite the pressing social needs and economic problems in the country.³⁷⁷ This is echoed by Abrahams, who states that ‘the climate for defence conversion was ideal during the immediate post-1994 period’, and that human development should have been more of a priority.³⁷⁸ Goldstein reported in 2002 that South Africa still had a fully domestic-owned defence industrial complex consisting of about 700 companies employing 50 000 people, contributing 1,1 per cent of the GDP, and ranked second among the largest exporters of complex manufactured goods.³⁷⁹ Harris questions the rationality of the defence expenditure, and suggests several alternatives.³⁸⁰

The number of scientific publications regarding the SADI reached its second peak in the early 2000s. There was much to analyse and report on – the SDP and the drastic change in the military. There was an almost rush from academics to understand how the changes would be adopted and managed within this new paradigm. Most articles published are very positive and congratulatory to the SA government for how this change was implemented. As Le Roux stated in 2003, ‘[t]oday the SANDF stands as a totally legitimate and generally accepted defence force of the South African nation’.³⁸¹ This unique case also provided food for thought for other nations that would perhaps follow similar changes concerning their defence industries.³⁸² In 2003, Cilliers stated, ‘the present status of the industry is undoubtedly the most cost-effective way to preserve and maintain a core capacity, as well as the associated jobs’.³⁸³ The early 2000s however also saw scholars raising questions regarding the long-term viability of the DIP. Dunne and Haines state that the present and future impact at national and local levels could be more problematic than initially recognised.³⁸⁴ Similarly, Dunne and Lamb assert that off-the-shelf procurement

would have been more economical, and that funds could have been channelled to areas of the economy with a high potential for economic growth and job creation.³⁸⁵ Haines demonstrates that offsets do not advance the long-term economic or military goals of countries, and have substantial hidden costs.³⁸⁶ The utility of the DIP programme within the context of developing the defence sector sustainably is thus debatable.

The 2015 Defence Review and the Defence Industry Strategy

As early as 2010, calls for a new defence review were heard.³⁸⁷ One of the reasons for this was that the level of funding allocated to defence did not seem to align with the needs of the SANDF, especially when considering deployment requirements in the prevailing African security environment.³⁸⁸ In an interesting take on the change in the defence sector, Vreÿ states that the SANDF had undergone a paradigm shift – from Total Strategy to Defence in Democracy.³⁸⁹ Seegers declares, ‘[the] security-is-development concept as embraced in South Africa’ makes for a “cautionary tale”, as those with minimal policymaking experience were promoting new security policies.³⁹⁰ Louw describes the variance between defence policy and military capabilities, and concludes that the defence force has been largely unsuccessful in complying with the demands of defence policy.³⁹¹ In anticipation of the second defence review, Mills notes that the review should have been conducted by “putting people, not technology, first”.³⁹² He reflects on the significant changes worldwide since the original Defence Review (1998), and maintains that the new review should be adapted for the twenty-first century in an SA and African context.³⁹³ These opinions reinforced the call for a new defence review.

Transformation has also been reported as harming the SANDF. This goes as far back as the late 1990s. Winkates states that the process followed up to that point had been successful,³⁹⁴ while Cilliers (circa 2018) declared that the SANDF has been suffering from what he terms ‘transformation fatigue’.³⁹⁵ In his article, Wessels criticises the SANDF for focusing on racial quotas instead of achieving professional, military and strategic goals.³⁹⁶ In another article, Le Roux calls for defence sector transformation to be initiated for the right reasons and by adopting a holistic approach to defence and security.³⁹⁷

The 2015 Defence Review (the second such policy review in the democratic South Africa) was developed to assess the then-current state of the SANDF and map out the direction defence would take for the next few decades. The then Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Nolutshando Mapisa-Nqakula, argued that the significant challenges faced by the SADI were limited economic growth, limited markets, and a reduced defence budget. The National Defence Industry Council (NDIC) was established to address some of these challenges, and was tasked to draft a defence industry strategy, which was approved in December 2020. A comprehensive document, it acknowledged the SADI as a significant factor in expanding and deepening the national skills base while generating foreign currency earnings and creating employment (the defence industry strategy also makes significant reference to the SA Industrial Participation Action Plan). Four “Looking Forward” options were therefore considered: “Uncontrolled Shut-Down”, “Planned Shut-Down”, “Secure, Stabilise and Sustain”, and “Secure, Stabilise, Develop and Sustain”. The last option involves deciding ‘to use the present industry as the foundation for an

expanded and better-balanced industry and create an environment where the industry can better support economic development and targeted industrialisation R&D, as well as exports'.³⁹⁸ It is appreciated that the first two very dire options were included, showing that the government was acutely aware of the precarious position in which the SADI was. Ultimately, Option Four was seen as the desired end state, which would use the elements of Option Three as a foundation.³⁹⁹

A key factor for the success of defence exports when it comes to complex equipment or systems will often be for the equipment or system to be in actual operational service with the local military. This assures potential clients that:

- the equipment or system in question functions;
- it will be supported over its service life; and
- it can be upgraded by the original equipment manufacturer when required.

The broader government and the defence force were therefore crucial to support the local defence industry in achieving the “Secure, Stabilise, Develop and Sustain” option.⁴⁰⁰ This saw the introduction of the “SA Inc.” concept.

*Respice Adspice Prospice*³

The significant events described in the preceding sections have an integrated history with defence spending and the annually allocated defence vote. Figure 2 shows the defence budget from 1960 to 2020. The defence budget increased steadily through the 1960s as the need for self-sufficiency mounted against the backdrop of a perceived internal and external threat, reaching its peak in the latter part of the 1970s with the “Total Strategy” concept employed by government. After a decline in the early 1980s, the subsequent state of emergency resulted in the eventual second peak in 1989. The early 1990s saw the end of apartheid and the external (regional) threat, resulting in a steady decline in the defence budget during the entire decade to a value of just above 1 per cent of the GDP (similar to the early 1960s). This value has remained virtually constant since around 2000, albeit with a slight yearly decrease. Neither the SDP nor the DIP affected the defence budget.

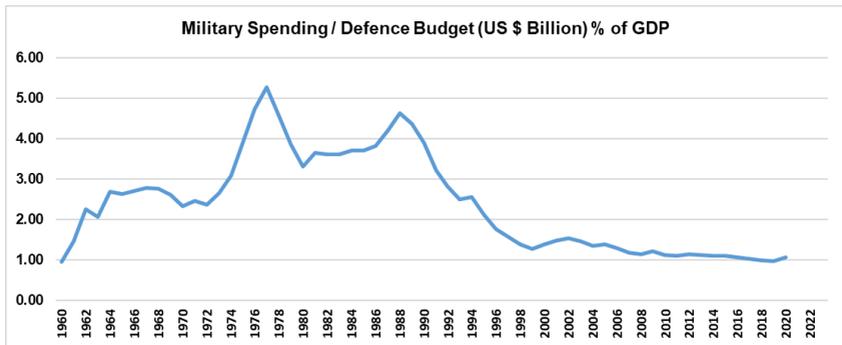


Figure 2: Defence expenditure as a percentage of the GDP (1960 to 2022)⁴⁰¹

³ Examine the past, the present and the future [first authors’ own translation].

Regarding arms exports, the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) was established in the early 2000s to issue arms export permits, previously in the domain of Armscor.⁴⁰² NCACC reports are available to the public, and the extent of arms exports can therefore be charted with historical data used for years prior to the establishment of the NCACC. This is reflected in Figure 3 below, with values adjusted to 2022. Note that a small percentage of the exports comprise marketing permits as well. As of 2018, the NCACC sees exports as divided into “Munitions” and “Dual-Use Technologies”, with the latter making up less than 10 per cent of the total (this distinction is as per the Wassenaar Arrangement⁴). Export values that could be sourced before the advent of the NCACC were obtained from Batchelor and Dunne.⁴⁰³ A relatively stable arms export environment can be observed during the 1980s and 1990s, with the rise from 2000 to 2012 attributed to the SDP and DIP, where local companies benefitted from the joint ventures and international partnerships spearheaded by the providers of the systems procured under the SDP in 1999. The peak here is more than three times that of the average for the 1980s and 1990s, after which a sharp decline is observed. The period after 2012 would therefore suggest that the gains the DIP had in the period leading up to 2012, had ended. A slow decrease follows. This was amid the period of state capture, which would have significantly slanted how contracts were awarded and how the government did business.

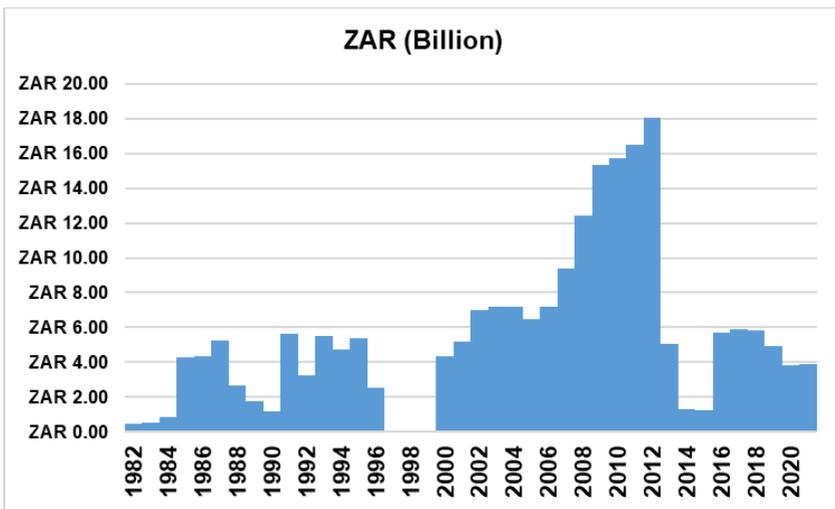


Figure 3: Arms exports (in ZAR billion adjusted for 2022)

⁴ The Wassenaar Arrangement is a voluntary multilateral body, of which South Africa is a member, and which promotes transparency, responsibility and accountability among members regarding exports of sensitive conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies (see www.wassenaar.org).

During the past five or so years, a multitude of media releases and academic publications, as well as declarations by government officials have emphasised the current grim state of the SADI, with warnings that, 'if the industry is not able to sustain itself, there will be massive job losses, closure of defence-related companies, and highly skilled personnel will be lost'.⁴⁰⁴ Matthews and Kohe are critical in their assessment of the declining SADI and conclude that defence industrial stagnation has occurred, exacerbated by corruption, unethical sales,⁵ and government mismanagement. The ultimate conclusion appears to be that survival of the SADI into the 2020s cannot be assured, and that the question needs to be asked whether the high opportunity cost of defence-related investment in a country experiencing economic and social inequalities is justifiable.⁴⁰⁵ With no consideration at all for the involvement of the SANDF (due to declining local defence spending), Moodley suggests that international partnerships may be the key to the survival of the remnants of the SADI.⁴⁰⁶

One of the major considerations not taken into account in these recent comparative remarks by observers is the fact that the "decline" in the SADI occurred because of the end of apartheid, and continuing regional conflicts in Southern Africa. There was no longer a need for a strong military and defence industry in South Africa. As expected, this led to a sharp decline in defence expenditure in the early 1990s. A reduced defence budget was a reality as the significant "threat" to the country was identified as a socio-economic one, not a military, insurgent or terrorist one. Government policy regarding how this smaller SADI should manage this change was however not realised until the end of the 1990s, which is seen as a shortcoming, which possibly contributed to the demise of the SADI and the economic downturn during the early part of the decade. With no immediate threat to the country, it therefore seems surprising that the SDP saw the light of day at the end of the 1990s. It appears that the recently promulgated policy (in 1999 to revitalise the SADI) was overshadowed by the SDP. Yet another question that could be posed regarding the SDP is why the expertise and knowledge gained during the pre-1994 years were not used to design and manufacture these platforms. This could surely have led to a boost in the manufacturing sector as well as the greater economy. The fortunes of the SADI are inextricably coupled to other industries, and exploring these links would surely detail a complex and contradictory tale. On a related note, it is indeed significant that, despite a decline in defence spending, socio-economic problems in South Africa have persisted, prompting questions regarding the allocation of this funding.

Further reflection reveals that the conditions of DIP may have been a significant reason for the government acquiring these assets, and the fruit of DIP was seen into the early 2010s. SA defence companies forged long-lasting professional relationships with large defence firms, opening up the global defence market. While many SA companies thrived, it must be noted that international companies also obtained the SA knowledge and experience gained during the Border War (this could be seen as a threat to the local industry). Further, the defence budget has remained steady at just above 1 per cent of the GDP since then. The SADI flourished until the decline in defence exports in the mid-2010s, but subsequently

⁵ Matthews and Koh describe the allegations of bribery and corruption that involved high-level government officials and SDP suppliers, which led to the Seriti Commission of Inquiry.

shows a defence industry not competing on the international market as well as in the past. Did the as-predicted, long-term questionable viability of DIP become a reality? Couple this with the state capture saga, the arms deal corruption allegations, and the much-publicised troubles of the Denel Group, and a tarnishing of the SADI brand is observed. These are all elements that deserve detailed individual analyses.

The second Defence Review and the Defence Industry Strategy, which speak volumes regarding the need for the SADI and the benefits that it can have for the country, have not resulted in any action on the part of the government. Indeed, the Defence Industry Strategy acknowledges that the SADI is currently teetering on the brink of collapse and that international cooperation is essential. The budget remains the same, the SANDF seems to struggle to fulfil its mandate, and what seems to be a reflection of the early nineties, the SADI has been left to fend for itself. This is exacerbated by the fact that the trend of the local customer not supporting the SADI with funding, providing test platforms, and maintaining a solid professional relationship, continues. Not having this support contributes to the lack of foreign income for the SADI.⁴⁰⁷

Considering future projections, an initial question is whether another boost, à la the SDP, could be forthcoming. This is considered highly unlikely, as the purpose of such acquisitions would be questionable; a “saving grace” of this sort is impossible. Similarly, a rise in the defence budget is improbable, given the trend of the defence budget for the past two decades. Local customer investment in the defence industry will therefore not happen. In addition, reflecting the state of sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s, there does not seem to be an imminent threat to the sovereignty of South Africa. No threat implies that an increase in the defence budget will not happen. Finally, from a policy perspective, the question of whether the Defence Industry Strategy holds much value for the SADI is raised. In theory, absolutely, but again channelling the past, implementation is critical. Government appears to be committed to recovering the momentum in the industry and using the innovative capability within the national context. As at least one scholar has observed, in some manner, governments of small and medium states need to support their defence industries in becoming involved in the global arms market.⁴⁰⁸ This concept began in the early 2000s after the South African failure to sustain self-sufficiency in defence during apartheid. It may, therefore, be prudent to consider the stance other countries have taken in the post-Cold War world, and how the concept of organisational resilience has been addressed. Granted that the South African transition from apartheid is unique, parallels can be drawn to other nation-changing events, with the 1979 revolution in Iran being just one example.

With further consideration of other nations, Putter comprehensively investigated the possibilities of the SADI partnering with BRICS countries, and offers much in terms of the criteria that should be considered in this regard. His listing of certain technologies that could imply a comparative advantage for the SADI is considered an important contribution, and should be a foundation for further work. Putter’s conclusions point to possibilities of collaboration with India and/or Brazil, but not with China and Russia.⁴⁰⁹ Another worthy option would be to compare the SADI to the defence industries of similar nations and to determine their positions on the three different tiers of defence industrial

capabilities. This would also make for an interesting temporal analysis of the SADI – considering the possible changes in the tier categorisation over the past several decades. As a final recommendation, and almost as an aside to the current research, a study of the pre-history of the production of arms in South Africa, dating back to the nineteenth century, would form an all-encompassing appreciation of the SADI.

Concluding Remarks

Ultimately, the Defence Industry Strategy holds the theoretical key to the continued and sustained existence of the SADI. Such a strategy would, however, need to be analysed critically, and subsequently transformed into a set of measurable objectives, which it actually expects from the industry itself.⁴¹⁰ The SADI itself would therefore need to lead the charge, using the Defence Industry Strategy as a foundation while establishing local links to create synergistic, innovative solutions for all, ensuring a positive economic outcome. The government and academia would be vital in this regard, pointing to the triple helix model of innovation and/or a defence innovation framework as possible guiding principles. Coupled with the incorporation of primary archival material, an examination of policy wider than only in terms of defence, as well as considering the insights of strategic actors, a path forward could be forged. Considering market share, individual companies should develop their technological niche areas and seek out partnerships on a global scale. If the SA government does indeed decide to invest locally and use this expertise for the SANDF, that would be considered a bonus.

In the final analysis, the SADI is facing a relevance problem. The existence of a defence industry is clearly needed to address the perceived need that the apartheid government created. What relevance does such a capability have in the current SA context? While recognised as a driver of innovation and a contribution to economic growth, the current SADI would nevertheless need to prove tangibly that it is a vital cog in the South African trajectory into the future, while also establishing international market links, all necessary to ensure organisational resilience. Using the Defence Industry Strategy as a foundation, this two-pronged approach is ultimately recommended, with the additional perception that any action from government in terms of a fiscal boost is deemed highly unlikely.

Endnotes

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United States–Kenyan Asymmetry in Counterterrorism Cooperation: An Assessment of the Efforts of the United States and Kenya in East Africa

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Abstract

On 11 September 2001, the world witnessed a drastic change in the global security landscape that influenced the dynamics of United States counterterrorism. The United States expanded its global alliances, including its financial assistance and cooperation scope, in East Africa as well. A fundamental transformation in the United States Defence Foreign Policy towards Africa was marked by a growing reliance by the United States on African partners, such as Kenya. Despite visible power disparities between the United States and Kenyan asymmetric relations, the two states set an unmatched counterterrorism partnership in East Africa – even with the growing criticism of the United States militarisation in some parts of Africa, such as in the Sahel region, which remains prone to coups despite enduring counterterrorism interventions by the United States. What is particularly interesting is how the asymmetric relations between the United States and Kenya enhanced a stable and multidimensional implementation of counterterrorism in East Africa. The dynamics of these asymmetric relations on counterterrorism demystify the perception that asymmetric relations between powerful and weak states are inherently unstable. Employing secondary data, the study on which this article reports, sought to deconstruct such rhetoric by conceptualising asymmetry whilst identifying five main conceptualisations of asymmetry theory that characterises the asymmetric relations between the United States and Kenya. Thereafter, by taking stock of the multidimensional efforts by the United States and Kenya, it is argued that triangular asymmetries are the significant force multipliers of stability and normalcy in asymmetric relations.

Keywords: Asymmetry, Terrorism, Counterterrorism, Al-Shabaab, United States, Kenya

Introduction

The dynamics of asymmetric relations between the United States of America (US) and Kenya are filled with contradictions. On the one hand, the global reputation of the United States as a powerful state and its interactions with weak states, such as Kenya, tend to be shaped by conditionalities.⁴¹⁴ This means that the power dynamics and distinctions between powerful and weak states could influence the course of the interactions. For instance, the US foreign policy on counterterrorism has been globalised since 11 September 2001 (9/11) with the US-led global mobilisation against al-Qaeda. This period not only unleashed a multitude of policy changes but also intensified national, regional, and global protection of US interests and of its allies across the world.⁴¹⁵ In East Africa, the US counterterrorism strategy in Kenya was concerning – specifically with regard to Western influence on the counterterrorism strategies of African states. For instance, critics observed how the implementation of the Kenyan Suppression of Terrorism Bill of 2003 unfolded, and concluded that this specific policy was highly influenced by the United States, and the bill was eventually enacted despite heated domestic contestation.⁴¹⁶ This further suggests that counterterrorism in Kenya has been driven by diplomatic pressures to cooperate with the political and military objectives of American post-9/11 war on terror strategies.⁴¹⁷ On the other hand, the existence of ‘a blind spot in most thinking about International Relations’⁴¹⁸ blurs the conceptualisation of asymmetric relations from an interdependence and cooperation perspective that contributes to relational management through negotiation and cooperation rather than hegemonic dominance. The main assumption the current study held was that the asymmetric nature of international relations may affect the outcome of counterterrorism initiatives, especially when the interests of asymmetric states are at stake. This means that, despite clear distinctions in the capabilities of powerful states (such as the United States) and weak states (such as Kenya), the existence of mutual security threats to their national and regional security posed by terrorists, such as al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab, creates a balanced equilibrium and brings normalcy to asymmetric relations by agreeing to certain counterterrorism measures. Eventually, state actors are increasingly influenced by international society when responding to terror threats. For instance, as the uncertainties of globalisation increase, the conditions for vulnerabilities also rise, which further intensifies insecurities in the international arena.

To this end, the study on which this article reports, had three key objectives:

- The conceptualisation of asymmetry to advance the literature on US–Kenyan asymmetric relations. This is critical to understand distinct views about asymmetric relations in international relations;
- An empirical understanding of the dynamics of US–Kenyan asymmetry in counterterrorism by taking stock of the multidimensional security efforts in East Africa; and
- Demystifying the claims related to powerful and influential states making use of counterterrorism strategies as ‘imposed orders’⁴¹⁹ in which weak states conform to international counterterrorism orders through possible combination of enforcements.

Asymmetry and Asymmetric Relations: A Conceptual Framework

The conceptualisation of asymmetry theory offers contradictory explanations embedded in a paradox where, on the one hand, the conventional understanding assumes that states with distinct military and economic power capabilities are also ‘equal before the law and in terms of their rights and obligations’.⁴²⁰ Asymmetry is however generally perceived as a socio-political or relational structure where unequal relations are established between great and small, strong and weak as well as rich and poor. Asymmetry is thus seen as a catalyst of discord and disharmony where relations are often unjust, specifically because, in asymmetric relations, powerful states are perceived to use their global influence to impose orders on and force compliance to international norms, such as counterterrorism.⁴²¹

Counterterrorism remains a complex term to define. This has also influenced how states implement their security strategies based on what is perceived as a security threat. The lack of a universal definition of counterterrorism is thus reflected in how states have perceived terrorism, which has manifested in distinct ways for centuries; thus, influencing the course of counterterrorism strategies.⁴²² For instance, in the aftermath of 9/11, al-Qaeda operatives in East Africa began to launch a series of terror attacks on the interests of US allies in Kenya.⁴²³ The 2002 terror attacks on the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel in Kikambala – and many others that followed – influenced the enactment of the Kenyan Suppression of Terrorism Bill of 2003 as a counterterrorism measure.

US counterterrorism efforts under the George W Bush administration relied vehemently on US allies, such as Kenya.⁴²⁴ This meant a cooperative action against acts of terror through the rectification of international conventions and the implementation protocols related to the prevention of terror. Kenya therefore implemented the Kenyan Suppression of Terrorism Bill of 2003. This bill, like the US counterterrorism approach under the Bush administration, resorted to the intense use of force and violence that compromised human rights. Consequently, US–Kenyan counterterrorism cooperation under the Bush administration was highly contested due to the use of coercive interrogation techniques. In most cases, these counterterrorism techniques came under scrutiny given the lack of scientific backing as they added physical and psychological stress to captured individuals alleged of being associated with terrorism, more especially in East Africa following the 2002 Kikambala bombings in Kenya.⁴²⁵

Counterterrorism entails national and intergovernmental measures to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to security threats nationally and internationally.⁴²⁶ These measures can be unfavourable at times but are critical for the national, regional, and international security of a state, which may be amplified by intra-state and inter-state conflict vulnerabilities.

The incidents of 9/11, for example, have not only accentuated insecurity but have also compounded conceptual confusion over the distinction between the concepts “counterterrorism” and “counterinsurgency”. This is partly because the United States focused on the former rather than on the latter due to the US perception of the complex threats that al-Qaeda posed to international peace and security.⁴²⁷ Despite existing conceptual challenges, counterterrorism differs from counterinsurgency in many respects.

Counterinsurgency presents a blended approach to defence where both civilian and military preventive efforts are implemented to contain the spread of insurgency and to address the underlying causes of the violence within a state.⁴²⁸ Counterterrorism is highly strategic, as defensive actions are targeted specifically at terrorists with transnational links; thus, requiring the use of “hard power” through heavy military use when the security interests of the state are endangered.

In some instances, the use of “hard power” and violence during counterterrorism interventions is as uncompromised as it has been since the post-9/11 war on terrorism as a strategy to defeat al-Qaeda operatives in East Africa. Counterinsurgency operations as pursued by African Union (AU) missions, such as the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), have been preferred, however, despite remaining largely military operations. Counterinsurgency employs specialised operations that aim at mobilising local forces and, to an extent, at reducing the reliance on foreign defence actors that often compound intra-state rivalry and conflicts.⁴²⁹ Essentially, the uncertain international environment compels states to pursue both soft power, which includes democratic and diplomatic engagements, as well as hard power through offensive measures in anticipation of or as reaction to a security threat.⁴³⁰

In cases where states resort to soft-power approaches to counter security threats, the likelihood for violent conflicts is minimised given that ‘attractive foreign policies’ are implemented often based on cultural, political, and economic ‘co-option’ of values that are desirable in international relations.⁴³¹ When hard power is deployed, power is not only unequal but also unstable, as unbalanced relations tend to magnify conflicts, particularly between enemies. For instance, the Russo–Ukrainian War that erupted in 2022 provides a best-case scenario of an antagonist asymmetric relationship magnified by resource-driven geopolitical conflict.⁴³² Asymmetries may often lead to a lack of mutual understanding and transparency even in a globalised environment where all aspects of humanity seem to be interdependent. This is because ‘states remain idiosyncratic in their location, identities, and historical memories’,⁴³³ and this influences asymmetry between states. An unequal character of states is clearly seen in the size of their populations, resource capabilities, and their multifarious international relations.

There is, however, also a positive perspective to asymmetry theory, which does not disregard the existence of disparities in the capability of the relations of strong and weak states. Womack’s asymmetric approach presents a good understanding of how and why large and powerful states, such as the United States, are unable to reign over small and weak states, such as Kenya, regardless of their expansive military and economic capability.⁴³⁴ The explanation is simple: the current asymmetric relations between the United States and Kenya are multi-nodal. This essentially means that powerful and weak states take part in the management of asymmetric relations whereby powerful states do not necessarily compete with or exercise dominance over weak states; thus, choosing to manage any possibility of discord in order to stabilise the US–Kenyan asymmetric relationship.

In the case of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations, asymmetric theory is significant, as it sets up a framework to expand the means through which state actors implement counterterrorism strategies. This is vital because it assists states irrespective of their distinct capabilities to fight against common security threats, such as terrorism. Since 9/11, the US–Kenyan asymmetric relations have been strengthened to fight against terror threats posed by common foes, such as al-Shabaab, which has recently found a haven in East Africa.⁴³⁵ Asymmetry theory therefore provides a platform to explore and shape the dynamics of counterterrorism alliances in international relations, specifically those between powerful and weak states, such as the US–Kenyan asymmetric relations.

Increased insecurities, which often lead to competition in the power dynamics of states, create conditions for alliance formation. In asymmetric relations between states, the one with strong capabilities – deemed a powerful state – constantly worries ‘about a division of possible gains that may favor others more than itself’.⁴³⁶ Consequently, realists and neorealists insist on the anarchic structure of international relations as a factor that potentially limits cooperation and interdependence, creating an unstable cycle of interactions when it comes to securing ‘that which they depend on’⁴³⁷ – namely their national interest. Womack’s perspective on asymmetric relations presents a relatively novice perspective on international relations between unequal states, which is distinct from the classical theories of Waltz or Eckstein.⁴³⁸ Womack views international relations as interactions based on relational beads rather than independent transactions where power and control are the main features of asymmetric interactions, while Eckstein perceives that, in asymmetric relationships, one state seeks to have advantage over the other.⁴³⁹

To redress imbalance, Womack maintains that, despite visible capability disparities found in asymmetric relations, both strong and weak states can strike a stable and normal relationship because of shared mutual interests.⁴⁴⁰ In this case, national, regional, and global peace and security have become the centre of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations since 9/11, which to an extent has created conditions for cooperation between asymmetric states when responding to a common threat – terrorism.

After 9/11, the expansion of terrorism in East Africa became prominent with an increased wave of terror attacks in Kenya marked by the 2002 attack on the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel in Kikambala.⁴⁴¹ This strengthened efforts for the establishment of a stable and normal US–Kenyan asymmetric relationship where mutual benefits are pursued by both asymmetric states as they jointly commit themselves to counterterrorism strategies. For instance, as states cooperate to reduce uncertainty through certain patterns of preventive actions that include counterterrorism capacity building, the likelihood for great-power sustainable domination is limited. In this case, capacity building includes:

- Security in aviation and border areas;
- Advisory support to security forces in the region; as well as
- ‘[T]raining and mentoring of law enforcement to conduct investigations and manage crisis response, and advancing criminal justice sector reforms.’⁴⁴²

Womack's theoretical argument on the utility asymmetric relations differs significantly from the views of realists, such as Morgenthau, and neorealists, such as Waltz, whose views on domestic hierarchy and relations in the international system are driven by an anarchic system due to the lack of an overarching legitimate authority, which limits opportunities for mutual benefits.⁴⁴³ Asymmetric relations may instead be perceived as a source of 'great power "entrapment"', as Snyder points out in his security dilemma argument.⁴⁴⁴ Snyder's conceptual and theoretical explanation of 'entrapment' suggests that, (weak) states are 'dragged into a conflict over an ally's interests that one does not share, or shares only partially'.⁴⁴⁵ Although the interests of allies exist, and these are nonetheless 'generally not identical'.⁴⁴⁶ Unlike other theoretical frameworks, such as that provided by constructivism, which also argue that the interactions of strong and weak states are often managed through domination rather than negotiations,⁴⁴⁷ Womack's interpretation of asymmetric relations, emphasises the existence of an ordered relationship. Asymmetric relations are therefore stabilised by cooperation rather than by a situation where the dependence of a weak state (e.g. Kenya) on the alliance and commitment to a powerful ally (e.g. the United States) is at a high risk of entrapment.

Apart from enforcing stability through cooperation, an ordered relationship also shapes the perception of each asymmetric state. In turn, the perceived trust and confidence of symmetric states influence interdependence and cooperation through which counterterrorism strategies are advanced bilaterally regionally, and multilaterally through international actors such as the United Nations (UN) and the AU. For example, whilst bilateral relations are essential for the formation of coalitions regionally and multilaterally, they are also critical enforcers of stable asymmetric relationships – particularly given that both powerful and weak states accept the dynamics in the asymmetric relationship framework in which national security as well as political and economic interests plays a central role. In the context of US–Kenyan asymmetry, this refers to the strategies of counterterrorism pursued through multilateral efforts, such as AMISOM. In the case of the US–Kenyan asymmetric relationship, the patterns of interdependence and cooperation serve the mutual interests of the involved parties and preserve stability by mitigating the effects of misperceptions.⁴⁴⁸

Misperceptions can generally be explained as a cluster of both "misinterpretation" and "misunderstanding" that mislead the perceived reality. Although Womack's conceptualisation of asymmetric relationships is deemed stable, misperceptions are not immune to asymmetric relations. If misperceptions occur, the two forces (i.e. powerful states and weak states) work out to constrain the 'negative complementarity'⁴⁴⁹ of misperception. This can be achieved through diplomatic measures that affirm mutual respect, such as the exchange of state visits at global, regional, and state level. These measures are essential and should be performed in ways that respect and show dignity toward local political communities. Figure 1 below illustrates how the United States and Kenya have been able to stabilise their asymmetric relations despite the existence of clear disparities in the socio-economic and political capabilities as well as regional and global influence.

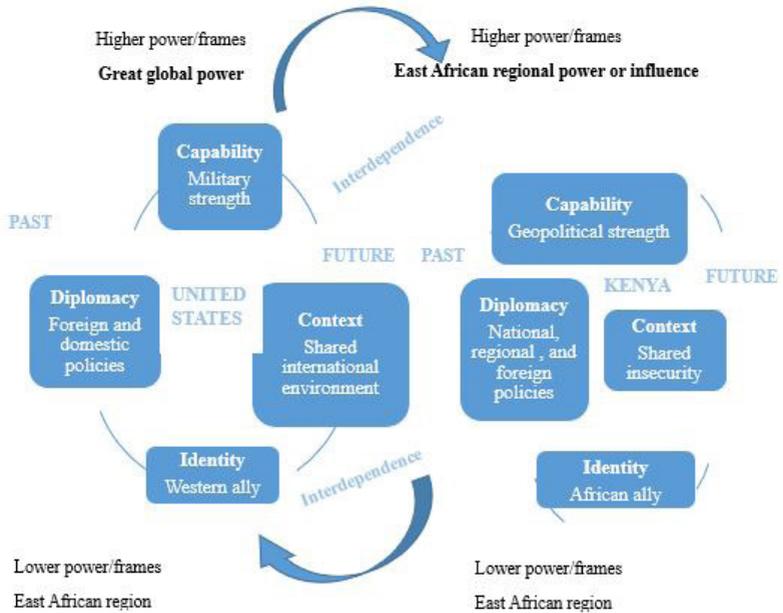


Figure 1: Pattern of a normal asymmetric relationship: United States–Kenya⁴⁵⁰

Figure 1 presents a vivid illustration of the pattern of the US–Kenyan relationship, which influences the pursuit of national security interests in Africa. US counterterrorism in Africa is theoretically guided by four elements (capability, diplomacy, identity, and context). These elements constitute the prime requirements for normalcy in any asymmetric relationship. Caution should however be taken when conceptualising “normalcy”, as a normal asymmetric relationship is not in any form one that is based on ‘mutual love or even mutual understanding, [but] rather a bilateral relationship based on the mutual conviction that the peaceful management of the relationship can be negotiated’⁴⁵¹ through recognition of the influential role of each side, whether from a strong or from a weak state.

Dynamics of United States–Kenyan Asymmetry

Womack’s interpretation of asymmetric relations emphasises normalcy through interdependence and cooperation in light of misperceptions that may destabilise asymmetric relations if mismanaged.⁴⁵² For instance, in the context of the Bush and Obama administrations, the general perception was that the US–African relations under the Bush administration created conditions for the securitisation of Africa in the sense that the US foreign policy focus was on the military engagement in dealing with the perceived threat of terrorism.⁴⁵³

Subsequently, there was a negative perception of the Bush administration, as since 9/11, the administration developed counterterrorism policies, such as the establishment of the Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism (PRACT) in 2009. The PRACT initiative built the capacity of African military forces and enhanced cooperation of the military whilst advancing law enforcement between civilian actors across East Africa.⁴⁵⁴ To an extent, these counterterrorism efforts ensured the cooperation of African states with US military troops:

[To] develop effective military containment against terrorist attacks which pose a threat to the security of incumbent African regimes. The growing criticism ensued due to the fact that African regimes have largely advanced the economic and political security interests of foreign powers.⁴⁵⁵

For this reason, there has been a growing perception that US counterterrorism in Africa failed to promote sustainable African security interests, and instead advanced its major foreign policy priorities, which to some extent fuelled misperceptions regarding US interest in Africa.

US–African relations however evolved with diplomatic measures that have affirmed mutual respect in terms of African states, such as Kenya. For instance, the United States and Kenya exchange state visits at global, regional and state level. In recent years, Kenya has continued to support US-led initiatives to strengthen regional security – not only in East African, but also in other regions, such as in the Red Sea area and in Ukraine⁴⁵⁶ through diplomatic measures that have further enabled respect and showed dignity towards local political communities. The five-year cooperation framework on defence partnership – signed in September 2023 between the United States and Kenya – was marked by a strengthened mutual commitment to regional peace and stability. The Kenyan Minister of Defence at the time, Aden Duale, asserted that the asymmetric relationship between the United States and Kenya was ‘based on the principle of mutual trust, respect, shared values, and common defence objectives’,⁴⁵⁷ which echoed the acknowledgement by US Secretary of Defence, Lloyd Austin, of Kenya as a continued strategic partner in East Africa.

Although distinctions can be drawn when analysing the Bush and Obama administrations, specifically with regard to the foreign policy approach taken towards East African states, it is clear that, unlike the Bush administration, the Obama administration and those that followed gained a unique reputation that advanced extensive diplomatic measures. Upon assuming office, President Obama undertook a state visit to Kenya on 24 July 2015,⁴⁵⁸ emerging as the first sitting US president to visit Kenya.⁴⁵⁹

Obama was also the first US leader to address the AU. This was yet another way to show US commitment to fighting terror in East Africa. Although Obama’s talks were primarily on trade and investment, security and counterterrorism were also on the agenda.

This unfolding of events reflected the extent to which interdependence is vital for the stability and normalcy of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations. It also shows that, to an extent, realist and neorealist perspectives on asymmetry are linked to liberal views in terms of the influence that powerful states exert on weak states. The distinction, however,

lies in the power dynamics where realists emphasise the use of military force as the main power resource, whereas liberalists – like asymmetry theory – accentuate the power of institutions, such as the UN and other actors that foster cooperation. This reduces the role of force, given that economic incentives and security concerns take centre stage instead of the relative power, which states sometimes use to coerce weak states into complying with certain goals in the international system. As these slight distinctions unfold, it is clear that, ‘in many areas, realist assumptions about the dominance of military force and security issues remain valid’.⁴⁶⁰

The ordered and stable pattern of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations as illustrated in Figure 1, does not, by any means suggest the elimination of problems or risks of entanglement but rather an enhanced possibility for the management of distinct interests, which eventually minimise the risk of conflicts between asymmetric states. Relational management facilitates normalcy in asymmetric relationships where the diplomatic leadership of states, socio-historical engagements, and the assignment of bilateral commissions routinise issues of common interest, such as counterterrorism strategies.

A clear distinction between the engagement of the Bush and Obama administrations with Africa, specifically in East Africa, can be established. On the one hand, Obama’s foreign policy emphasised youth engagement as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whereas the Bush administration was concerned with security and military matters. For instance, in the first engagement of Obama’s administration in East Africa, the focus was on the pursuit of sustainable solutions that promote entrepreneurship ‘to solve social challenges’⁴⁶¹ affecting African people. The 2015 Global Entrepreneurial Summit⁴⁶² aimed to advance better business and trade, not aid. This is how Obama envisioned Africans ridding themselves of poverty, specifically Kenyans, as this was his ancestral land, the birth country of his father.

Security interests were also part of Obama’s agenda, as the threat posed by al-Shabaab could not be ignored. Obama’s state visit happened two years after the 2013 Westgate Mall attacks and the same year in which al-Shabaab launched an attack against Garissa University on 3 April 2015, killing scores of students in their dormitories. During this specific state visit, Obama’s US foreign policy resonated with the advancement of security cooperation, which he reinforced:

I’ll be the first US president to not only visit Kenya and Ethiopia, but also to address the continent as a whole, building off the African summit that we did here which was historic and has, I think, deepened the kinds of already strong relationships that we have across the continent.⁴⁶³

This presidential statement gives an indication of the relationship between the United States and Africa, and how – despite clear asymmetry – the bilateral relations wield mutual benefits inasmuch as it is extremely beneficial for the advancement of US global security. Kenya has derived several benefits from its relations with the United States. Before 9/11, Africa received little US recognition, but the period 2001–2015 heralded a strengthened US–African partnership arising from an almost “imposed” US global counterterrorism campaign, as all US coalition partners had to participate in the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

The GWOT narrative emphasised two security aspects, namely ‘the larger the efforts that are required to counter terrorism [...] the larger the danger of abuse of authority in combating the phenomenon’.⁴⁶⁴ This was yet another factor that influenced criticism of the Bush administration. The counterterrorism approach of the Bush administration was criticised for the intense use of force and violence by the US Military, which often compromised human rights. Although the GWOT was implemented across the globe and entailed US diplomatic, financial, and other military actions to deny the establishment and/or financing of safe havens for terrorist groups, its security approach influenced the global perception of the United States.⁴⁶⁵

Since 9/11, Africa gained some prominence in US foreign policy. The post-9/11 era also informed the positive transformative nature of asymmetric relations; thus, bringing to light the significance of asymmetric bilateral relations between a powerful state and a weak state. By 2015, new counterterrorism programmes were funded by the United States. Programmes, such as the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund and the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership, enable African partners to secure their national borders through military education and training as well as defence equipment.⁴⁶⁶ Finally, US–Kenyan bilateral relations have been solidified as a result of cooperation and interdependence that led to the attainment of mutual interests. For instance, on 9 February 2024, both the United States and Kenya reiterated the significance of their security partnership, which represents one of the diplomatic measures reflecting a continued and beneficial aspect of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations. Just as the United States underscores Kenya as one of its vital security partners in Africa, the asymmetric cooperation has enabled both states to address a wide ‘range of shared threats and advancing security in East Africa and beyond’.⁴⁶⁷

As a member of one of the volatile regions plagued by terrorism, Kenya continues to gain from the enduring US peace and security support towards regional stability. The US–Kenyan security partnership has also been instrumental in sustaining counterterrorism efforts in the fight against the expansion of al-Shabaab through multidimensional missions, such as the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

To this end and through the application of asymmetry theory in terms of US–Kenyan relations, five main conceptualisations of asymmetric theory have been detected (see Table 1). These conceptualisations are relational aspects that are influenced by the transformation in the global environment, which interconnects both large and small states.

Table 1: *United States–Kenyan relations according to asymmetry theory*⁴⁶⁸

United States (Global great power = large state)	Kenya (East African sub-regional power = small state)
Normal and stable asymmetric relationship rather than dominance and competition between the large (e.g. United States) and the small (e.g. Kenya) parties.	
A pattern of mutual interests (both parties maximise counterterrorism interest in the global, regional, and national spheres).	
The great military and economic capability of large states (e.g. United States) does not enable sustained dominance of the small state (e.g. Kenya), but increases interdependence and cooperation.	
Small states (e.g. Kenya) gain much from the asymmetric relationship through East African regional influence on regional security and socio-economic stability matters. For example, Kenya contributes a large number of troops in the East Africa region due to US financial and military training assistance.	
Diplomatic measures mitigate misperceptions through mutual respect; thus, preserving stability in the asymmetric bilateral relationship.	

These concepts aid the validation of the extent to which asymmetry theory is pivotal in explaining the essentiality of interdependence–cooperation patterns of interactions to counterterrorism. This means that, in a seemingly asymmetric bilateral relationship between a powerful state and a weak state – such as seen in the US–Kenyan asymmetric relationship – stable relations are attainable despite globalisation that creates conditions for an asymmetric composition of interactions affecting how states relate in the international environment.⁴⁶⁹ The insecurity of one state thus becomes a challenge for another that can only be addressed collectively regardless of the economic, socio-political, or military capability of either one of the states. Despite asymmetry, the existence of a common threat to their national interests therefore influences the course of their relations and their commitment to counterterrorism measures that often shape the manner in which the entire international community attains peace and security.

Assessing United States–Kenyan Counterterrorism Efforts

Although contrasting views on the structure of asymmetric relations suggest one common feature – the existence of relational disparities in the capabilities of unequal states as seen in the US–Kenyan relations – this does not mean instability is a given. The existence of mutual interests normalises asymmetric relations. This however does not entail the elimination of threats but rather means that asymmetric states manage their distinct interests through routinised issues of common interest, such as counterterrorism efforts, which minimise the risk of conflicts.⁴⁷⁰ Asymmetric interactions can therefore deepen security, economic, and developmental cooperation through the identification of mutual interests that also influence the collective integration of regional and international partners. US–Kenyan asymmetric relations are therefore cemented by multinational partnerships through which states cooperate with forums, such as the Intergovernmental Authority

of Development (IGAD), the East African Community (EAC), the AU, the UN and the European Union (EU).

Subsequently, as a powerful state, the United States and its Western allies collectively support Kenya as a relatively weak East African state with the required defensive means to address the threats posed by terrorism. Fundamentally, to succeed in minimising their mutual exposure to terror threats, the United States and Kenya employ strategic patterns of interactions to counter terrorism, and address other forms of transnational threats, such as violent extremism posed by terrorist groups, such as al-Shabaab. The following patterns of asymmetry enhance normalcy in asymmetric bilateral relations through the adoption of a cooperative leadership management framework embodied in:

- Interdependence and cooperation: This pattern of asymmetry initiates conditions for collaboration between states with distinct capabilities. Since terrorism places the national interests of both powerful and weak states in a vulnerable security predicament, normalcy in their asymmetric bilateral relations is highly significant. This momentum is achieved through the ‘maintenance of an asymmetric cooperative framework’,⁴⁷¹ which refers to collaboration backed by confidence in the establishment of stable partnerships nationally and regionally. In the case of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations, the same applies as for trade and military partnerships, such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and PRACT continues to strengthen the bilateral relations through US contributions to Kenyan investments in vital sectors. These investments include bilateral defence cooperation to bolster Kenyan military capability to support regional peace and counterterrorism efforts better, as well as reform enhancement in ‘health, agriculture, and energy sectors’.⁴⁷²
- Multi-agency partnership: This brings to light the reality that the global security crisis affecting the national and regional security interests of both asymmetric states requires a blended multi-agency approach combined with a civilian-centred approach to counter terrorism and violent extremism. By countering violent extremism collectively, it becomes a counterterrorism strategy aimed to bolster steps addressing terrorism by coordinating both state and non-state actors through synergy in ‘counter terrorism efforts and counter terrorism operations for better results’,⁴⁷³ as the existence of mutual threats shape the course of counterterrorism efforts of asymmetric states in East Africa. These coordinated efforts create conditions for stable US–Kenyan asymmetric bilateral relations through the expansion of regional and global links.⁴⁷⁴ To an extent, the multi-partnership pattern of asymmetry has influenced the US–Kenyan asymmetric bilateral relations on counterterrorism to accentuate a shift in the US military-focused approach to a much more collaborative and multi-agency counterterrorism approach with weak, yet strategic African partners, such as Kenya.

Through multi-agency collaboration, the US–Kenyan asymmetric relations enforce collective integration of national, international, and regional partnerships to stabilise and secure Kenya and East Africa. For instance, since 9/11, the US-led counterterrorism efforts not only facilitated global mobilisation against al-Qaeda through the GWOT

rhetoric that unleashed US-led unilateral invasions in Afghanistan in 2001; it also made a multitude of policy changes to protect the interests of the United States and its allies.⁴⁷⁵ An explanation for these mutual and stable relations between asymmetric states is the acknowledgement of the patterns of interdependence and cooperation, which are essentially multidimensional in nature. A multidimensional approach to counterterrorism relies on interagency collaboration, which is a distinct feature of the US unilateral approach pursued in the early 2000s. The unilateral US engagement against terrorist groups after 9/11 was nonetheless deemed necessary.⁴⁷⁶ Partly, the growing ‘anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric from a number of Islamic radicals’⁴⁷⁷ influenced the unilateral and heavy militaristic approach to counterterrorism, particularly under the Bush administration. A prominent shift was however seen in the administrations that followed by way of US commitment to building defence and military capacity, law enforcement, and cooperation with civilian and other multinational actors across East Africa.

The US foreign policy shift in its counterterrorism efforts enabled the normalisation of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations in several ways. US counterterrorism efforts focused on strengthening US–African relations by increasing trade through initiatives, such as AGOA of 2000.⁴⁷⁸ Although US–Kenyan relations have been ongoing for nearly six decades, it was only in 2012 that the US foreign policy shifted from unilateral engagement to multilateral partnership, specifically with prioritisation by the Obama administration of democratisation of African states to ensure a strengthened institutionalisation of democracy, economic growth, mechanisms for conflict prevention and peaceful resolution as well as collective responses to transnational security threats as a soft-power rather than hard-power approach to counter the growing security challenges threatening the sustainability of its interests in Africa.⁴⁷⁹

The distinctions between a hard- and a soft-power approach are in its rules of engagement. The hard-power approach was highly prominent during the Bush administration through use of coercion, as a result of which this approach was in many respects “disastrous” when engaging in counterterrorism as was the case with the US invasion in Iraq. In this case, counterterrorism interventions were preceded by violent interrogations ensuing human rights concerns.⁴⁸⁰ Subsequently, replacing the hard-power approach with a soft-power approach – which in many regards carries a “soft diplomatic” approach enforced by diplomatic and economic engagements instead of military force – has been practical specifically when dealing with the growing and complex members of al-Qaeda East Africa (AQEA) and associated terrorist fugitives from Kenya.⁴⁸¹ Despite the growing security challenges that AQEA and its affiliates, such as al-Shabaab, pose, the reliance on merely fatal military engagements could not curb terrorism threats. It consequently became critical to employ a multidimensional approach, which entailed a multitude of non-military engagements due to the limitations presented by the militaristic counterterrorism approach in countering terror threats posed by groups with insurgent inclinations.

Essentially, counterterrorism strategies should consider the transformational structure of terrorist groups in Africa, which are increasingly having links with international terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In East Africa, al-Shabaab has been employing terrorist tactics akin to counterinsurgency operations where targeted

training is given to vulnerable recruits.⁴⁸² Nonetheless, to an extent, the militaristic focus of AMISOM hampered its ability to pursue a counterinsurgency operation despite having drawn several successes in dislodging terrorist groups from areas they had previously controlled, such as Mogadishu.

In Mogadishu and other areas previously seized by terrorists, AMISOM counterterrorism operatives reclaimed those areas in offensive operations by the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) and AU peace missions.⁴⁸³ The persisting resistance by al-Shabaab militants in targeting regional security forces along the border posts of Kenya and Somalia⁴⁸⁴ however compelled continuous regional cooperation and strengthened security in terms of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism measures. The transition of AMISOM to ATMIS has, therefore, created conditions for increased capacity building to redress effectively the security weaknesses, which al-Shabaab militants exploited to launch extremist violence in the East African region and beyond.

United States–Kenyan Asymmetric Counterterrorism Efforts and International Actors

Counterterrorism is one of the predictable norms to combat terrorism through which great powers, such as the United States, influence the international community to pursue collective strategies for international peace and stability. These counterterrorism strategies can be carried out through bilateral engagements and multilateral partnerships. Bilaterally, the US–Kenyan counterterrorism efforts have initially been met with a certain degree of scepticism due to a number of factors. Firstly, the conceptualisation of counterterrorism in itself renders its implementation a challenging practice by virtue of being an under-theorised and under-researched phenomenon.⁴⁸⁵ It may happen that the implementation of counterterrorism strategies by state decision-makers may occur through a reactive approach. At times, the intervention may require a prolonged strategic engagement to adapt better to the local and regional contexts in order to remain relevant and effective. It has not been an easy task to predict the outcome of some counterterrorism strategies or the public reaction to such counter strategies. For example, since 9/11, Kenya experienced its share of terror attacks. The 2002 Paradise Hotel terror incident in Kikambala compelled Kenya to strengthen its national security by enforcing counterterrorism measures.⁴⁸⁶

The enactment in Kenya of the Suppression of Terrorism Bill of 2003 during the Bush administration however raised national polemic. Critics observed the implementation process of the Suppression of Terrorism Bill (2003), and concluded that its enactment was highly influenced by the United States, given that, despite heated domestic contestation in public forums, the Bill was, nonetheless, enacted.⁴⁸⁷ The United States used diplomatic pressure to garner cooperation in terms of the political and military objectives of its post-9/11 war on terror strategies.⁴⁸⁸

This has somewhat affected the perception of the intentions of the United States in Africa, as the distinct perspectives may produce ‘structural misperceptions that can culminate in conflict’.⁴⁸⁹ This is however unlikely in asymmetric relations because, regardless of the existing power capability distinctions between the US–Kenyan relations, for example,

the risks for such occurrence are mitigated by a perceptual factor – a pattern of attention in asymmetric relations that influences and normalises bilateral relations in asymmetric relationships, specifically because of the historical context that shapes how each state perceives the other.

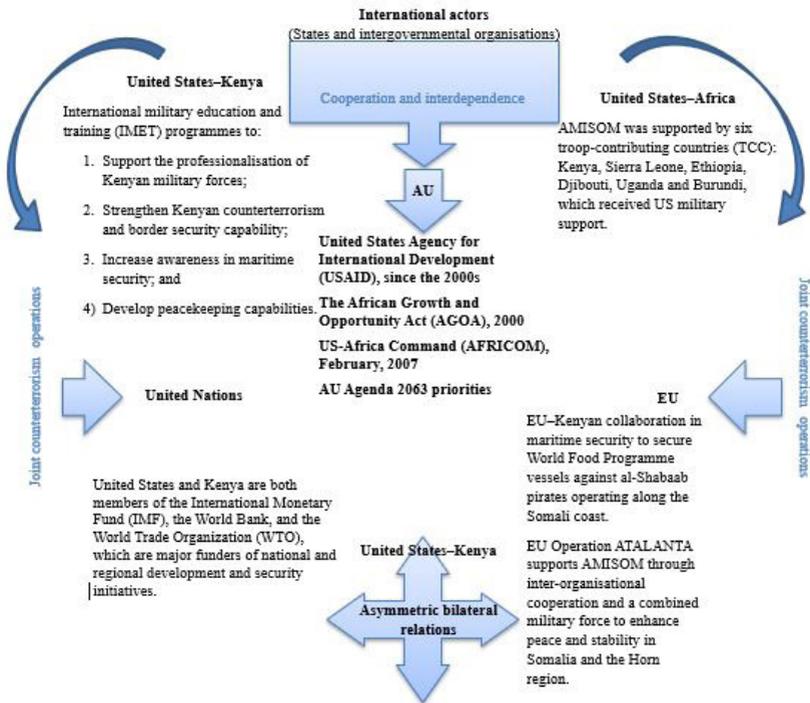
Secondly, the challenging nature of counterterrorism is amplified by the reactive approach. Arguably, counterterrorism influences the actions of both governments and the international community in such a way that they intend to take globalised defensive action. This collective action enables further advancement of common interests amongst states and also regulates bilateral asymmetric relations. Certainly, as long as security threats, such as terrorism and violent extremism, remain existential and continue to spread at an alarming rate across Africa,⁴⁹⁰ counterterrorism automatically becomes a responsive defensive strategy to counter any perceived threats associated with terrorism.

Indeed, counterterrorism strategies influence both governments and the international community in devising globalised defensive actions that advance common interests. For instance, whilst both the United States and Kenya are committed to building defence and military capacity, law enforcement, and cooperation with civilian and other multinational actors across East Africa, a multi-agency approach to counterterrorism is desirable. This would strengthen asymmetric relations between the two unequal states and the rest of the international community through collaboration with institutions, such as the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), IGAD, and ATMIS to improve the approaches in countering the morphing threats of terrorism.⁴⁹¹

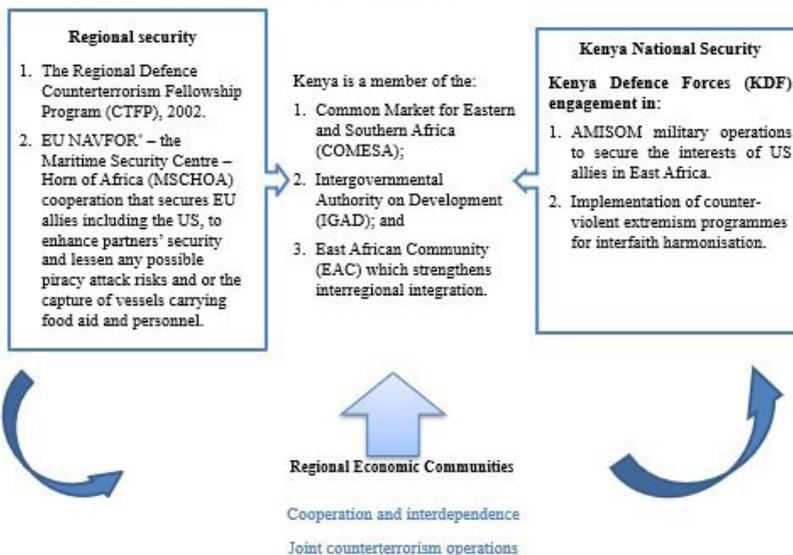
Although the significance of institutions as socially crucial tools that sustain cooperation and enhance mutual interests is embedded in the multilateral arrangements of liberal thought, asymmetry theory perceives multilateral relations as vital patterns of interaction. While liberal perceptions may be valid in maintaining that multilateral institutions ‘lock in policies’⁴⁹² by making these binding and also cementing coalitions that support progressive changes for the benefit of humanity, their position is slightly different from Womack’s asymmetric framework. On the one hand, liberalism, specifically institutional liberalism as Keohane points out, draws attention to the use of power in constructing institutions to attain a social purpose.⁴⁹³ From this point of view, one can argue that counterterrorism strategies can only wield relative gains as the use of power is a determinant according to which institutions have been created. This could potentially lead to a chaotic state of multilateral interactions. To counter this possibility – which is caused by uncertainty in international relations as realists would agree – Womack’s asymmetric theoretical argument suggests that, in light of the uncertainties that multilateralism may present to international relations, asymmetry transforms uncertainty through the management of interactions.⁴⁹⁴ The management of interactions reduces the exposure of states to certain uncertainties that may arise from misperception.⁴⁹⁵

Both the United States and Kenya accepted the asymmetric framework that embodies their relationship whilst cooperating multilaterally within the parameters of regional and global institutions that drive mutual interests, such as counterterrorism and national security goals, as in the case of the NCTC, IGAD, the UN, and the AU. Inevitably, despite

the asymmetry, the United States and Kenya will take advantage of the asymmetric relationship to maximise their interests and mutually yield benefits, as illustrated in Figure 2.



Kenya is a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.



*NAVFOR = the European Union Naval Force responsible for safeguarding maritime vessels in areas of operation⁴⁹⁶

Figure 2: Sequential architecture of United States–Kenyan counterterrorism efforts in East Africa.⁴⁹⁷

The architecture of counterterrorism strategies pursued by global and regional powers may take different forms. Figure 2 above presented the architecture of US–Kenyan counterterrorism strategies. It illustrated a sequential interlink between actors in international relations that form part of established troikas that advance regional stability.⁴⁹⁸

The sequence of asymmetric interactions in troikas demonstrates the strength of the US–Kenyan asymmetric collaborative relations with other global or regional actors, such as the AU and the EU. It therefore portrays ‘triangular cooperation’ aimed at accelerating the implementation of counterterrorism initiatives that focus on drawing mutual security benefits.⁴⁹⁹ Troikas also represent a collective commitment to multilateral security responses to achieve common interests. Apart from addressing terrorism, troikas thus enable international actors to equally address ‘concurrent and converging threats, such as the worsening climate crisis, armed conflict, poverty and inequality, and lawless cyberspace’.⁵⁰⁰

Troikas can be arranged in a unique sequence of asymmetric trilateral interactions, such as US–Kenyan–UN, US–Kenyan–AU, US–Kenyan–EU, and regionally, US–Kenyan–EAC relations, depending on the interagency composition. The utility of the US–Kenyan asymmetric relations with international actors is the creation of sustainable regional security

and stability. Essentially, each categorised international actor symbolises an interplay of US–Kenyan joint operations in a sequential interagency with key international actors that build civilian capacity and strengthen partnerships supporting Kenyan interagency and the engaging role of the country in defending its territorial integrity and regional stability. This means that, since becoming a major troop contributor to counterterrorism missions, such as AMISOM and ATMIS, the effective regional security role of Kenya cannot be attained independently.

Conversely, interagency efforts are pivotal and are extended through financial support, training, and capacity building to the existing counterterrorism institutions, such as the NCTC, which cooperates with other state actors. For example, Danish collaboration with East Africa is not least through NCTC to ‘significantly reduce the number of IED (Improvised Explosive Device) casualties and mitigate the growing threat represented by terrorists’ use of IEDs’⁵⁰¹ but also the IGAD Centre of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism through capacity building for IGAD member states, such as Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, and Djibouti. These interagency cooperations are strategic in that they enhance counterterrorism efforts of asymmetric states to respond to threats emerging from easy accessibility to IEDs used by terrorist organisations, such as al-Shabaab.

Troikas Supporting the US–Kenyan Asymmetric Relations

The sequence of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations (as illustrated earlier in Figure 2 shows that the asymmetric interactions with other allies and troikas are ingrained in diplomatic, economic, and military interests through initiatives, such as AGOA, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United States Africa Command (US AFRICOM) defence engagements that cement the US–Kenyan partnerships even further into stable and normalised asymmetric patterns of interactions.⁵⁰² Both the United States and Kenya have benefited from regional grant support drawn from USAID. These grants have been issued to East African member states in a collective effort to prevent and counter terror threats to US security interest. These threats have been on the rise since the twin US Embassy bombings of 1998.⁵⁰³ Similarly, US AFRICOM, which is one of seven ‘geographic combatant commands’ of the US Department of Defence, has consistently supported African military operations aimed at promoting US interests on the continent and advancing ‘regional security, stability, and prosperity’.⁵⁰⁴

From an asymmetry theory perspective, troikas bear relevance in managing asymmetric relationships that seek to respond multilaterally to imminent threats to national security. Besides establishing bilateral asymmetric relations, weak states, such as Kenya, therefore expand their membership to global forums that tackle threats posed by terrorist groups, such as Da’esh and ISIS. The willingness of Kenya, for instance, to engage in global alliances, such as the Global Coalition against Da’esh and ISIS as well as the Global Counterterrorism Forum, attests that security threats posed by terrorism affect the interests of both powerful states and weak states.⁵⁰⁵ Despite power disparities in relations of powerful states and weak states as seen in US–Kenyan asymmetric relationship, the holistic inclusion of and cooperation amongst unequal states therefore shape counterterrorism strategies by driving a multidimensional approach to national, regional, and global security.

Troikas and International Actors: A Multidimensional Approach to Counterterrorism

The major utility of troikas and international actors in asymmetric relations is their ability to normalise and stabilise international relations in the face of insecurities and power disparities amongst states. Faced with insecurity dangers posed by the ever-growing threat of terrorism, African states have recognised the significance of adopting a ‘multidimensional, holistic and integrated approach to effectively combat the terrorist threat affecting several African countries’.⁵⁰⁶ How can troikas and international actors catalyse effective responses to the problematic resurgence of terrorist groups, transnational terrorism, and acts of violent extremism in East Africa? Given the complexity of the instability woes of East African states that result from their “umbilical” linkage to war-torn states, such as Somalia, efforts for an integrated response to national and regional security threats remain a priority. For instance, as a regional player and a member of the AU, Kenya acknowledges the effects that the unstable conditions have compelled African leaders and their allies such as the United States –

[To] carry out the mandate of reducing the threat posed by al-Shabaab; support the capacity-building of the integrated Somali security and police forces; conduct a phased handover of security responsibilities to Somalia; and support peace and reconciliation efforts in that country.⁵⁰⁷

It is pivotal to fathom the general concerns of Africans around the achievement of governing objectives that advance human rights and development; the promotion of peace, security, stability; and regional economic integration supported by interactions driven by a win-win principle in spite of the distinct power capabilities.

A win-win principle can be drawn in asymmetric relations even though ‘the calculus of asymmetric negotiation is quite different from interaction premised on symmetry’.⁵⁰⁸ The concept of symmetry seems obvious and easy to define. Like other concepts in international relations, such as “terrorism” and “counterterrorism”, the interpretation of symmetry however remains a contentious issue in the study of international relations. Generally, symmetry is perceived to be more harmonious than asymmetry, as relations are found between states with equal capabilities. The perception is therefore that, since relations are driven by ‘a balanced mutual relationship, based on similar allocations of power resources’, conflicts may be limited.⁵⁰⁹

In practical terms, however, as the realists would argue, like asymmetric relations, symmetric relations involve power dynamics where coercion is likely due to competing power struggles that may occur even though negotiations and cooperation may occasionally occur. The case of the United States and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War is an example of a symmetric relationship where power competition led to global conflicts.⁵¹⁰ Despite the existence of equal power characteristics in symmetric relations, mutual trust is however not normalised nor stabilised. Consequently, any future conflicts are highly probable, as in the case of the US–Russian relations amid the Russo–Ukrainian war.

Similarly, asymmetry has two interpretations despite the existence of the power dynamics, which remain constant in international relations. The first interpretation maintains that, unlike symmetric relationships, which are between equals and considered “just”, asymmetric relations are seen as unjust because the relations are between unequal parties.⁵¹¹ The relations are, thus, between powerful states and weak where the probability of discord is likely due to a dichotomy of resources and capabilities. The second interpretation, which derives from Womack’s asymmetry theory, emphasises that, despite disparities in the capabilities of unequal states, such as the powerful United States and the weak Kenya, the likelihood of a stable and normal asymmetric interaction in an asymmetric relation is achievable. This is because mutual benefits are drawn from the realisation that the probability of power dominance by the powerful state over the weak state is less likely given the shared values and global ambitions in securing their interests in East Africa, more especially in light of the imminent shared security threats posed by the transnational nature of terrorism.

The US–Kenyan asymmetric relationship wields a mutual benefit as the idea of a win-win expectation ‘stabilizes the relationship, which is desirable for both sides’.⁵¹² For instance, by 2020, the US military spent an estimated \$778 billion⁵¹³ on defence, which capacitated the Kenyan defence force to engage in multiple global and regional security priorities. In East Africa, for example, US–Kenyan asymmetric cooperation was instrumental in addressing regional priorities, such as ‘ending the crisis in Ethiopia, fighting terrorism in Somalia, and restoring the civilian-led transition in Sudan’.⁵¹⁴

The US–Kenyan asymmetric relations indicate that the idea of discord in asymmetric relationships is not applicable in this instance. Although realists argue that asymmetric relations only present relative gains, absolute gains can be achieved when the patterns of cooperation are not only driven by ‘mutual self-interest and reciprocity’,⁵¹⁵ as Keohane emphasises in his reassessment of institutional liberalism. Although there are no visible disjoints in terms of the views of Keohane and Womack that cooperation in asymmetric relations is achievable due to mutual interests, Keohane underscores that asymmetric patterns of cooperation are strengthened by the existing sets of governing ‘principles, norms and rules governing the relations among well-defined sets of actors’⁵¹⁶ such as the UN, the AU and IGAD.

In the end, although Keohane’s assertion remains valid and is to an extent supported by asymmetry theory – despite a few visible distinctions in their explanation of asymmetric relations – this makes liberalism inadequate as compared to asymmetry theory. Womack maintains that asymmetric relations thrive through concerted efforts involving national and international actors that seek resolutions to address identified national and regional security threats as well as other forms of sustainable development concerns through diplomatic engagements and security partnerships. The existence of well-defined institutions and a set of rules alone however cannot stabilise or enforce cooperation in asymmetric relations, as relative changes may affect the relationship calculus of each party; thus, reducing the asymmetric relationship into a cost–benefit calculation. Consequently, to avoid misperception and ensure normalcy in asymmetric relationships, Womack’s asymmetry theory explains best how powerful states and weak states take

into consideration the patterns of interaction (see Figure 1), specifically US–Kenyan capability, identity, diplomacy, and the context of the relationship.⁵¹⁷ These elements are critical in asymmetric relations, as they ensure that, despite the exposed disparities in any of the identified elements, mutual interests, such as peace and security through enhanced counterterrorism strategies, are attained through collaborative efforts (see Figure 2).

The US–Kenyan collaborative counterterrorism efforts have enabled national and international actors to a great extent to enhance their advisory services, assistance, and ally support in terms of defensive operations on the African continent.⁵¹⁸ For instance, through diplomatic counterterrorism engagements, the United States has proactively engaged in de-radicalisation activities by organising dialogue with Somali communities in the United States as a counterterrorism strategy to mitigate extremist attacks on US interests domestically and abroad. In terms of security partnerships, the United States relies on intercontinental, interregional, and interstate cooperation to intensify its counterterrorism strategies in affected sub-Saharan African regions.⁵¹⁹ Given that peace and security constitute the core of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations, both the United States and Kenya cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally to achieve the envisioned national and regional security interests. To this end, international actors play a vital role in creating partnerships and synergies that advance the legislation, compliance, and implementation of counterterrorism strategies. Collaboration between Kenya and the United States and its allies has, in many regards, enhanced Kenyan military capacity, law enforcement, and cooperation with civilian actors across East Africa through regional initiatives, such as PRACT.⁵²⁰

The US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), for instance, is a strategy of PRACT that has enabled Kenya and its regional partners, namely Tanzania, Somalia, Uganda, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Mozambique to create long-term solutions to regional security threats collectively. The insecurity vulnerabilities, which are magnified by the spread of incidents of violent extremism and the expansion of transnational terrorism in some parts of these countries, have created conditions for asymmetric states and international actors to strengthen the institutions supporting both civilian and national security. For example, the implementation of the 2016 Kenyan National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism is one of the national efforts employed to confront the security challenges at national and regional level.⁵²¹

The cooperative efforts of INL, PRACT, and East African countries capacitate the host governments to play leading roles in fighting the scourge of terrorism within their territories and surrounding areas. For Kenya, a coalition with international actors maximises its strategic counterterrorism interests implemented through an enduring asymmetric bilateral relationship with the United States.

Given the tumultuous character of the East African region, comprising complex sources of instability that magnify violent conflicts emanating from the surrounding border areas, the strategies to combat the surge in terror activities have required a multidimensional approach. The increased instability risks of extreme violence spillover beyond the East African region compelled the United States and Kenya to adopt highly ‘coordinated anti-

terrorism deployments with regional economic communities, including the Multinational Joint Task Force'.⁵²²

Counterterrorism measures implemented through the US–Kenyan asymmetric relations have relied on a wide spectrum of strategies, depending on the form and manifestations of terror threats. The troikas have therefore been instrumental in promoting regional peace and security, despite growing criticism of US-led counterterrorism strategies in Africa of being rather 'reactive and heavily militaristic'⁵²³ and therefore perceived as a 'cover for US imperialism'.⁵²⁴ States are thus becoming critical of the United States, in particular to strengthen its "soft" diplomatic approach to ensure that the United States and Kenya maintain peaceful management of the asymmetric relationship.⁵²⁵ A balanced preventive approach to insecurity threats found in the shared environment enhanced by a limited reactionary counterterrorism approach, has become desirable.

US–Kenyan–UN Troika: Restoring Peace and Political Stability

The primary responsibility of the UN Security Council (UNSC) is the maintenance of international peace and security through the promotion of an international culture of peace and the prevention of terrorism in all its forms. The UNSC has led international counterterrorism operations decisively over the years by 'determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression'.⁵²⁶ For instance, upon the demise of Siade Barre's regime in the 1990s, Somalian instability was aggravated by the proliferation of clan militias, such as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) that gave rise in the mid-2000s to al-Shabaab, which remains a major force of instability in East Africa.⁵²⁷ Despite these long-lasting security shortcomings, the continued support drawn from the US–Kenyan–UN troika led to several positive outcomes:

- Firstly, the establishment of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) in 2013 following the 2012 extensive political transition efforts where the US–Kenya–UN troika advanced AMISOM peacekeeping operations.⁵²⁸
- Secondly, despite having engaged militarily in Somalia through the 2011 operation Linda Nchi, which constituted the epitome of the AMISOM pursuit of al-Shabaab, great national and regional security outcomes were achieved with the involvement of the AU and the UN. The withdrawal of al-Shabaab militants from the previously captured military bases attests to the assumption that the collective engagements of asymmetric states with international actors serve as potential security enforcers in counterterrorism interventions.⁵²⁹
- Finally, in light of expanding inter-agency integration to counterterrorism, the US–Kenyan–UN troika, particularly through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), facilitated the creation of the Nairobi Regional Counter-terrorism Centre of Excellence, which 'fosters knowledge-sharing and capacity-building at the regional level among members of the Organisation to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism'⁵³⁰ in East Africa.

Realists and liberals may agree with asymmetry theory that all states are vulnerable to the uncertain nature of the international environment, and their desire to manage uncertainty motivates international relations. It is, however, beneficial for small and weak states, such as Kenya, to engage in asymmetric troika relations to cope with and manage the evolving security threats and to advance economic development through integrative strategies because weak states are 'more exposed and have less control over the general situation'⁵³¹ which emphasises conditions for insecurity.

US–Kenyan–EU Troika: Maritime Security and Anti-piracy Efforts

Since most US–Kenyan terror threats emanate from Somalia, the international community, specifically the EU, collaborates with the United States and Kenya to secure the Somali Basin along the Indian Ocean. Through the European Union Naval Force Operation (EUNAVFOR) Operation Atalanta, the Kenyan navy obtains support to enforce its maritime security instruments whilst its seas are protected from Somali pirates whose agenda is to use the Indian Ocean corridor to 'hijack the ship and hold the crew for ransom'.⁵³² The escalation of terror threats often conducted by pirates along the Gulf of Aden affects vulnerable vessels carrying aid to East African states. For these reasons, it has become fundamental to retain an integrated and multidimensional counterterrorism strategy that collectively responds to the emerging instability crisis that is compounded by emerging collaboration between al-Shabaab and Somalian pirates.

In recent years, terrorist groups and pirates have become creative in their terrorist acts by joining forces to facilitate marine transit of illicit arms, ferry recruits, and other goods to enable the financing of their terrorist activities along the Somali seas. To counter these emerging security threats, the US–Kenyan–EU troika has to strengthen partnerships equally with the UN and AU to protect their ships from terror attacks.⁵³³ For instance, UNSC Resolution 2608 (2021) has been instrumental in repressing the activities of pirates along the Somali marine territory.

Furthermore, since the establishment of the 2012 transitional government in Somalia, the UN, the AU, and the EU have supported and enhanced coordination efforts by the UN in Somalia, by promoting an uninterrupted presence of the 'good offices of the Secretary-General and supporting political reconciliation and peacebuilding through engagement with the Federal Government of Somalia'.⁵³⁴ The US–Kenyan–EU security interests and their multinational allies have thus expanded the activities of international actors by either providing humanitarian aid or military training support to prevent violent extremism and to combat the expansion of terrorist threats within the Kenya–Somalia borders and offshore.

Consequently, as mentioned earlier, by strengthening a collective integration of national, regional, and international efforts, there is an assurance that the implementation of security measures protects the interests of the US–Kenyan national security and those of their allies against terror groups and pirates. Likewise, in defensive situations, such as counterterrorism, multi-agency cooperation enhanced by the US–Kenyan–EU troika has also increased 'the size and complexity of the target faced by the opponent'.⁵³⁵ For instance, pirate activities along the Somalian coast have frequently destabilised the vessels

carrying goods for the World Food Programme. Other vulnerable vessels supporting displaced populations in Kenya and Somalia have also been targets of piracy. The EU Naval Force (NAVFOR) in collaboration with the US–Kenyan–EU allies has however remained vital in its broader security responsibility that provides maritime security in the strategic Indian Ocean corridor.

US–Kenyan–AU Troika: Advancing Diplomatic, Economic and Military Interests

As mentioned earlier, troikas form a unique sequence of asymmetric trilateral interactions and interweaved networks of counterterrorism strategies. These strategies advance the diplomatic, economic, and military interests of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations on the continent. Furthermore, trilateral interactions with intergovernmental and regional actors ensure that the international community achieves its global goal of preventing the spread of terrorist activities through a collective effort. For instance, it was through multilateral security missions that the US–Kenyan–AU troika was able to accomplish numerous regional diplomatic, economic development, and peacekeeping successes in East Africa.

In terms of diplomatic engagements, the US–Kenyan asymmetric relations contributed to East African developmental growth marked by the implementation of policies related to regional economic growth, such as AGOA, adopted by the Clinton administration in the 1990s.⁵³⁶ These policies have been instrumental in advancing US–African economic partnerships through the introduction of tariff and non-tariff barrier reduction, trade agreement negotiations, as well as the integration of regional economic powers, such as Kenya, into the global economy. AGOA ‘grants exports from qualifying African countries duty-free access to the United States – the world’s largest consumer market. Over \$10 billion worth of African exports entered the United States duty free last year under the programme’.⁵³⁷ This is a clear indication that the US–African partnership is diversified and that the US–Kenyan–AU troika enhances support for regional economic development as well as security activities, such as bilateral and multilateral engagements advancing the war on terrorism, through strengthened interdependence and cooperation, peacekeeping operations, and civic action performance.⁵³⁸

Essentially, the existence of mutual interests in US–Kenyan asymmetric relations has thus far preserved these relations where cooperation with international actors continues to ensure stability and to mitigate the effects of misperceptions that could lead to hostilities. Furthermore, mutual respect diffuses any possibility of the display of political egos, as both powerful states and weak states focus their attention on attaining a common national and regional security.

National and regional security is at the centre of US–Kenyan–AU troika relations due to the insecurity conditions in East Africa that have prompted the international community to engage collectively in counterterrorism efforts that support the stabilisation of the Horn of Africa. Whilst there have been numerous initiatives that have contributed to the growing stabilisation of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations, the multilateral support drawn from the international community has not only normalised the troikas formed through US–Kenyan

asymmetric relations but has paved the way for enhanced collective management of threats posed by al-Shabaab. The following four-fold security achievements remain one of the remarkable security aspects of the US–Kenyan–AU troika.

Firstly, the ability of AMISOM to protect the 2006 Transitional Government in Somalia, and the subsequent establishment of the Somali Federal Government can be ascribed to the relentless capability of AMISOM to degrade terrorist cells of al-Shabaab.⁵³⁹ Secondly, the collective multilateral counterterrorism operations enabled the US–Kenyan–AU military operatives to push away most of al-Shabaab’s jihadist forces from the capital city of Mogadishu. For instance, as AMISOM advanced in its offensive operations, al-Shabaab was attacked from ‘several fronts’ as about 1 000 soldiers who were heavily backed up by 20 tanks continued to capture several al-Shabaab bases.⁵⁴⁰

Additionally, by 2022, AMISOM had been equipped successfully to counter the evolving threat amplified by terrorists’ choice of IEDs, through extensive training received from Western counterparts of the AU, such as the United States and the United Kingdom.⁵⁴¹ Increased awareness of al-Shabaab’s modus operandi enabled Kenya and other troop-contributing states serving under AMISOM, such as Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Uganda to mitigate al-Shabaab’s evolving ‘tactics, techniques and procedures in order to better protect’⁵⁴² themselves, and ultimately to emerge victorious. AMISOM had significant victories against al-Shabaab, as initially, prior to the transition from AMISOM to ATMIS in 2022, the bulk of troops serving under AMISOM were from Kenya and Ethiopia. Nonetheless, mutual security interests – seen through joint offensive operations against al-Shabaab militants – have led to successful military outcomes not only on land but also at sea.

For example, while AMISOM had been vital in helping the US–Kenyan–AU troika in expanding accessibility to humanitarian relief for displaced Somalis in East Africa, the political developments in Somalia remain one of the major successful regional interventions that the US–Kenyan asymmetric relations have accomplished with the continued troika partnerships with the UN and members of the EU community. The challenges associated with internally displaced people (IDPs) in Northern Kenya, for instance led to over 66 000 IDPs being hosted in Dadaab, the largest African refugee concentration camp, in East Africa.⁵⁴³

To redress the challenges magnified by the long-term effects of dispersed refugees, multinational collaboration enhanced synchronised efforts, such as financial support channelled towards the prioritisation of security and intelligence programmes for counterterrorism.⁵⁴⁴ Multinational organisations, such as the EU, continue to support the US–Kenyan–AU troika through “soft” diplomacy and financial assistance. For these reasons, the non-militaristic counterterrorism efforts of the EU – as ‘a leading supporter of Somalia’s peace process’⁵⁴⁵ – focus on effective counter-measures and terror-preventing strategies to reduce the threat of terrorist activities and violent extremism in vulnerable environments.

Finally, until its final mission, AMISOM – along with security forces of the Somali government – continued to provide fundamental security, which has been vital for the security of all international actors operating in Somalia and along its surrounding borders.⁵⁴⁶

Evidently, the prevailing military cooperation of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations with the distinct allies – such as the UN deployment to peacekeeping missions, the EU socio-economic and developmental support, as well as AU peacekeeping missions, such as AMISOM and currently ATMIS – has enabled international institutions, specifically African regional institutions, such as IGAD, to deal effectively with uncertainties resulting from terror-related threats. This has been made possible because, as Womack observes, not only do asymmetric relations accelerate cooperation between asymmetric states; they also affect the urgency and strategic actions taken by states.⁵⁴⁷

This, therefore, means that both powerful states and weak states cooperate in a bid to manage uncertainties affecting their mutual interest. Weak states are consequently in an advantageous position rather than being disadvantaged by the asymmetric relationship. This is ascribed to the fact that, despite being exposed to security threats, their cooperation with powerful states, such as the United States and its allies, the multinational institutions strengthen their ability to address terror-related threats through financial support and capacity building as well as law enforcement mechanisms nationally and regionally. Facilitation and consolidation of regional peace by Kenya by means of its defence force, particularly in Somalia, South Sudan, around the Eritrea–Ethiopia border, and in the Indian Ocean waters, attest to the developing capability of Kenya in addressing regional conflicts.⁵⁴⁸

Furthermore, while Kenya and other African states have pursued laudable counterterrorism actions through the ratification and implementation of terror-prevention instruments, such as the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism,⁵⁴⁹ after 9/11, Kenya has been exercising less control over the underlying conditions permeating the expansion of violent extremism on its surrounding borders. The defence skills Kenya acquired through continuous cooperation with the United States have enabled success in numerous peacekeeping operations in the region. The United States has equally become a relentless East African counterterror partner committed to the regional security priorities seen through its enduring financial, technical, and logistical cooperation to incapacitate terrorist groups from settling in vulnerable parts of East Africa.⁵⁵⁰

The current US–Kenyan asymmetric relations case study attests to the reality that, despite considerable US capabilities in terms of its military, economic development, and global influence, the US still focuses its attention on a small and weak state, such as Kenya, which has become a reliable US partner since 9/11, and which supports the responses to (in)security crises that often affect shared vital US–Kenyan domestic values, such as democracy and human rights.

Conclusion

There are undoubtedly conceptual complexities around the interpretation of asymmetric relationships. Nonetheless, significant lessons can be learnt from the US–Kenyan asymmetric relations, primarily the necessity to manage the asymmetric uncertainty

towards achieving mutual interests. In light of the distinct views in relation to whether asymmetric relations – such as those between the United States and Kenya – can be harmonious rather than unjust, this article argued that not only do complexities in relational perception influence the conduct of states and international actors in international relations, but they also influence the prioritisation of collective engagements to counter threats associated with terrorism effectively.

An analysis of the US–Kenyan asymmetric relations suggested that weak states benefit more from the asymmetric relationships than powerful states. The exposure to the insecurity risks that the state of uncertainty presents to both states is equally asymmetric; therefore, weak states, such as Kenya, are more affected than powerful states due to the deepened insecurity conditions that expand terror threats nationally and regionally. The powerful state however also gets positive national security returns from the same asymmetric relationship as the mutual security interests of both states are met when they collectively and multilaterally take actions to eradicate the proliferation of extremist radical networks in Africa strategically. To a certain extent, the troikas mentioned above have created conditions to enhance multinational integration, cooperation, and development, as an asymmetric relations management strategy to respond to the insecurity dimensions found in the international arena, which cannot be ignored.

The current political environment is engulfed by a plethora of uncertainties, which has rendered this environment vulnerable for both powerful states and weak states as security interests have become increasingly susceptible to terror-related threats and violent extremism. Nonetheless, the intensity with which counterterror strategies have been implemented provides insight into the dynamics of US–Kenyan asymmetric relations. The strategies of counterterrorism as pursued by asymmetric states present a clear indication that distinctions in the capability of states do not automatically translate into dominance and injustice, specifically when mutual interests, such as national, regional and global security, are at stake.

In such an instance, a normalised and stable asymmetric relationship is managed through cooperation created by conditions for collective reinforcement of national interests through bilateral and multilateral interactions. With this in mind, the US–Kenyan asymmetric relationship is characterised by cooperation that is beyond bilateral relations; thus, involving participation in multilateral organisations, such as the UN, the EU, the AU, and IGAD. These multinational institutions remain vital in reducing uncertainty through collective counterterrorism actions that have relentlessly sought to degrade the capacity and operations of pirates, al-Shabaab, and allied terrorist groups entrenched in parts of Africa.

To this end, troika interactions arguably have the potential to revitalise asymmetric relations given their multidimensional patterns of actions. It is however worth noting that, while cooperation ensures that asymmetric relations reduce uncertainty, it remains unclear whether enduring stability in East Africa can be sustained collectively through a multi-agency approach given the morphing dynamics of its insecurity.

Endnotes

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South African Responses to New Soviet Air Defence Systems – in Angola in the 1980s

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Abstract

Because of its air superiority during the counter-insurgency conflict against the South West Africa People's Organisation the South African Air Force had neglected to build up modern air and counter-air defences. When Soviet air defence systems were deployed in Angola in the 1980s, South Africa was forced to reconsider their tactics and responses to the war. The Soviet systems included early warning networks, surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft guns to cover troops advancing in the field, and fighter aircraft. The South Africans watched the build-up in the region with concern, viewing it as the precursor to offensive action, given Soviet air defence doctrine. While this build-up was also observed in the neighbouring Southern African countries and had the appearance of a purely defensive stance, given Soviet air defence doctrine, South Africa viewed this as the first steps to offensive actions in Angola and possibly Namibia (then South West Africa) and the start of a dangerous escalation in the military situation. In response, the SADF adopted a strong defensive stance and improved its own air defence capabilities to ensure that it was not outclassed. The South African Air Force also introduced new tactics. These included the introduction of toss-bombing, making greater use of precision-guided missiles and bombs, and investing more in research in terms of missiles and new technology for their aircraft.

Keywords: SADF, SAAF, Angola, Soviet Union, Air Defence, Radar

Introduction

In the 1980s, the South African Defence Force (SADF) was extremely concerned about the Soviet Union's active support for neighbouring countries – particularly Angola – in the form of weapons, and especially, modern air defence systems. As a result, the SADF constantly monitored the situation to ensure that it was not outclassed, and it improved its own air defence capabilities. The Soviet air defence systems introduced in Angola included early warning networks (such as radar), surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft guns, and fighter aircraft.

The SADF strategy at the time was based on pro-active action to deter and prevent neighbouring countries from being able to mobilise offensive air power against South Africa. In this regard, the SADF adopted a strong offensive posture. While the build-up

in neighbouring countries had the appearance of a purely defensive stance, given Soviet air defence doctrine, South Africa viewed it as the first steps to offensive actions and the start of a dangerous escalation in the military situation.⁵⁵²

During the 1970s and earlier, the South African Air Force (SAAF) had total air superiority to conduct cross-border operations. At the time, South Africa was conducting counter-insurgency operations, which saw the SAAF provide close air support and other operations, such as trooping, casualty evacuation, and transport of supplies. Because of its air superiority, the SADF paid little attention to developing its own air defence capabilities.⁵⁵³ In addition, South Africa was under a total arms embargo from late 1977, which made it almost impossible to obtain additional or new aircraft, technology, or spares. The country also had a limited defence budget because of the size of its economy.⁵⁵⁴ In the 1980s, spending on defence averaged around 16 per cent. A country study by the Federal Research Division of the American Library of Congress pointed out that, while South African spending on defence compared to economic output in the 1980s was high, a trend towards militarisation was not evident compared to other countries worldwide at the time.⁵⁵⁵ In 1989, the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency ranked South Africa out of 144 countries as follows:

- 30 for total military expenditures;
- 44 for military spending as a percentage of gross national product,
- 63 for military spending as a percentage of total government spending,
- 49 for the size of its armed forces; and
- 103 for the size of the armed forces related to population.

In Angola, the post-independence political and military situation created conditions for foreign involvement (including the United States, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and South Africa) driven by regional and international Cold War politics. The three largest anti-colonial groups, – the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) under Agostinho Neto, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) under Holden Roberto, and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) under Jonas Savimbi, – had agreed to the Alvor Accords with Portugal on 15 January 1975.⁵⁵⁶ The Accords saw Angola secure independence on 11 November 1975 under a transitional government with elections scheduled for October.⁵⁵⁷ The Accords however did nothing to address rivalry among the groups.

Operation Savannah in 1975 set the pattern for South Africa's military involvement in southern Angola. What was initially a clandestine operation to assist UNITA recover its lost territory, intensified over the years as the then Soviet Union, Cuba, and several other former East Bloc countries increased their involvement in support of the MPLA in Angola and SWAPO, who was then fighting for Namibian independence from South Africa.⁵⁵⁸

Although South Africa's forces withdrew from Angola in March 1976, they continued to provide substantial assistance to UNITA, and frequently launched military raids into the south of the country for more than a decade after that.⁵⁵⁹ Following an alliance with the MPLA, SWAPO was able to move closer to the bases of the People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola (FAPLA).⁵⁶⁰

After 1979, the Soviet Union provided South Africa's neighbours with increased assistance – particularly Angola, which did not have its own infrastructure or technical expertise to manufacture or maintain aircraft and air defence systems. These included highly sophisticated aircraft and air defence systems, such as MiG fighters, surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) and radar systems.⁵⁶¹

The establishment of an extensive air umbrella – through the operational use of anti-aircraft artillery and ground-to-air missile systems – in Angola, forced South Africa, and the SAAF in particular, to revise its tactics drastically. This situation also restricted the use of certain types of aircraft, such as the slower and less sophisticated Blackburn Buccaneer S Mk 50 bomber, the Atlas Impala Mk II ground attack aircraft, and the English Electric Canberra B(1) Mk 12 bomber. In turn, this had some effect in limiting the operations of ground forces and the provision of air support.⁵⁶² The presence of heat-seeking missiles in Angola led to very expensive research in South Africa into deterrent measures and curtailed the use of SAAF helicopters.⁵⁶³

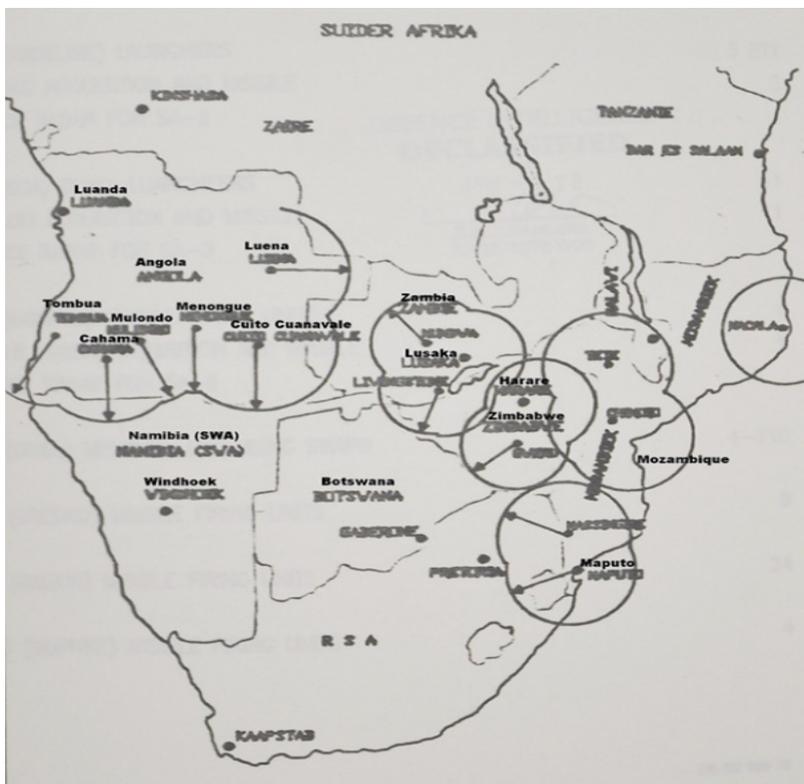


Figure 1: Soviet radar coverage in Southern Africa⁵⁶⁴

Breytenbach notes this was in keeping with Soviet doctrine.⁵⁶⁵ This had a pronounced influence on the thinking, planning, and actions of the SAAF.⁵⁶⁶

Situation in Angola in the 1980s

By the early 1980s, Soviet radar systems had been set up in southern Angola in a zigzag pattern along the Namibe–Menongue railway line (at Namibe, Lubango, Menongue, Cahama and Cuito Cuanavale). These were a mix of P-18 (NATO reporting name “Spoonrest”), P-15 (NATO reporting name “Flat Face”), P-35 (NATO reporting name “Barlock”), the height-finder radar of the SA-3 surface-to-air missile system (NATO reporting name “Side Net”), and fire control radar of the SA-3 system (NATO reporting name “Low-Blow”) radars.

Each radar site had a mix of equipment, which worked on a shift system to ensure continuous radar coverage of the area.⁵⁶⁷ All radars on the approximately 700 km long front were controlled from one central point at Lubango.⁵⁶⁸ In the early 1980s, the SADF viewed the deployment of radar at Cahama as possibly the beginning of a new radar chain.⁵⁶⁹

In addition to the technology, there was also a well-developed visual sight early warning system using FAPLA forces and members of SWAPO in their deployment positions. From the mid-1970s, SWAPO had bases in southern Angola from where they launched attacks into what was then South West Africa (SWA) (now Namibia).⁵⁷⁰ They reported all aircraft positions, flight directions, and altitudes. Maintenance of all equipment was done by Soviet and Cuban technicians. Small arms fire and RPG-7s were also used against SAAF aircraft. By the second half of the 1980s, the Angolan air defence system was not very different from the one the allied forces encountered in Iraq in 1991.⁵⁷¹ This conformed to the Soviet doctrine of air defence in mass and depth.⁵⁷²

The SA-3 missiles were deployed in Luanda, Namibe, Lubango, Matala and Menongue to defend specific strategic assets.⁵⁷³ Writing in 1983, Prinsloo notes that the SA-2, SA-6, SA-9 and SA-8 were also reported to have been deployed to Angola.⁵⁷⁴ His assessment was supported by a 1986 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) assessment on Angola.⁵⁷⁵ This was significant, as some of these systems were still relatively unknown in their entirety in the West, indicating that the conflict was escalating.⁵⁷⁶ Air defences in Angola were also gradually being strengthened with the ZU-23 twin-barrelled anti-aircraft autocannon (initially in a static role) as well as 37-mm and 57-mm guns. Prinsloo further indicates that the combinations of 14.5-mm, 20-mm, 23-mm, 37-mm and 57-mm guns in addition to the SA-7 (STRELA) man-portable shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles were placed at all key point areas across southern Angola.⁵⁷⁷ The smaller calibre weapons were effectively camouflaged. Together these weapons provided cover to an altitude of several thousand meters.⁵⁷⁸

Convoys were also protected with 12.7-mm, 14.5-mm and 23-mm guns, which were mounted on the vehicles. The SADF considered that the increase in self-propelled air defence systems in the area could mean the weapons were being used in a mobile role.⁵⁷⁹ While the SA-7 was reported to have been used extensively by FAPLA, this did not prove

to be successful against the SAAF.⁵⁸⁰ Prinsloo says this was because there was no chain of command to higher headquarters to authorise fire – FAPLA fired on all aircraft that came into their area.⁵⁸¹

It is worth noting that the Soviet Union supplied Angola with its most modern air superiority fighter, the MiG 23ML, at about the same time as it supplied its allies, the Warsaw Pact, for example Hungary, from 1981–1990.⁵⁸² Angola also received the same number of aircraft (12) as the People’s Republic of Hungary.⁵⁸³

South African responses

South Africa needed the continued presence of UNITA in the south-eastern Cuando Cubango province to ensure that the SADF counter-insurgency operations against SWAPO were confined, and that SWAPO fighters were unable to cross into the Caprivi or Kavango from Angola. Between 1978 and 1987, the SADF conducted numerous small-scale and several larger hot pursuit operations against SWAPO (Reindeer [1978], Sceptic [1980], Protea [1981], and Askari [1983–1984]). Although these were largely successful, FAPLA continued to support SWAPO.⁵⁸⁴

From 1983, with Operation Karton, a new pattern began to emerge, and became clearer with operations Wallpaper (1985) and Alpha Centauri (1986). FAPLA focused on destroying UNITA through planned attacks on its stronghold of Mavinga. This was critical as the town could be used as a springboard for an assault on the UNITA headquarters at Jamba.

The build-up of air defence systems on South Africa’s borders increased the risk that the SADF would have to respond with conventional attacks – and this proved to be the case from Operation Askari (1983) onwards – thereby escalating the conflict and tensions. In an attempt to mitigate this build-up, more emphasis was placed on international political negotiations and interventions to convince the Angolans and their supporters (such as the Cubans and Soviets) that they were playing with fire.

The move to a conventional phase of the fighting also gave the SADF first-hand experience of how Soviet doctrines regarding air defence of moving columns were applied in a Southern African context. While the SADF had clashed previously with conventional forces in southern Angola, these had been in defensive positions and not mobile.⁵⁸⁵

This air defence build-up also had specific implications for the SAAF:

- aircraft, such as the Mirage III, becoming out of date and therefore being out-classed in combat;
- restricted air reconnaissance translating into less air intelligence available for operational planning;
- restricted helicopter support;
- more aircraft being needed to reclaim air superiority and therefore fewer available to support ground forces; and
- SAAF air bases becoming increasingly vulnerable to attack by enemy air forces.

Prinsloo indicates this was already a concern for air bases at Hoedspruit in South Africa and Ondangwa and Grootfontein in SWA.⁵⁸⁶ The Nkomati Accord, signed between South Africa and Mozambique in 1984, reduced this threat for Hoedspruit.⁵⁸⁷ Lord also notes the SAAF's concerns when attacking targets in Angola that their bases in northern SWA could come under attack – although this never happened to the SAAF.⁵⁸⁸

This had implications for the SAAF's responses. These would depend mainly on the perceived air threat, the importance of the objective, as well as the sortie rate and ability to replace aircraft.⁵⁸⁹ Breytenbach further indicates:

[C]onsidering the attrition effect and the RSA [Republic of South Africa] situation of no 'reservoir' of aircraft, the choice for the SAAF seems not to be between actions with the lowest possible attrition rate, but rather between actions which would guarantee deterrence, or in the event of a battle, a speedy victory over the enemy.⁵⁹⁰

To overcome this, the SAAF would need to conduct swift 'Blitzkrieg'-style operations and make increased use of electronic measures and precision-guided munitions to minimise the attrition effect.

In order to surmount the disadvantages in their situation, several courses of action were recommended to the SAAF:

- modernising aircraft;
- acquiring new technology aircraft;
- having aircraft airborne for longer periods to operate on more than one front against an enemy, which means air-to-air refuelling technology became critical;
- gunship-type helicopters would need to be obtained or developed to supplement close air support for ground forces and be able to act as tank destroyers. (The Alouette III light utility helicopter was used very effectively as a gunship, and one C-47 Dakota armed with a 20-mm cannon, the "Dragon Dak", was also used in this role.)⁵⁹¹

Other action recommended included the improvement and modernisation of long-range air reconnaissance capabilities as well as maximising the use of factors affecting the outcome of an anti-aircraft engagement.⁵⁹² Several of these possible actions were not practical while the country was under sanctions, and given the time it took to develop new equipment and systems.⁵⁹³

Expanding on this last point regarding the aircraft itself, Prinsloo suggests attention should be paid to aspects such as flight profile. This included performance parameters of the aircraft and weapons load, training of pilots, terrain, defences deployed on the target (this would be based on intelligence on the size and shape of the target area).⁵⁹⁴ "Aircraft survivability" refers to a function of the vulnerability of the aircraft to anti-aircraft ammunition and the statistical parameters governing the probability of a hit by a bullet or a missile.⁵⁹⁵ Other factors for consideration were the weapons system, terrain, and the element of surprise, technological expertise, deployment patterns, and atmospheric conditions.

Challenges facing the SAAF

The SAAF was now pitted against more sophisticated Soviet weapons, culminating in high-mobility semi-conventional operations against Angolan, Soviet and Cuban forces.⁵⁹⁹ From 1983, FAPLA and SWAPO began operating jointly to a greater degree. In August 1983, UNITA appealed to the SADF for assistance to take the FAPLA-held town of Cangamba in Moxico Province. This action escalated SADF involvement with the Angolans, Cubans and Soviets. The success at Cangamba meant that the Soviets significantly increased the amount and sophistication of replacement weaponry that was sent to Angola, and the Cubans sent additional troops. This was a development that gave the South Africans further cause for concern.⁶⁰⁰

In the early 1980s, it appeared that the Angolan MiGs were only flying in defence of their bases. Radar had however locked onto SAAF planes over southern Angola since the early 1980s.⁶⁰¹ The SAAF shot down two MiG-21s, one in Operation Daisy on 6 November 1981, and another on 5 October 1982.⁶⁰²

Lord notes that the SAAF Mirage F1 was superior to the Angolan MiG-17 and MiG-21 but was out-performed by the MiG-23, which was introduced in 1983 and used to good effect towards the end of the conflict.⁶⁰³ As Lord notes, 'all indicators pointed to further encounters with MiGs and our air-to-air missiles had proved to be sub-standard'.⁶⁰⁴

The SAAF began looking for a replacement for the Mirage III in 1971. The Mirage F1 offered an improvement on the Mirage III as it had advantages, such as increased speed, increased pursuit flight time, double the ground mission range, and increased manoeuvrability.⁶⁰⁵ In June 1971, Dassault and SNECMA (the French aerospace engine manufacturer) announced a technical cooperation agreement with South Africa for the license manufacture of the Mirage F1 and engines. The intention was to produce up to 100 Mirage F1s.⁶⁰⁶

The 1977 arms embargo caused this licence to lapse. The SAAF only acquired 16 Mirage F1-CZs and 32 Mirage F1-AZs.⁶⁰⁷ At the time, the SAAF already operated the Mirage III interceptor CZ, ground attack AZ, dual-seater BZ, trainer DZ, and photo reconnaissance RZ versions.⁶⁰⁸ The interceptor CZ and ground attack AZs were replaced by Mirage F1. They were flown by 1 and 3 Squadrons. Heitman notes that the F1AZ fighters performed key roles, such as interdictions and close air support, air defence suppression, and strike sorties.⁶⁰⁹ They were able to carry rockets and bombs of up to 3 650 kg on the fuselage and wing pylons, two 30-mm cannon and two air-to-air missiles on the wingtips. Depending on the weapons loads, the mission and the payload–distance equation and the risk level, the aircraft had a combat radius of up to 900 km, with a top speed of over 2 300 km/h, although they were usually flown at around 1 100 km/h at low level.⁶¹⁰

The Buccaneer flew the precision-guided strikes, using the Kentron H2 Raptor glide bomb. The aircraft was able to carry up to 7 000 kg of weapons, and had a range of around 3 700 kilometres.⁶¹¹

The Impala Mk II was used extensively for close air support and battlefield air interdiction, reconnaissance, photo reconnaissance, and quick reaction air support missions. It had a range of between 130 and 600 km, the ability to carry long-range tanks, and was armed with two 30-mm cannons and could carry up to 1 800 kg of weapons on six hard points.⁶¹² The aircraft was considered relatively slow – with top speeds of just over 800 km – and it was withdrawn from external operations before Operation Moduler in 1987 when the Angolan air defences became too effective.⁶¹³

The SAAF Mirage was armed with the R550 Matra Magic heat-seeking missile (a short-range French air-to-air missile), which was fired against the MiG-21 and MiG-23 over Angola. The limited performance envelope of the early generation R550 led to South Africa designing, developing and producing its own air-to-air missile – the V3B Kukri – despite sanctions.⁶¹⁴ Lord says, ‘[t]he Matra 550 was more reliable but failed to achieve hits during operations when the infrared fuse detonated ineffectively in the exhaust plume of the MiGs.’⁶¹⁵

The Matra R530 was a short-range radar-guided air-to-air missile, which was developed in the 1950s. Lord notes that, because of constant problems with the electromagnetic fuse, the Matra R530 was never used operationally. While it performed satisfactorily in tests, it did not reach accepted standards in the rough operational border conditions.⁶¹⁶

The Mirage III proved disappointing because of its limited range in relation to the large distances involved in the combat area; the Mirage F1 had a longer range.⁶¹⁷ The SAAF adopted special low-level flying techniques to counter the Soviet mobile guided missile systems.⁶¹⁸

An SADF assessment in the early 1980s noted that the Angolan Air Force had an estimated 50 MiG-21s and 15 MiG-17s.⁶¹⁹ These could operate from Luanda, Namibe, Lubango and Menongue. Day and night interceptions were possible, and this was regularly feasible. The aircraft operated in conjunction with a highly sophisticated radar system. This made Angola the best-equipped and therefore the most serious threat to the SAAF of all the countries bordering South Africa at the time.⁶²⁰

With the launch of Operation Askari in late 1983 to disrupt SWAPO operations in southern Angola and to prevent a further mass infiltration into SWA the following year, the SADF hoped to capture an SA-8 battery. This Soviet mobile air-defence missile system incorporated both its engagement radars and missile launchers in one vehicle. This would be of significant intelligence value to South Africa, as this was the first time this system had been deployed outside the Soviet Union.⁶²¹ This goal was not achieved when political pressure on South Africa forced military operations on the Cahama front to end by 31 December 1983; however, they captured one complete SA-9 missile system at Cuvelai.⁶²² This was a self-propelled Soviet short-range, low-altitude infra-red guided surface-to-air missile system.

In the political sphere, Askari facilitated peace negotiations between South Africa and Angola, which led to the establishment of a Joint Military Commission (JMC). The commission comprised officials of both countries who were tasked to monitor the “area in

dispute” (a semi-circular area stretching roughly 150 kilometres to Cuvelai at its furthest point from the border with SWA). In terms of the agreement, South Africa would withdraw from the area in stages, the Cubans would remain north of Cuvelai, and the Angolans would ensure that SWAPO did not operate in the area. A joint South African–Angolan force would monitor the area to ensure compliance.⁶²³ SWAPO however continued to move through the area and into SWA. By mid-1984, South Africa was faced with the same situation as in previous years regarding the insurgency.

One of the unforeseen outcomes of Askari and the SADF attacks on FAPLA wherever they were protecting SWAPO, was to put pressure on the Angolans to acquire an air defence system, which – at the time – was only second in terms of sophistication to those in the Warsaw Pact countries.⁶²⁴ At this point, the conflict experienced a significant shift, which saw the SADF engage more frequently with FAPLA rather than with SWAPO.

What had begun as a low-intensity, bush conflict focusing on counter-insurgency, would escalate over the next four years until it ended in 1988, into high intensity, internationalised undeclared conventional war between the SADF and UNITA on the one hand, and FAPLA, SWAPO, the Cubans and the Soviets and other East Bloc advisors on the other.⁶²⁵ South Africa was now fighting on two fronts – the initial front in Ovamboland and the Angolan 5th Military Region to the north, as well as the 6th Military Region, north of Rundu.⁶²⁶

Because of the great distances, the lack of significant infrastructure development and terrain (especially in northern SWA), air power had a key role to play in counter-insurgency operations (e.g. transport, reconnaissance, troop movements by helicopter, casualty evacuation as well as airborne command posts and radio relays). As the “air umbrella” in neighbouring countries was strengthened, this had an effect on the conventional SADF operations as well. It provided the insurgents with safe bases from which to operate, and posed significant challenges for the SADF to avoid the possibility of serious losses during long-distance offensive air raids against deep targets.⁶²⁷

During the period of the JMC, the intensity of the SADF operations was significantly decreased. This removed the need to deploy the Canberra, Buccaneer, and Mirage F1 squadrons constantly. Lord however indicates that the introduction of the SA-8 mobile ground-to-air missile batteries and the suspected presence of SA-6 missile systems changed the combat scenario, affecting the SAAF flying tactics and attack profiles.⁶²⁸ The break, however, did allow the pilots to undertake training to counter the new threats.

After Askari in 1983–1984, most SAAF cargo and casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) flights were done at night to avoid patrolling MiGs. Lord notes:

All these flights, carried out under extreme operational pressure, were successful because they occurred in the all-important “gap” which existed in the enemy radar chain. It is my belief that plugging this hole with a suitable early-warning radar system was more important to the enemy triumvirate than capturing Savimbi’s HQ [headquarters] at Jamba.⁶²⁹

The “gap” to which Lord refers was that between the radar in Livingstone in Zambia and Cuito Cuanavale in south-eastern Angola. The SAAF exploited this intelligence to fly behind enemy lines in Angola.

Air defence build-up in Angola

In 1985, during Operation Second Congress (Operation Congresso II) – the Angolan offensive against UNITA with the aim of seizing Mavinga – only Menongue and Cuito Cuanavale were suitable airfields for sustained air operations in the 6th Military Region.⁶³⁰ Occupation of Mavinga could have enabled the installation of radar and missile systems to close this gap. The base at Menongue operated jet fighters and helicopters, while Cuito Cuanavale only operated helicopters. As combined SADF–UNITA operations against FAPLA intensified, these were withdrawn to Menongue. The helicopters comprised four Mi-25s, two Mi-8s, four Mi-17s as well as several Alouette IIIs.⁶³¹ In this operation, helicopters were crucial to resupply Angolan troops because of UNITA attacks against the road convoys. Mi-25 gunships escorted the transport helicopters, which would fly in a line between 3 000 and 6 000 feet above ground level – probably believing the most serious threat came from rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire as well as Stinger missiles. The Reagan administration provided UNITA with Stingers between 1986 and 1989.⁶³²

The SAAF Canberra, Buccaneer, Mirage and Impala aircraft (in conjunction with SADF artillery) conducted bombardment of the FAPLA brigade convoys. Impala Mk IIs also attacked some helicopter flights. The Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft undertook resupply flights to UNITA and SA forces. Lord notes:

We assessed that, in general, the standard of enemy flying was poor. Their navigation abilities were extremely weak and it was noted they always used physical features such as river lines and roads to enable them to reach their destinations ... Radio discipline and procedures were poor.⁶³³

This made it easy for the SAAF to predict and anticipate their moves as the terrain presented very few distinct physical features, and infrastructure, such as roads, was very limited. But this would change with the arrival of Cuban and Soviet pilots.

The Angolans also learned the lessons of a lack of suitable air defence systems (which allowed the SAAF freedom of movement over FAPLA brigades) and passive air defence measures (vehicles not dug in were exposed to shrapnel). Lord says, ‘[t]his was a pattern of the war. Every time we beat the opposition and captured tons of equipment, they came back for more, better equipped and better trained.’⁶³⁴

The SAAF had first-hand experience of the SA-2 and SA-3 SAM systems during air strikes on targets near Lubango. These missiles were fired from fixed sites and, provided the SADF intelligence information was accurate, the threat they posed could be avoided.⁶³⁵

For the SAAF, it was all about tactics to achieve minimum time under fire and to stay safe from the Angolan defence systems. They adopted toss-bombing (SAAF Mirages flew onto their targets at 50 meters above the ground, then rose steep and fast, while 7–8

kilometres from the target, released their bombs or “lobbing” them onto the target, then immediately returned to a height of 30 meters above ground level to fly home). They also turned to flying in formation – both combined with low-level flying and high speed), and night flying. Lord concedes that the practice of toss-bombing was the most inaccurate of delivery systems.⁶³⁶ Towards the end of the conflict in Angola, the SAAF adopted the approach of ‘unless a kill was guaranteed, our aircraft would not pitch-up from low level flight into enemy radar cover’.⁶³⁷ This was because the arms embargo prevented the SAAF from replacing combat aircraft losses, and the risk was not acceptable at that time. The SAAF was working on equipping 5 Squadron with the new Atlas Cheetah E, which would not be operational for many months.⁶³⁸

In June 1986, SAAF photo reconnaissance confirmed the presence of Su-25 ground attack aircraft at an airfield near the Angolan coastal town of Namibe.⁶³⁹ The Su-25 was a Soviet sub-sonic ground attack plane used in Afghanistan with great success in the 1980s.⁶⁴⁰

In the same year, SA intelligence indicated that the Angolan Air Force was trying to establish an airfield closer to the SWA border. Monitoring the very high frequency (VHF) transmissions from Angolan combat pilots confirmed that an airfield was being built at Cahama.⁶⁴¹ In June 1987, SAAF intelligence-gathering aircraft also confirmed the presence of SA-3s and SA-8s near Cuito Cuanavale.⁶⁴²

All this formed part of the massive build-up of Soviet weaponry, including radar, SAMs, MiG-23 fighters and Mi-25 attack helicopters at Menongue and Cuito Cuanavale. In addition, there was a significant increase in the number of Cuban troops and Soviet advisors, heralding a renewed attack on UNITA. The attack was almost identical to the one in 1985.

South Africa responded with Operation Moduler, which lasted from 22 June to 26 November 1987. This saw the start of high-intensity conventional battles between the SADF and UNITA on the one hand, and the Cubans, Soviets and FAPLA on the other.⁶⁴³ It was fought along the Lomba River and between the Lomba and Chaminga rivers in south-eastern Angola.

MiGs were active over the battlefield east of Cuito Cuanavale but, because of the distances, South African aircraft based at Rundu in northern SWA only arrived in the area after they had left. The radar at Cuito Cuanavale and Menongue had coverage from the ground upwards, while the SAAF, because of the limits of the radar horizons, could only cover the combat area above 24 000 feet.

In September 1987, two SAAF Mirages engaged two MiG 23s; however, both Matra 550 missiles fired against one of the MiGs detonated early. In another encounter in the same month, Mirage F1CZs again encountered MiGs. This time, a Mirage was badly damaged, and the pilot, Arthur Piercy, seriously injured during a crash-landing in Rundu. Lord notes:

This incident brought home the fact that the technological advantage now lay in the hands of our enemies. While the facts were being analysed, 3 Squadron was restricted to base defence and escort duties.⁶⁴⁴

The SAAF adapts

Following these encounters, tactical changes were initiated in the air combat manoeuvring programme against forward sector AAM-7 and AAM-8 missiles.⁶⁴⁵ Lord states the SAAF had hoped to acquire the Matra Magic missile, but the international arms embargo prevented this.⁶⁴⁶ One significant achievement during Operation Moduler was the capture of an SA-8 ground-to-air missile system.⁶⁴⁷

The weapons boycott had ruled out the SAAF acquiring the Matra Magic missile; therefore aspects of the fighting doctrine had to change. Lord notes:

Commandant Mossie Basson, a former 1 Squadron pilot ... gathered information relating to performance of the AAM-7 and AAM-8 missiles. He brought in tactical changes to our fighting doctrine, explaining why and when to cut afterburner to reduce the infrared signature of our aircraft.⁶⁴⁸

Although the anti-aircraft artillery of the SADF did not feature extensively during the final phase of the Border War, it is interesting to note the success of the Cactus surface-to-air missile system. This system was developed from the French Crotale system to suit an South African requirement. The Cactus is credited with damaging one MiG – possibly a MiG-23 – and appears to have been an effective deterrent to Angolan and Cuban pilots.⁶⁴⁹ Heitman notes that, following this, no MiGs flew near that area on the battlefield.⁶⁵⁰

The success of Operation Moduler in stopping the FAPLA advance on Mavinga and forcing the Angolans to begin retreating to Cuito Cuanavale, was followed by Operation

Hooper from 27 November 1987 to 13 March 1988. Hooper had the aim of destroying FAPLA forces east of the Cuito River by the end of 1987. This operation posed significant challenges for the SAAF. Whereas the fighting on the Lomba River during Operation Moduler had been almost equidistant between Rundu and Menongue (ensuring similar limitation in terms of fuel and radar for both SAAF and Angolan Air Force pilots), over the Chaminga high ground immediately east of Cuito Cuanavale, the conditions were in favour of the Angolans. MiGs from Menongue could reach the battlefield in 11 minutes while the Mirage F1AZ from Rundu took 45 minutes. Underwing fuel tanks and ordnance also affected SAAF performance, and the Angolan radar from Cuito Cuanavale had good coverage of the area.⁶⁵¹

Lord notes, '[t]he severe fuel limitations did not allow attacks to be made from different directions; thus, making attack profiles predictable and, therefore, easier for the enemy to defend.'⁶⁵² Air refuelling of planes with heavy bomb loads was also problematic, as the pilots did not have much practice.⁶⁵³ Because the aims of Operation Hooper were not achieved by December, the operation was extended to March 1988.

The proximity of Menongue to the battlefield meant MiGs became regular features over the battlefield. This resulted in two quick dogfights between MiGs and Mirage F1s on 25 February 1988. In the subsequent SAAF debriefing when the intercepts were analysed, it was indicated that the MiG pilots had picked up the SAAF Mirages visually from above.

Lord suggests this was because the yellow in their camouflage scheme was too light. This was subsequently changed to a darker brown. It was also during this time that two pilots from 3 Squadron visited the Kentron missile factory to give input on the performance of the V3B Kukri missile in dogfights with MiGs.⁶⁵⁴

The vital modifications to the F1 aircraft however only became reality in late 1988. These included compact radar-warning receivers as well as chaff and flare dispensers. Matra 550 missiles with modified fuses to prevent premature detonation in exhaust plumes were supplied by Kentron. In October 1988, the SAAF received 50 much-needed third-generation Snake missiles with head-on capability.⁶⁵⁵

The fighting around Cuito Cuanavale had reached a stalemate. At this point – the first and only time during the Border War, according to Lord – the Angolans controlled the air.⁶⁵⁶ This however did not mean the SAAF was without advantages. It continued to make good use of its better pilot training, meticulous planning and exploiting the weaknesses of the Angolans (such as not operating well in the dark) to enable the SAAF to operate favourably and reduce the threats against them. In an attack on Angolan convoys in February 1988 on the Menongue–Cuito Cuanavale road, a Mirage F1AZ was shot down by a surface-to-air missile (NATO reporting name “SA-13 Gopher”).⁶⁵⁷

According to Lord, ‘[t]he F1AZs were configured for ground attack sorties with large fuel tanks and bomb pylons giving a high-drag index. This made the Mirages inferior to the MiG-23s armed with forward-sector air-to-air missiles.’⁶⁵⁸ Former SAAF Mirage F1 pilot, Cobus Toerien, confirmed this, saying that, because the MiGs had head-on capability, the SAAF had to get something better. This resulted in the Cheetah C multi-role aircraft, which had state-of-the-art radar in the extended nose, in-flight refuelling capabilities, as well as a very small radar cross-section.⁶⁵⁹ The aircraft was however only in service from 1993 onward.

Also in February 1988, two SAAF sorties were intercepted by MiG-23s. In one of these, the MiGs broke away, and in the second, a Cuban MiG-23 formation also accelerated out of range.⁶⁶⁰

In March 1988, Operation Hooper (which had not achieved its aims) was replaced by Operation Packer, which had similar objectives. These were to destroy FAPLA east of Cuito Cuanavale or to drive them off the east bank of the Cuito River by 20 March. This was also not achieved, and the operation was extended to 12 May 1988. On 23 March, the last SAAF sortie of the bush war was flown.⁶⁶¹

Lord summarises the SAAF’s final conventional battles as follows:

SAAF pilots had contended with the full spectrum of Soviet air-defence missile systems which included SA-2, -3, -6, -7, -8, -9, -11, -13, -14 and 16. They reported sighting 112 missiles fired at them, flew 794 strike sorties and dropped nearly 4 000 bombs.⁶⁶²

In contrast, Lord says the Angolans flew about 1 200 sorties during the seven-month period.⁶⁶³ Casualty figures for the SAAF were four killed and seven wounded.⁶⁶⁴ The SAAF also used the H2 460 kg pre-fragmented, folding-wing glide bomb, which had a guidance system as well as pre-fragmented bombs with air-burst fuses, which replaced rockets.

Conclusion

As the international political climate changed in the late 1980s, which enabled a political settlement to be reached among all parties, South African forces withdrew from Angola by 27 August 1988. This was amid peace negotiations under United Nations Charter 435.

In retrospect, as the Angolan armed forces (as well as the Cubans and the military wing of SWAPO) had access to some of the most modern and sophisticated missiles and anti-aircraft systems in the world at the time, this meant that the SAAF was faced with unprecedented challenges, which had to be overcome during the final phases of the Border War (operations Modular, Hooper, and Packer). Angolan, Cuban and Soviet pilots were able to operate with increasing freedom over the front lines, compared to the SAAF, and they did not have the same constraints about replacing losses or accessing new aircraft. This did not mean the SAAF was completely ineffective – they were still able to provide replenishment, conduct bombing missions, evacuate casualties, perform intelligence and surveillance operations, and to move troops as well as a degree of close air support.

The establishment of an extensive air umbrella – through the operational use of modern Soviet anti-aircraft artillery and ground-to-air missile systems – in Angola, forced the SAAF to revise its tactics drastically.

The revised tactics of the SAAF to deal with the extensive Angolan air defence umbrella saw the introduction of toss-bombing, making greater use of precision-guided munitions, additional investment in research into missiles, and new technology for their aircraft as well as unmanned aerial vehicles, like the Seeker (forcing the Angolans to use up missiles that would otherwise have been fired against SAAF aircraft). This also underlined to the SADF that it would have to give priority attention to its air defence systems (aircraft, radar, and artillery) to enable it to neutralise the growing air defence threat in Angola.

The SAAF had to use their limited resources wisely because of sanctions and the fact that they were facing a superpower (the Soviet Union) with all its resources. Equipment, such as the Cheetah C multi-role fighter, the Rooivalk attack helicopter, the Oryx medium helicopter, and the V3C and V4 air-to-air missiles only came into service after the fighting was over.

Responses by the SAAF and the SADF have also been studied fairly extensively by international militaries (the US Marine Corps and the Australian Defence Force) to evaluate the success of a careful balancing of troop strength and firepower as well as logistic requirements over long distances, and the role of air support in successful mobile conventional and unconventional warfare. This proves that small but extremely mobile combat formations can be effective and survivable.

Endnotes

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- ⁶⁶¹ Dubois, 'Mirage F1 in SAAF Service'.
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- ⁶⁶³ Lord, *From Fledgling to Eagle*, 443.
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On Charges of Treason: The High Treason Case against the Afrikaans Broadcasters of Radio Zeesen after the Second World War

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Abstract

While the Second World War was characterised by battles and intelligence networks, it also involved cases of treason and military legal processes – and South Africa was no exception. The South African involvement in the war produced high treason cases, but trials of those historical figures who worked “behind the scenes” are occasionally neglected within academic literature on the South African history surrounding the Second World War. An example of such is the case of high treason of four Afrikaner men accused of broadcasting propaganda from Radio Zeesen to South Africa in Afrikaans, with the aim of jeopardising the South African war effort. This propaganda was carried out strategically within the context of existing Afrikaner resistance against participation in the war. The four accused were Sidney Erich Holm, Jan Adriaan Strauss, Johannes Jacobus Snoek, and Michael Johannes Pienaar. This article focuses on the trials of the four men accused as a series of lesser-known cases in South African history. The aim of the article is to provide a historical narrative of the cases. After providing the necessary contextualisation, the positions of the prosecution and defence, as well as the verdicts of the trials will be outlined. The objective of this article is not to offer a detailed analysis of the criminal justice procedure or the laws surrounding the cases, but rather to make a historiographic contribution to an overlooked aspect of South African history.

Keywords: South Africa, Second World War, Radio Zeesen, Broadcasters, Propaganda, High Treason

Introduction

Radio Zeesen played a prominent role in German dissemination of radio propaganda, and the station had been spreading German propaganda across the world since the 1930s.⁶⁶⁶ By the time the war broke out, Germany was already broadcasting propaganda to several countries across the globe in various languages via shortwave transmission, including to South Africa in Afrikaans.⁶⁶⁷ The propaganda was incorporated into news reports, radio talks, and cultural programmes, and was specifically adapted to resonate with Afrikaner

listeners who opposed South African (SA) participation in the war. The angle adopted by Radio Zeesen was often suggestive of an informal alliance between Germany and Afrikaner nationalists, rather than official declarations that Afrikaner nationalists were pro-Nazi.⁶⁶⁸ In this way, support for the German cause and resistance to the British war effort could be promoted. Afrikaans propaganda by Radio Zeesen not only fuelled sympathy for Germany and Afrikaner nationalist sentiments, but also openly opposed the Smuts government. Prime Minister JC Smuts's political decisions and actions were under heavy criticism, especially regarding the emergency regulations he introduced during the war.⁶⁶⁹ Smuts felt that the emergency regulations were justified due to the increasing unrest.⁶⁷⁰ The first of these regulations was announced two weeks after war was declared.⁶⁷¹ The war measures were enabled by government approvals, for example, parliamentary approval was given for some of the emergency regulations on 7 February 1940.⁶⁷² These emergency regulations included prohibiting non-religious gatherings and the wearing of uniforms by civilians, internment of individuals suspected of anti-war activities, the confiscation of private firearms, forced withdrawal of public servants from the *Ossewabrandwag* (oxwagon sentinels or oxwagon guard), and especially relevant for this article – the establishment of a Special Court to handle political crimes.⁶⁷³ Given the openly anti-government nature of Afrikaans broadcasts by Radio Zeesen and its status as an enemy radio station, any involvement with Radio Zeesen would be potential grounds for high treason. Despite the influence of Radio Zeesen on anti-war Afrikaners, the subject of Radio Zeesen has not yet been fully represented in SA historiography.

Radio Zeesen is only discussed in a few academic works,⁶⁷⁴ with even fewer in-depth discussions when it comes to the Afrikaans radio broadcasters' high treason cases. Primarily, historians such as C Marx and F Monama made mention of Radio Zeesen in their writings, and only Marx's article, which was published over 30 years ago, was dedicated fully to operations by Radio Zeesen in South Africa.⁶⁷⁵ Marx's article focuses, among other things, on how Radio Zeesen orchestrated radio broadcasts, and further investigates the propagandist techniques and leitmotifs of the propagandist contents.⁶⁷⁶ Marx refers briefly to the Afrikaans radio broadcasters of Radio Zeesen,⁶⁷⁷ but offers no in-depth discussion of the high treason cases against them. The current article thus builds upon Marx's work – where Marx described the operational aspects of Radio Zeesen. The article provides insight into how these operations were represented in SA courts, and also how the experience of working at Radio Zeesen is recalled by the broadcasters. The discussions on subversive activities in South Africa during the war years, explored by historians such as A la Grange, AM Fokkens, and PJ Furlong, also serve as connecting points to this research in the wider historiographical discussions, as the research of these historians alludes to propaganda as a factor that played a role in the internal unrest.⁶⁷⁸ This research also connects with historians who took into account the South African context during the Second World War, including about resistance movements, such as the *Ossewabrandwag*, as such organisations assisted in the spread of anti-war propaganda. This includes historians such as EP Kleynhans, PF van der Schyff, and C Blyngaert to name only a few.⁶⁷⁹ The complexities of the cases against the Radio Zeesen broadcasters also reflect the historical debate about the blurred lines of treason and patriotism, which were not only debated in academic historical context, but also appeared in popular publications

by writers such as GC Visser and A Blake.⁶⁸⁰ The current article builds on the research of other historians surrounding the logistics behind Radio Zeesen by also evaluating the consequences for the Afrikaans broadcasters after the war.

Monama is one of only a few historians who make mention of Radio Zeesen on more than one occasion, although it was not the exclusive focus of his research. Monama's articles, 'South African Propaganda Agencies and the Battle for Public Opinion during the Second World War, 1939–1945' and "'Blind" Warfare: Radio Propaganda Dynamics in South Africa during the Second World War",⁶⁸¹ focus extensively on the topic of Radio Zeesen concerning attempts by the Smuts administration to counter propaganda, such as that of Radio Zeesen. Monama's research forms part of the academic literature on propagandist techniques during the Second World War, and how Smuts, for example, was portrayed in a way that could further instil anti-British resistance.⁶⁸²

Radio Zeesen is also briefly mentioned in the works of other historians, specifically concerning the fact that the sentiments conveyed by Afrikaans propaganda broadcast by Radio Zeesen resembled existing anti-war sentiments. The same argument can be found, for example, in the research of AM Fokkens, W van der Merwe, and A la Grange.⁶⁸³ Several sources that mention Radio Zeesen refer to it in terms of the relationship between Germany and South Africa during the war.⁶⁸⁴ A gap however exists in terms of the Afrikaans broadcasters' personal experiences, and the central theme of this article, namely the high treason cases against them after the war. The potential therefore exists for more research about Radio Zeesen with respect to the post-war context surrounding the high treason cases.

Contextualising the broadcasters' backgrounds and involvement with Radio Zeesen

To grasp the accusations of high treason and the legal proceedings against the Afrikaans Radio Zeesen broadcasters fully, it is essential to understand the circumstances under which the broadcasters were affiliated with the station and with their individual histories. All four broadcasters were born in South Africa and were therefore SA citizens.⁶⁸⁵ The broadcasters lacked substantial connections to Germany. Despite Marx noting Holm's German ancestry,⁶⁸⁶ the Holm family was already established in South Africa for several generations prior to the onset of the Second World War.⁶⁸⁷ Consequently, Holm's lineage played no notable part in his association with Radio Zeesen.

The broadcasters' connection to Germany was mainly due to the fact that all four studied and pursued careers in Germany. Holm studied archaeology in Germany in the 1920s,⁶⁸⁸ but returned to South Africa in the 1930s.⁶⁸⁹ Strauss studied history, and pursued his postgraduate studies in Humanities in Germany in 1938.⁶⁹⁰ Pienaar's studies were focused primarily on physical education, which he pursued in Germany in 1938.⁶⁹¹ The fourth announcer, Snoek, also went to Germany in 1938 with an interest in the printing industry and rotary presses.⁶⁹²

Of the four Afrikaners in question, Holm was the first to join Radio Zeesen. As mentioned, Holm returned to South Africa after completing his studies, where he was employed in education for some time.⁶⁹³ It was during this time that Holm accepted the opportunity to join Radio Zeesen in Germany.⁶⁹⁴ According to Marx, Holm already left for Germany on 20 March 1939 for his new position at Radio Zeesen.⁶⁹⁵ This means that, at the time that Holm joined Radio Zeesen, Germany and South Africa were not yet officially at war.

At the outbreak of the war, Strauss, Pienaar and Snoek were in Germany, still engaged in advancing their education and professional lives.⁶⁹⁶ Because Pienaar was classified as an “enemy citizen”,⁶⁹⁷ he was required to check in at the police station daily. Subsequently, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs became aware of his proficiency in Afrikaans, and offered him translation work. This role was eventually expanded to include managing broadcasts.⁶⁹⁸ In Snoek’s case, he was approached by W Gröhe of the German broadcasting service, and offered a position at Radio Zeesen, which Snoek accepted because another opportunity fell through.⁶⁹⁹ Snoek’s personal writings suggest that Strauss became affiliated with Radio Zeesen before 1941.⁷⁰⁰ Furthermore, official records confirm that Strauss also took on the responsibilities of sub-editor and announcer at Radio Zeesen in 1944.⁷⁰¹

The Afrikaans broadcasters at Radio Zeesen made use of aliases for their broadcasts – Holm was known as “Neef Holm”, Strauss as “Neef Buurman”, Pienaar as “Neef Hermaans”, and Snoek as “Neef Bokkies”.⁷⁰² A crucial aspect of the four Afrikaners’ affiliation with Radio Zeesen is the absence of a distinct ideological alignment. Holm became associated with the station before the war, while the other three, unable to return to South Africa at the time, were compelled to seek employment in Germany. This context of incidental presence in Germany and non-politically motivated involvement with Radio Zeesen is important, because it is relevant for understanding the broadcasters’ defence in the high treason cases.

The pursuit of war criminals and subsequent arrests after the war

The conclusion of the war in 1945 had global repercussions, and the Allied triumph similarly influenced South Africa. After the end of the war, the Union government took steps to track down South Africans who could be labelled as potential war criminals. This effort also entailed searching for South Africans in Europe, particularly those who had betrayed the Union government by supporting enemy nations, such as Germany, against whom South Africa had battled during the war.⁷⁰³ The Union government was aware of propagandistic Afrikaans broadcasts by Radio Zeesen, and attempts were made to counter the anti-war propaganda through government agencies, such as the Bureau of Information. There were also non-government agencies, such as the Union Unity Truth Service. These were started by loyal Smuts supporters to counter propaganda efforts, especially through a field unit called the Waarheidslegioen (Truth Legion) and a radio station called “Mystery Radio Freedom” to counter Radio Zeesen directly.⁷⁰⁴ German dissemination of propaganda to the Union was thus observed, and consequently, the search for Union citizens suspected of treason included the Afrikaans broadcasters at Radio Zeesen, who, as South Africans employed in Germany, contributed to the German war effort by disseminating propaganda.

By the end of 1945, the Union government was considering the South African Search Officers' mandate to allow such officers to interrogate Union suspects in Germany. It was further determined that cases of high treason would fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice.⁷⁰⁵ In February 1946, the Rein Mission headed by lawyer and German linguist, R Rein, was dispatched to Europe to look for suspected war criminals and gather evidence of potential high treason. The commission however lacked the authority to execute arrests on European territory.⁷⁰⁶ By May 1946, under the leadership of a deputy attorney-general, L Barrett, and special police member, GC Visser, the Barrett Mission was deployed. The Barrett Mission specifically targeted South Africans who had supported or contributed to the German war efforts, and worked to collect evidence against suspects.⁷⁰⁷ The Rein and Barrett missions were thus similar in scope, and also collaborated in the investigation of suspected individuals.⁷⁰⁸ These missions were therefore explicitly designed to locate individuals such as the aforementioned Afrikaans broadcasters, enabling their prosecution by the Union government.

Amid the international search for war criminals, Snoek, Pienaar and Strauss were arrested on SA soil. Following the conclusion of the war and the subsequent cessation of the operations of Radio Zeesen, the three men undertook steps to return to South Africa. Snoek and Pienaar had already arrived in South Africa with their families in July 1945 by ship.⁷⁰⁹ Upon his return, Snoek secured a position at the National Press in Cape Town. Nearly a year later, on 30 August 1946, he was arrested on charges of high treason by two detectives at the National Press office. Pienaar was arrested for high treason in August 1946 in Rustenburg.⁷¹⁰

Strauss did not travel back with Snoek and Pienaar but completed his own journey back to South Africa at the beginning of June 1946.⁷¹¹ He was taken into custody in Germiston on 30 August 1946.⁷¹² Holm was the only one of the four Afrikaans broadcasters to be arrested on European soil. He was first detained in Munich, Germany, under American authority, but then handed over to SA officials for arrest.⁷¹³

“For the Crown”:⁷¹⁴ Charges and Prosecution of the Afrikaans Broadcasters of Radio Zeesen

After Holm, Straus, Pienaar and Snoek had been arrested for high treason, a decision had to be made as to how the trials would proceed – a prominent discussion point in the post-war climate of South Africa. A logistic question therefore emerged at the end of the war regarding the upholding of emergency regulations and subsequent handling of trials. When the trials of the broadcasters were set to commence, the emergency regulation allowing subversive activities to be prosecuted without a preliminary investigation remained in effect. Although the war had ended, the broadcasters could therefore be summarily tried by a Special Court, the establishment of which was allowed under the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (Act 31 of 1917) of the Union of South Africa. Despite the emergency regulations, it was determined that a preliminary investigation would be conducted prior to proceeding with the cases against the Afrikaans broadcasters from Radio Zeesen.⁷¹⁵ The four broadcasters were charged with high treason on various counts.

There were four counts against Holm, the first being that he accepted a position in the Broadcasting Corporation under the control of the Propaganda Ministry and of the Foreign Office of the German Reich. The second count stated that he prepared and recorded talks to be broadcast to the Union on behalf of the German Propaganda Ministry and of the Foreign Office. Related to the second, the third count was that he broadcast propaganda from Germany to South Africa, 'which was designed to weaken and hinder the State in its prosecution of the war against Germany and that such propaganda was heard in the Union of South Africa'.⁷¹⁶ Lastly, the fourth charge rested on the accusation that Holm took the solemn vow prescribed by the German Public Service Act to be loyal and obedient to the Führer of the German Reich, also referred to as the Hitler oath.⁷¹⁷

The four charges against Pienaar were similar to those against Holm in the sense that they also related to Pienaar's employment at an enemy radio station, the preparation and recording of talks on behalf of the Propaganda Ministry and Foreign Office, the propagandistic nature of the talks broadcast to South Africa, and the Hitler oath.⁷¹⁸ When examining the charges of high treason against Holm and Pienaar, four key factors had to be considered to determine their guilt. The initial factor was their employment at Radio Zeesen, operating under pertinent German agencies, suggesting their service to the enemy. Secondly, the charges hinged on their involvement in preparing and recording radio broadcasts that were disseminated within the Union, with the content of these broadcasts being propagandist and specifically targeted at the Union. The third factor concerned the intent behind the propagandist broadcasts, which was to undermine the South African war effort against Germany. The fourth factor involved the purported taking of the so-called Hitler oath, regarded as concrete evidence of disloyalty towards the Union government.

Strauss' charges rested on only three alleged acts of treason, the first being that he translated, prepared, and recorded news services, talks, commentaries, and radio plays on behalf of the German Propaganda Ministry and the Foreign Office to be broadcast to the people of South Africa. The second charge was that Strauss, in 1944, 'did accept and enter upon the duties of office under the enemy in the capacity of a sub-editor and news announcer, employed by the Reich's Broadcasting Corporation'.⁷¹⁹ The third charge was that Strauss did broadcast propaganda designed to weaken the South African state in the war against Germany.⁷²⁰

Strauss therefore faced charges based on his role as a sub-editor at Radio Zeesen, his involvement in the preparation and broadcasting of radio talks for Germany, and the propagandistic intent of these talks aimed at undermining the SA war effort. The charges against Strauss however did not encompass the taking of the Hitler oath, a detail that also surfaced during the trial.

Snoek's high treason case also rested on the details of three charges. The charges were firstly that Snoek engaged in work under the enemy, 'in the capacity of editor-in-chief at the Reich's Broadcasting Corporation, German Shortwave Station, under the assumed and observed command and control of the Ministry of Propaganda and the Office of Foreign Affairs, of the said German Reich'.⁷²¹ The second charge was similar to that of the other

broadcasters – that Snoek translated, prepared, and broadcast propaganda to the Union of South Africa. The third charge accused Snoek of taking the Hitler oath as prescribed by the Reich Civil Service Act.⁷²²

These specific points in the broadcasters' charges touched upon technical points that influenced the court cases. The charges entailed specific and numerous elements that required careful consideration, with each aspect necessitating adequate supporting evidence.

Debates Surrounding the Definition of High Treason

A significant issue that emerged during the trial – and which was subsequently revisited during the appeal process – revolved around the definition of high treason and the applicability of this definition to the broadcasters' case. In the case of Holm and Pienaar, the prosecution argued for an interpretation of high treason that hinged on the presence of "hostile intent" as its defining characteristic. Furthermore, the prosecution contended that the cognitive aspect of treason inherently implied that the act in question was, by its very nature, against the state.⁷²³ According to the prosecution's reasoning, any act executed with the direct or indirect aim of harming the state should consequently be classified as high treason. The argument also obscured the distinction between hostile intent and the act itself, suggesting that the presence of hostile intent qualified an act of treason, irrespective of the extent to which the act was executed.

The context of war was also crucial to the prosecution's case, leading them to differentiate between involvement with foreign countries in times of political stability versus involvement in times of conflict. In this scenario, Germany was identified as a specific enemy of the British Crown and, by extension, an adversary of the Union. The state of war between South Africa and Germany, combined with the propagandistic content of their broadcasts, rendered the SA broadcasters' association with Radio Zeesen contentious. Consequently, the prosecution maintained that any assistance provided to an enemy nation, regardless of its magnitude, should be interpreted as an expression of hostile intent.⁷²⁴ This stance elucidates why acts, such as sabotage and the dissemination of propaganda, were both classified as high treason, with sabotage exerting a physical impact, and propaganda influencing on an intellectual level. Interestingly, despite both propaganda dissemination and sabotage being deemed high treason due to their shared hostile intent, the varying sentences for high treason suggest recognition of different degrees of severity within the crime, based on the nature of the act. For example, R Leibbrandt was convicted of high treason for acts of sabotage and conspiracy against the government and initially sentenced to death, although the sentence did not materialise.⁷²⁵ The broadcasters of Radio Zeesen were also found guilty of high treason, but none was sentenced to death. If treason could be proved, the severity of the consequence had to be determined, and consequently an appropriate punishment had to be found. These examples highlight the complexity of high treason cases, specifically after the Second World War.

Debates Surrounding the Location of the High Treason Offence and the Authority of the court

During the broadcasters' court cases, the prosecution expanded on the issue of where the high treason offence was committed as relating to the borders of a state. The argument was put forward that the state had jurisdiction over all persons with SA citizenship or those born in the country. Moreover, any action that violated allegiance to the state was deemed to affect the state, irrespective of the physical location where the accused committed high treason.⁷²⁶ Court case reports also highlighted a significant aspect of the debate: whether SA courts possessed the jurisdiction to prosecute cases of high treason that occurred beyond the territorial boundaries of the state.⁷²⁷ The broadcasters were broadcasting propaganda from Germany, so they were not on Union soil when they committed the act of high treason. Nonetheless, the prosecution argued that the dissemination of propaganda by Radio Zeesen constituted high treason and had to be prosecuted by the Union, despite the act being committed on another continent, on the grounds that the broadcasters were SA citizens.

The prosecution also invoked a fundamental principle of international law, asserting that every state possesses jurisdiction over its territory and its citizens, irrespective of whether a crime was committed on foreign or domestic soil. Jurisdiction only within own territory was, according to the prosecution, not recognised internationally. While some nations adhered to the principle of prosecuting crimes only if committed within their own territory, there was no international agreement that would prevent the Union from punishing its citizens for treasonous acts committed beyond its borders. This argument was also partly founded on the fact that treason only affects a citizen's own country and its prosecution, and therefore does not infringe on the authority of the country where the act was committed.⁷²⁸ In other words, given that the broadcasters' crime only affected South Africa and that no other country had an interest in their prosecution, the Union was within its right to try them. Since the broadcasters did not commit any offence against Germany, they would not face prosecution in German courts. This suggested that, if the Union did not prosecute and penalise its citizens, the crime could persist without interruption. This formed part of a wider debate that emerged during the trials regarding which institution was responsible for trying high treason cases.

Furthermore, the prosecution contended that the use of radio propaganda as a means of supporting warfare served as a compelling example of why the definition of high treason should not be confined solely to acts committed within the territory of the state. Even if the definition of treason is not interpreted in such a manner, or in other words, even if the concept of high treason were restricted to actions within state territory, the prosecution argued that there was still a tangible presence of treason within the Union. This was because the propaganda broadcasts were heard by thousands of listeners within the Union, thereby constituting a demonstration of hostile intent.⁷²⁹ This argument concluded that the broadcasts created an "atmospheric disturbance" within the Union, implying that the act of treason was, in part, perpetrated within the borders of the Union.⁷³⁰

The conclusion reached by the prosecution in terms of this argument was that there was no international policy that prevented the Union from punishing its own citizens for high treason, even if it was not committed entirely within the Union itself.⁷³¹

Another issue that emerged during the court proceedings was whether the Special Court tasked with conducting the hearings possessed the legal authority to adjudicate the case. The prosecution maintained that the court was indeed entitled and authorised to preside over the trials. The jurisdiction of the court was established under section 215 of the South African Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (Act 31 of 1917). This section allowed the establishment of a Special Court in circumstances where the Governor General deems it necessary, and gave it the power to 'try without a jury any charge' and 'to sentence the accused, if convicted of such an offence, to any punishment that may by law be imposed therefor'.⁷³² The argument also highlighted that, despite the Special Court having the same jurisdiction as a provincial court that might otherwise have heard the case, in this instance – within the Transvaal provincial division – the proceedings were also justified according to the provisions of section 4 of Act 31 of 1917.⁷³³ Following this line of reasoning, the prosecution consistently argued that the Special Court possessed the authority to deem the dissemination of propaganda a punishable offence. This point is somewhat related to the discussion on the location of the treasonous act, as the location would have influenced which courts were deemed appropriate to hear the case.⁷³⁴ The context of the act occurring in a post-war period however meant that the Special Court was designated to oversee the case.

Evidence and Witness Statements against the Accused

The prosecution presented many pieces of evidence to support the charges against the broadcasters. For instance, evidence presented indicated that Radio Zeesen operated under the Ministry of Propaganda and the German Foreign Office, thereby corroborating that the broadcasts were disseminated on behalf of the enemy and thus hostile intent. Testimonies from Germany confirmed that Radio Zeesen operated among these departments.⁷³⁵ For example, Strauss claimed he was unaware that Radio Zeesen was under the oversight of the Ministry of Propaganda and the Foreign Office; however, the prosecution confirmed his regular interactions with Dr WRP Oetting at the Foreign Office to counter this claim.⁷³⁶ Gröhe also testified that it was common knowledge that the broadcasts were controlled by said specific departments.⁷³⁷ The testimonies from Gröhe and Oetting, for example, affirmed that the Ministry of Propaganda had implemented the guidelines for the broadcasts.⁷³⁸ This also provided additional evidence for the prosecution to demonstrate that the broadcasts were conducted on behalf of the enemy.⁷³⁹ This meant that the broadcasts could be motivated as tools of propaganda rather than mere cultural products. For example, Strauss himself admitted to having translated, compiled, and broadcast news and political and cultural programmes.⁷⁴⁰ The political nature of the broadcasts was therefore a focal point for proving guilt. Gröhe testified that the Afrikaans broadcasts from Radio Zeesen encompassed both cultural and political content,⁷⁴¹ indicating that they were not solely for entertainment, but also carried a political agenda within the context of the war.

During the trials, the prosecution also used circumstantial evidence, among other things, to prove that the broadcasters' real names could be tied to their aliases. Gröhe testified that aliases were employed to obscure the identities of the announcers and to protect them from potential repercussions.⁷⁴² There was therefore direct evidence that the broadcasters had aliases, but that the real names could be linked to the aliases. Evidence presented, for example, indicated that Strauss indeed broadcast content and was the sole individual using the alias "Neef Buurman". Consequently, it could be inferred that any broadcasts attributed to Neef Buurman were made by Strauss.⁷⁴³ Gröhe and KC Wille, a representative from the German radio service, testified that they had never encountered an incorrect announcement of Neef Buurman. The defence however challenged their testimony, noting that these witnesses admitted to not listening to every broadcast. Nevertheless, the court concluded that Strauss being Neef Buurman was the most likely scenario, drawing on what was referred to as "circumstantial evidence".⁷⁴⁴ It was argued that, at times, circumstantial evidence could be so compelling as to indicate guilt sufficiently, even in the absence of direct evidence, such as explicit testimony.⁷⁴⁵

The charges that the announcers were broadcasting on behalf of Germany were relatively easily proved. Payment slips signed by the broadcasters for each broadcast, for instance, served as evidence. There were different coloured entries on the slips, which indicated the type of work done. The entry colour for serving as a broadcaster during a session was, for instance, different from the entry colour for preparing the broadcasts.⁷⁴⁶ The preparation and broadcasting of German radio talks were both used as evidence of guilt. Even if the person only prepared the radio talk, it would still make him (or her) an accessory to the one who broadcast it, the prosecution argued.⁷⁴⁷ The degree of the broadcasters' agency over the broadcasts also emerged from testimonies. For instance, Gröhe testified that on occasion, the Foreign Office would provide only guidelines, and the radio staff would then supplement parts of the talks.⁷⁴⁸ The fact that these talks were led by guidelines only was verified by Oetting.⁷⁴⁹ This meant that the radio staff acted not solely as broadcasters, but also as creators of the content of the broadcasts.

The argument of the prosecution rested primarily on the idea that propaganda was orchestrated to weaken the war effort of the Union against Germany. Statements from German witnesses frequently supported this argument, as it was testified that Britain was considered the primary adversary of Germany. As a result, it was considered that Germany would view the British withdrawal from the Union as a victory.⁷⁵⁰ Gröhe also testified that the broadcasts were tailored to support individuals opposing South African involvement in the war, meaning the content was crafted to appeal to those with anti-war sentiments. His testimony indicated that the broadcasts were designed to challenge and confront pro-war attitudes.⁷⁵¹ Oetting testified that the overarching goal of the Foreign Office and the radio broadcasts was to persuade South Africa to disengage from the war, and to provoke strong emotions among the population. Just like Gröhe, Oetting also testified that the radio broadcasts were an attack on the SA government and policies.⁷⁵²

The court further considered some of the themes in the broadcasts to determine whether their intent was hostile. The court, for instance, investigated one radio talk, which reported that England had transported toxic gas to Poland with the purpose of waging war against

Germany. Another example cited was a broadcast alleging that England had obtained naval forces through piracy, and had generally engaged in territorial theft. The anti-British themes in the broadcasts were therefore drawn up and used in court as support for the fact that the broadcasts were designed to attack Britain and the Union as its ally.⁷⁵³ Other talks that were used in the court related that Smuts was criticised for disarming the Afrikaners, and referred to the notion that the indigenous population would be armed. In this talk, it was stated that there was no freedom of speech, and that the Afrikaners were dishonoured. Another argument that was put forward was that Germany made a peace offer, which Smuts declined. Because of the attacks on Smuts and Britain, the prosecution argued that the broadcasts were clearly designed to weaken the war effort of the Union.⁷⁵⁴

In some cases, the broadcasters' level of education also counted against them. Given that Strauss and Holm possessed doctorates, the prosecution argued that this implied that they had sufficient understanding to grasp the full implications of their actions. In the case of Strauss's verdict, Judge Ramsbottom, for instance, remarked that Strauss, being a learned individual, should have anticipated that any support he provided to Germany would be to the detriment of South Africa.⁷⁵⁵ The broadcasters' personal contexts and backgrounds were thus used against them through selective elements, such as the focus on their education.

The argument that propaganda broadcast by Radio Zeesen was heard by many listeners in the Union and that this weakened the war effort of the Union by encouraging subversive activities, is reflected in a variety of sources. Monama suggests that Radio Zeesen was the main reason for much of the anti-war sentiments and the internal division within the Union.⁷⁵⁶ Many Afrikaners who were part of the Ossewabrandwag also recalled that they listened to Radio Zeesen.⁷⁵⁷ One member recalled how the listeners would cheer for the German victories announced on Radio Zeesen.⁷⁵⁸ Some listeners even gathered in groups to listen to broadcasts by Radio Zeesen, or shared the broadcast with those who did not have a radio by means of a telephone call.⁷⁵⁹ Even internees in the internment camps referenced Radio Zeesen in their camp plays.⁷⁶⁰ The fact that Radio Zeesen reached thousands of Afrikaner listeners in the Union,⁷⁶¹ and that the propaganda talks encouraged sentiments and acts of resistance, supported the argument by the prosecution that broadcasts by Radio Zeesen were designed to hinder the war effort.

The documentation from Radio Zeesen, excerpts from talks, as well as various testimonies supported the stance that the broadcasters worked for the enemy and broadcast propaganda in order to thwart the war efforts of the Union. It is however also noteworthy to analyse the argument by the defence, and, as set forth earlier, personal context was essential to understanding the position of the defence.

“For the Defence”:⁷⁶² The Viewpoints of the Afrikaans Broadcasters of Radio Zeesen

Each of the accused was represented by his own legal team. Holm was represented by advocates from the firms Gordon & Fraser and Roux & Jacobs. Holm's defence consisted of Advocates O Pirow and F Rumpff.⁷⁶³ Strauss was defended by Dr TE Dönges and

Advocate MR de Kock from the firms Naude & Naude and Roux & Jacobs, respectively.⁷⁶⁴ Pienaar was represented by Advocate Rumpff, who was also part of Holm's team, and Snoek's defence was led by Advocates AH Broeksma and CDJ Theron.⁷⁶⁵ It is however, noteworthy that Dr Dönges and Advocate Pirow were both prominent in Afrikaner nationalist politics,⁷⁶⁶ and their disposition towards the defence case, based on political, social and personal influences, might become an interesting topic for further study. The matter of the different defence teams leads to other interesting questions, such as whether one defence team for all four broadcasters would have resulted in a stronger argument against the prosecution. This is, however, a speculative matter, perhaps best reserved for a different study.

During the defence, the broadcasters' teams frequently objected to the arguments and positions put forward by the prosecution, and those set out in the section above. The specific terminology surrounding the term "hostile intent" was called into question. In terms of hostile intent, Strauss's defence specifically maintained that he did not act out of hostility but rather to help and warn South Africa. This notion also tied in with the concept that intent and purpose can be distinguished from one another. Another argument put forward was that intent and conduct should be judged in relation to each other.⁷⁶⁷ According to the defence, the broadcasters' objectives had to be considered against the necessary background.⁷⁶⁸ In essence, while the broadcasters disseminated propaganda, and while their actions could be classified as high treason, their goals and motivations did not inherently equate to hostile intent. From the perspective of the prosecution, the motivation behind an action and its execution were however inseparable, as the broadcasters must have known that their activities constituted high treason.

The position of the prosecution regarding the location of treason also affected one of the prominent defence points. Holm and Pienaar's defence argued that criminal jurisdiction was territorial, and that there was no legislation authorising the Union to deal with crime outside its own borders.⁷⁶⁹ The authority of the Special Court was also called into question by the defence. Holm and Pienaar's defence contended that the Special Court possessed the same powers and authority as the Transvaal Provincial Court. As a result, they argued that since the laws of Transvaal did not apply internationally, the Special Court likewise did not have the jurisdiction to prosecute the accused for actions committed abroad.⁷⁷⁰

The Matter of Nationalist Sentiments

Further discussions delved into the rationale behind defending the broadcasters' position, specifically examining the implications of advocating for the broadcasters' nationalist viewpoints. The argument was made that the broadcasters did not operate in the interest of Germany. To support this argument, evidence was presented indicating that the broadcasters were proudly South African. During Snoek's trial, for example, Gröhe testified that Snoek always wore a Union coat of arms on his jacket – something that contributed to the idea that Snoek was pro-South African rather than pro-German. Gröhe also described Snoek as an Afrikaner above all else.⁷⁷¹ Witness Wille, who also worked at Radio Zeesen, gave the following testimony about Snoek:

I gathered from his [Snoek's] remarks that he was a South African, and had always been a South African, and proud to be so, and he had at one time hoped to be able to help his country, the Afrikaners in South Africa, the same as the others in the broadcasting station by the work they were doing there.⁷⁷²

Wille's testimony revealed that not only Snoek, but also the other Afrikaans broadcasters, wanted to assist South Africa and specifically their fellow Afrikaners by way of their service at Radio Zeesen, where they would have the power to deliver powerful messages about world politics. Wille acknowledged that Snoek supported the establishment of a republic, and hoped it would be realised if Germany emerged victorious. Even when Snoek later recognised that this outcome was improbable, he refrained from expressing his doubts in his broadcasts, despite discussing them privately.⁷⁷³ Gröhe also testified that he believed Snoek wanted South Africa to remain neutral.⁷⁷⁴

In 1941, Snoek wrote a letter to Gröhe informing him that he (Snoek) would accept a position at the radio station, in which he stated that he would be happy to work for the freedom of his country.⁷⁷⁵ Gröhe also mentioned in his testimony that he was sure the Afrikaans broadcasters would not work at the German radio if, for example, Germany declared war on South Africa first.⁷⁷⁶ This statement conveyed the notion that the German dispute was primarily with Britain, suggesting that the broadcasters were not guilty of betrayal of South Africa in terms of sovereignty. Testimonies portrayed Strauss as a nationalist primarily focused on South African interests, indifferent towards Germany, and holding a disdain for England.⁷⁷⁷ Oetting further noted that Strauss held the belief that South Africa could achieve neutrality through peaceful measures.⁷⁷⁸ This evidence and testimony worked in favour of the broadcasters, advancing the argument that they should not be simply categorised as pro-German.

Interestingly, all four broadcasters had been offered the opportunity to receive war medals. According to Oetting's testimony, they however refused the medals. For example, Strauss showed indignation at the suggestion of accepting a medal, reasoning that he could not accept it because his service was dedicated to South Africa, not Germany.⁷⁷⁹ The announcers' refusal to accept German medals played a significant role in demonstrating to the court that they were pro-South African and not pro-German. If they had accepted the medals, it would probably have counted heavily against them in the trials, because it would have meant that they had accepted commendations for service to Germany.

The Question of Circumstances, Necessity, and Non-Political Motivations

Apart from the argument that the broadcasters were loyal South Africans who actually wanted to serve their country behind the scenes, another prominent point of defence about the broadcasters' actions emerged. The argument posited that the broadcasters were compelled to work at Radio Zeesen due to their circumstances, indicating that their employment was not primarily driven by political motivations, but rather by individual agency in troubling times. Strauss, for instance, contended that his decision to accept a position with the German Broadcasting Service was motivated by a desire to avoid internment and to complete his studies, hoping this move would allow him to live without further upheavals. Gröhe testified that, even if Strauss had not been interned, he would

likely not have been able to earn money except by working for Germany.⁷⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the prosecution contended that Strauss ought to have recognised that, given the nature of the broadcasts, he was assisting Germany.⁷⁸¹ Strauss further stated (also regarding his resignation):

As far as my work at Zeesen was concerned, a crisis was inevitable. The news reports, talks, yes, even the music came from the top [translation]. Everything was already on the table and we freedom fighters were only allowed to do the translation work.⁷⁸²

Efforts were also made to demonstrate that Strauss had no desire to remain or work in Germany during the war. His defence mentioned that he wanted to flee Germany at the outbreak of the war, but was stopped at the Dutch border.⁷⁸³ It also partially proved that his motivation for staying in Germany was purely academic in nature and that he had to find work there out of sheer necessity. In Strauss's case there was no allegation or proof of having taken the Hitler oath either. Oetting testified that Strauss did not want to sign the oath and that he advised Strauss not to worry about it because it was simply routine. Gröhe pointed out that the other employment contracts signed were not equivalent to taking the Hitler oath.⁷⁸⁴

During the court case, Strauss's defence highlighted the right of a Union citizen to express his or her opinions freely – a right that Strauss clearly valued highly. The prosecution however maintained that the right to freedom of speech only applied within the limits of the law, which was violated when Strauss entered the service of the enemy.⁷⁸⁵ Strauss's strong personality and idiosyncratic ways frequently came to the fore in the court case, but this also partly counted in his favour. The court accepted the point that Strauss wanted to broadcast only cultural material.⁷⁸⁶

Similarly, testimonies revealed that Snoek was reluctant to engage in political matters, and was compelled to accept a position at the radio after another potential opportunity became unavailable. Gröhe's testimony revealed that while Snoek disagreed with the war policies of the government, his primary focus was on delivering talks against communism and discussing issues related to the working class.⁷⁸⁷ FJ Shaefer, a witness who was affiliated with the German radio, also testified about Snoek's anti-communist opinions.⁷⁸⁸ This could lead to the perception that Snoek was both anti-communist and anti-war, instead of being specifically opposed to the Union government. Gröhe further testified that Snoek was not a politician.⁷⁸⁹ Portraying Snoek as a figure not inclined towards political radicalism, the testimonies could cast a favourable light on Snoek's case. According to reports, Snoek's case however did not produce sufficient evidence in terms of specific broadcast material, so the hostile intent was difficult to prove. His age – he was only 29 at the time – also counted in his favour because the court ruled that he was too young and too inexperienced to realise the severity of his actions.⁷⁹⁰

Holm's personal circumstances were also a significant factor in his defence throughout the trial. Judge Ramsbottom noted two factors that worked in Holm's favour during his trial: firstly, Holm's assistance to Germany was provided from outside the Union; and secondly,

Holm's involvement with Germany was evaluated within the necessary context. Holm's strong ties with Germany convinced the court that he intended to settle permanently in Germany before the war broke out. Ramsbottom stated that, if the German government had allowed it, Holm would probably have been granted German citizenship.⁷⁹¹ It is noteworthy that Holm's association with Germany was given significant consideration, to the extent that it nearly acted as a mitigating factor.

These arguments put forth by the defence seemingly aimed to indicate that the broadcasters' offence could be justified to some extent in order to influence the final judgement.

The Judgements and the Appeal Process in the Court Cases

The court proceedings spanned from the end of 1946 through to the middle of 1947 before a judgement was delivered. During the preliminary investigations, the cases were repeatedly postponed to later dates.⁷⁹² In June 1947, all four announcers were convicted of preparing, translating, and broadcasting programmes for German radio.⁷⁹³

Judgement of all four broadcasters was delivered on 11 June 1947. Snoek was convicted on one of the three charges of treason, and was fined 150 pounds as a penalty.⁷⁹⁴ If Snoek had not paid the fine, he would have received a one-year sentence with forced labour.⁷⁹⁵ He received the most lenient sentence of all four broadcasters. Strauss was convicted of treason, and sentenced to three years imprisonment with hard labour.⁷⁹⁶ Pienaar was sentenced to the same punishment as Strauss – three years in prison with hard labour.⁷⁹⁷ Holm received the harshest sentence of all four broadcasters: ten years in prison with hard labour.⁷⁹⁸ The court found that each of the four allegations against Holm was proved.⁷⁹⁹ During Holm's sentencing, Judge Ramsbottom summarised Holm's guilt as follows:

That propaganda was designed to divide the people in the Union and to separate the Union from its allies. At a time when the allied forces – and the Union forces with them – has suffered a reverse in the field, your broadcasts were designed to discourage recruiting, to instil fear and create alarm and to check the confidence of the people in its leaders at home and in the field. Your offence is grave.⁸⁰⁰

When the broadcasters' verdict was handed down, Holm, Pienaar and Strauss's defence filed an appeal.⁸⁰¹ The defence contended that the evidence presented was insufficient to convict the broadcasters, citing a lack of concrete evidence. An appeal was lodged against the court's reliance on circumstantial evidence for its decisions, arguing that this was not as compelling for the defence as direct evidence from testimony would have been.⁸⁰² The prosecution's stance was that direct evidence from testimonies might not always be available; yet, the circumstances alone could sometimes suffice to establish guilt.⁸⁰³ With Strauss's appeal, the prosecution also stated that his alleged motive to help South Africa get out of the war was not sufficient, and there was no way to indicate that this was his real intention. The position adopted by the State was that an individual who undertook actions to achieve a goal, knowing those actions were illegal, should be held accountable.⁸⁰⁴ This is evidence of individual agency in historical events.

The appellate process and discussions revisited the issues concerning the court's jurisdiction and the location of the treasonous acts. The debate over hostile intent resurfaced, clarifying that the hostile intent characterising high treason does not necessarily imply animosity or hatred towards the State, but refers to the presence of behaviour that is antagonistic towards the State.⁸⁰⁵ While awaiting a decision on appeal, Strauss and Pienaar were granted bail. Although Holm was not granted bail, he was permitted to be treated as innocent throughout the duration of the appeal process.⁸⁰⁶

The legal points contested in the appeal were ultimately ruled in favour of the State. Holm's sentence was upheld on 11 December 1947.⁸⁰⁷ Pienaar, who had been on bail along with Strauss, was taken back into custody on 18 December, following the conclusion of the appeal process and the decision on the verdict.⁸⁰⁸ When the National Party came to power in 1948, the sentences of the broadcasters were however suspended through a statement that exonerated political prisoners. The statement was issued on 11 June 1948 with the aim to relieve South Africans of the tension after the war years.⁸⁰⁹ This also included the Afrikaans broadcasters of Radio Zeesen, and they, along with other political prisoners, were released.⁸¹⁰ Pienaar, Strauss and Holm were released from prison in Baviaanspoort based on the statement and their exemplary behaviour.⁸¹¹ Pienaar was released on 12 June,⁸¹² and Holm on 24 December.⁸¹³

The high treason cases against the Afrikaans broadcasters of Radio Zeesen garnered significant media attention, particularly within Afrikaans-language newspapers. Reports about the Afrikaans broadcasters of Radio Zeesen covered proceedings from the earliest stages of the court cases and even continued after their release.⁸¹⁴ The focus that the court cases received in the media indicates that SA society – and especially the Afrikaner community – took a keen interest in the case. These court cases also formed part of the broader context of post-war prosecutions, which piqued the interest of the local community. Further comparative studies on this topic might be insightful.

Conclusion

The Afrikaans broadcasters' involvement with Radio Zeesen meant that, after the war, they became part of the persons who could be charged with treason because of their part in the spread of German propaganda. Following the war, the Union government actively pursued suspected criminals through initiatives such as the Rein and Barrett missions.

Snoek, Pienaar and Strauss however fled towards the end of the war and the consequent end of Radio Zeesen. They managed to return successfully to South Africa without being intercepted by the Rein or Barrett missions. Only Holm was arrested in Europe after some time. The announcers were identified in 1946, subsequently arrested, and tried before a Special Court in accordance with the emergency regulations in the Union.

The treason charges stemmed from multiple factors, including the broadcasters' service under the German Ministry of Propaganda and Foreign Office; their involvement in translating, compiling, and broadcasting propaganda material that was heard within the Union; the detrimental impact of this propaganda on the SA war effort; and the so-called

Hitler oath. During the treason cases, the prosecution presented several arguments and pieces of evidence to prove each of the specific allegations against the broadcasters. The case against the broadcasters primarily revolved around the definition of high treason, which is characterised by hostile intent. It was also argued that the cases could have been tried judicially by the Special Court, even if they had committed treason in Germany and not in South Africa itself. Consequently, these court cases have ignited debates surrounding the legal proceedings of treason, particularly within the context of war.

Nonetheless, substantial evidence indicated that the broadcasters were employed by the German Broadcasting Service under the supervision of the Ministry of Propaganda and Foreign Office. Moreover, there was ample evidence of the broadcasters' roles in the broadcasts, and that these broadcasts were intentionally crafted to undermine the SAn war effort. Despite the defence's arguments and counterarguments, the conclusion reached by the State was that there was sufficient evidence for high treason. According to the prosecution, the act of spreading propaganda was considered antagonistic towards the Union, even if the broadcasters' intention was not necessarily motivated by pro-German sentiments. The broadcasters' emphasis on their pro-Afrikaner sentiments failed to absolve them of treason charges. The opposition to the Union government, even through means such as propaganda, provided a basis for charges of treason, which ultimately formed the cornerstone of the case for the prosecution.

The defence outlined a more nuanced set of motivations behind the broadcasters' actions, challenging the simplistic assumption of ideological alignment. In each of the four cases, it was noted that the broadcasters' intent was not necessarily to serve Germany, but to support the Afrikaner cause subtly or out of sheer necessity to earn a living in Germany through employment at Radio Zeesen. Generally, the broadcasters appeared not to be politically radical, highlighting once more the complexity involved in understanding historical causality. The question on the depth of the broadcasters' sentiments towards Germany remains somewhat unanswered. Valuable insights can be gained from primary material, but one must also consider aspects such as the sympathetic Afrikaans press and the National Party who would not willingly have divulged on the scope of such sentiments. This also supposes a more nuanced understanding of the broadcasters' motivations, rather than seeking for evidence to assign a simplified label of "pro-German".

Mitigating factors that worked in the broadcasters' favour included Snoek's youth at the time of joining Radio Zeesen, Holm's adaptation to Germany even before the war, Strauss's attempts to escape from Germany, their refusal to broadcast certain political talks, and their rejection of German war medals. Despite these factors, the defence was unable to establish the broadcasters' innocence, and each was ultimately convicted on charges of treason. The various sentences passed on the broadcasters – ranging from Snoek's fine to Holm's ten-year prison sentence – indicate that the punishment process was also variable in the court cases and could be influenced by complex factors.

During the appeal process in terms of the sentences of Holm, Pienaar and Strauss, the issues of the court's authority, the location of the treasonous acts, and the definition of treason were revisited. The competency of the Special Court to adjudicate high treason

cases was called into question, particularly in light of the evidence presented and the reliance on “circumstantial evidence”. The cases were however answered in favour of the State, and the broadcasters’ sentences were confirmed. Holm, Pienaar and Strauss each spent time in prison before being released.

By 1948, the broadcasters were released from prison along with other political prisoners. The management of the court cases, coupled with the scant research on them in contemporary academic literature, presents an intriguing question for historians regarding the future representation of treason cases from diverse perspectives.

Endnotes

- ⁶⁶⁵ Suné Kleynhans is currently enrolled for her PhD in Social Sciences with History at the North-West University. She completed her MA-dissertation in History in 2023 titled “Die rol en impak van Radio Zeesen as pro-Duitse propagandastasie tydens Afrikaners se anti-Britse verset teen Suid-Afrika se deelname aan die Tweede Wêreldoorlog, 1939 tot 1948 (The role and impact of Radio Zeesen as pro-German propaganda station during Afrikaners’ anti-British resistance against South Africa’s participation in the Second World War, 1939 to 1948). She is currently employed as a junior lecturer at North-West University. Her research interests include Afrikaner history, propaganda history, histories of nationalism and patriotism, and the Second World War.
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- ⁶⁶⁷ FL Monama, *Wartime Propaganda in the Union of South Africa, 1939–1945* (PhD dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2014), 28.
- ⁶⁶⁸ C Marx, “‘Dear Listeners in South Africa’: German Propaganda Broadcasts to South Africa, 1940–1941”, *South African Historical Journal*, 27, 1 (1992), 162.
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- ⁶⁷⁰ A la Grange, ‘The Smuts Government’s Justification of the Emergency Regulations and the Impact thereof on the Ossewa-Brandwag, 1939 to 1945’, *Scientia Militaria*, 48, 2 (2020), 45.
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- ⁶⁷² PF van der Schyff (ed.), *Die Ossewa-Brandwag: Vuurtjie in Droë Gras* (Potchefstroom: History Department of PU for CHE, 1991), 203.
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- ⁶⁷⁵ Marx, “‘Dear Listeners in South Africa’”, 148–172.

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- 678 See for example La Grange, ‘The Smuts Government’s Justification’, 39–64; A la Grange & C Bignaut, ‘The Iconography of Afrikaner Nationalism and Ossewa-Brandwag’s “Ideal of Freedom” in the South African Internment Camps of the Second World War’, *Historia*, 66, 1 (2021), 88–118; Fokkens, ‘Afrikaner Unrest within South Africa’, 123–142; Furlong, ‘Pro-Nazi Subversion in South Africa’, 26–40.
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- 686 Marx, “‘Dear Listeners in South Africa’”, 150.
- 687 A Holm, *Sommer My Reis* (Pretoria: Olimpiade, 2019), 1–2.
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- ⁶⁹⁵ Marx, “‘Dear Listeners in South Africa’”, 150.
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- ⁶⁹⁷ Pienaar, *By die Sterfbed van ’n Volk*, 4.
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- ⁷⁰³ Kleynhans, *Hitler’s Spies*, 172.
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- ⁷⁰⁵ Kleynhans, *Hitler’s Spies*, 173.
- ⁷⁰⁶ Kleynhans, *Hitler’s Spies*, 173–174
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- ⁷¹⁰ PC, NC, “‘Oom Jan’ in Court”; see also PC, NC, ‘Alleged “Oom Jan” Broadcasts’, *The Cape Times*, 27 September 1946.
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- ⁷¹³ Holm & Kirsten, *Man en Standpunt*, 22, 44.
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- ⁷¹⁵ PC, NC, ‘Spesiale Howe se Magte Ingekort: Verhoor van Holm kragtens Strafprosesreg’, *Die Burger*, 3 September 1946; see also PC, NC, ‘Special Courts’ Power’, *The Argus*, 3 September 1946 and PC, NC, ‘Emergency Regulation Withdrawn’, *Cape Times*, 3 September 1946.
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Book Review

How to Fight a War

Mike Martin

London: Hurst & Company
2023, 272 pages
ISBN 978-1-7873-8930-4

How to Fight a War is the third book by Mike Martin, a former British Army officer and senior visiting research fellow in the Department of War Studies at King's College London. *How to Fight a War* follows from Martin's 2021 book, *Why we Fight*, which, taken together, provide a timely and compelling foundation to make sense of the resurgence⁸¹⁵ of conflict – especially conventional war – in the early 2020s, and why conventional war now looks the way it does. The ambitious aim of *How to Fight a War* is to serve as a strategic reference guide for those who are commanders-in-chief of the armed forces of a country and covers important considerations at strategic, operational, and tactical level.⁸¹⁶ Written as a second-person narration, the book is written as though the reader occupies this ultimate leadership position, and is faced with war or the threat of war. For Martin, the self-stated intention is to help educate national leaders to direct wars better – not to encourage warmongering, but to help such leaders arrive at 'durable strategic answers to the pressing geopolitical issues of the day quicker and more efficiently.'⁸¹⁷

Divided into three parts, the book follows a structure that ranks the components of conducting war from most influential on the war's outcome to least influential. The first part covers a set of 'intangible fundamentals' in order of importance: strategy and intelligence, logistics, morale, and training. The second part covers what Martin considers 'tangible capabilities': land capabilities; sea, air and space capabilities; information and cyber warfare; and nuclear, chemical, and biological weaponry. The third part, which largely covers operational art, concerns the combination of the intangible and tangible elements to defeat an opposing force.⁸¹⁸ The listed intangible and tangible fundamentals of war delineate the essential principles to which Martin urges strategic decision-makers to pay close attention. Each principle is effectively presented as a different context for wartime leadership, and delves into more tactical and operational depth than one might expect a senior commander or politician to understand. This should however not stand as criticism of the book. Colin Gray has sagely noted, 'tactics and operations ... are the real-world material from which strategy has to be made.'⁸¹⁹ One implication of this is that forcing too much distance between knowledge sets for non-military political decision-makers and knowledge sets for military personnel could be detrimental to creating the desired strategic effect. While one might argue that politicians, for example, do not

need to understand how terrain shapes infantry tactics, Martin implicitly shows that, by having at least a rudimentary understanding of tactical and operational matters, a strategic decision-maker might appreciate better what could realistically be achieved within a given geography. In turn, this may help politicians to avoid making unrealistic demands on their military forces and to appreciate better the strategic effects that may or may not be within reach.

Of specific interest for this review are Martin's observations of strategy itself. A key assertion that Martin makes – one likely to be contentious among academic audiences – is that success in war is about following basic principles. The book under review in its entirety is an outlay of those principles. Where wars have been lost, the argument is that this is due to leaders ignoring or misapplying these principles, the most important of which is getting strategy right.⁸²⁰ Martin leads the discussion of strategy framed according to the familiar ends–ways–means structure.⁸²¹ The leader is advised to select strategic objectives carefully. Such objectives must rest on a sound understanding of the problem to be solved with military force, and must also allow for a framework to judge political actions.⁸²² In recent years, however, the ends–ways–means architecture of strategy – to which Colin Gray has added the category of assumptions⁸²³ – has come under much scrutiny, specifically as a way of formulating strategy itself. Although Martin makes an effort to reiterate that strategy is not a simple or formulaic matter, his conception still lends itself to what Jeffrey Meiser has alluded to as a 'seductive simplification.'⁸²⁴ Indeed, while Martin is certainly correct in asserting that many losses in war can be contributed to a mismatch between ends, ways, and means, he does not address the fact that many losses might occur because of strategy being oversimplified and abused as military planning tool comprising ends, ways, and means.⁸²⁵ Some military strategists themselves have experienced disillusionment in terms of this formulation, pointing out, for example, that it does not take the adversary sufficiently into account, that it fails to acknowledge the unending nature of ends, and that its adoption does not necessarily even improve strategic practice.⁸²⁶ *How to Fight a War* could certainly have benefited from Martin's insight into how to avoid this oversimplification or how to prevent the ends–ways–means structure from devolving into mere means-based planning.

With that said, there is also still the somewhat lingering question of *how* to really make good strategy. In a podcast interview with Abel Esterhuyse, Chair of the Department of Strategic Studies at Stellenbosch University, Martin alluded to such a possible structure and the need for a diverse team with wide-ranging perspectives and backgrounds that are given the space for robust debate and shaping of creative ideas to strategic questions.⁸²⁷ Coupled with the question of how to make good strategy, is the question of strategy in contexts other than regular or conventional warfare. The American failure to ultimately prevent the Taliban from taking political control in Afghanistan after 20 years of deployment, or the French withdrawal from the Sahel after almost 60 years' experience in North and West Africa, points to a particular context for strategy that even the best equipped nations with access to the best strategic minds cannot master. If there were to be a second edition of the book in the future, this could certainly be an added chapter.

Given the overall accessibility of the book, *How to Fight a War* would serve as an excellent primer for students of international security or strategic studies, and would also be beneficial to non-military professionals involved in security matters, such as journalists who look to cover current affairs related to contemporary warfare. A close reading of the book would likely make policymakers far more careful in even attempting to conduct war in the first place, and those readers who are not directly involved in strategic decisions more capable – if not more confident – in holding those policymakers to account for their decisions about war.

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Endnotes

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Book Review

National Security Surveillance in Southern Africa: An Anti-Capitalist Perspective

Jane Duncan

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2022, 231 pages
ISBN 978-0-7556-4022-5

National Security Surveillance in Southern Africa: An Anti-Capitalist Perspective by Jane Duncan focuses on the abuse of state intelligence agencies in Southern Africa based on the need for ‘national security’ as an excuse to infiltrate and thwart social movements.⁸²⁸ Duncan argues that such abuse maintains unjust social orders, which is aggravated by the increasing use of digital surveillance. Countries included in the research on which this book reports, are South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as Mauritius. This book could be viewed as an expansion on *The Rise of the Securocrats: The Case of South Africa* (2014),⁸²⁹ in which Duncan investigates the role of state security institutions in undermining democratic processes to keep certain politicians in power, while using secrecy to protect their institutional interests; and *Stopping the Spies: Constructing and Resisting the Surveillance State in South Africa* (2018),⁸³⁰ which assesses whether South Africa has become a surveillance state, from an international human rights perspective.

Although Duncan studied fine art and art history, she served as professor in the Department of Communication and Media at the University of Johannesburg, and more recently as professor of Digital Society at the University of Glasgow. Besides researching the impact of national security practices, she has been actively involved in civil society organisations and research projects dealing with policy issues on media affairs, communication, and freedom of expression. To obtain in-depth data for *National Security Surveillance in Southern Africa*, Duncan relied on the expert knowledge and insights of journalists, lawyers, activists, communication researchers, ‘spies of conscience’, and academics by means of semi-structured interviews.⁸³¹ She also utilised documents that leaked in the public domain, such as The Snowden Archive, and documents leaked to her personally to understand surveillance practices better.

The seven chapters in *National Security Surveillance in Southern Africa* contain findings of both empirical and normative research. Chapter 1 covers the theoretical foundation of perspectives and key concepts, such as “national security” and “surveillance”. In this chapter, Duncan argues that surveillance is often used by major powers to accumulate

economic and political gain; moreover, that in capitalist systems, intelligence agencies serve a capitalist agenda rather than the interests and needs of society. Chapter 2 pays attention to the post-colonial national security surveillance practices in Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. In Chapter 3, Duncan discusses communication surveillance in Southern Africa for the purpose of national security. Duncan starts Chapter 4 with a critical consideration of the mass surveillance practices of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New-Zeeland (also known as “the Five Eyes”), and then presents her evaluation of mass surveillance in Southern Africa. An assessment of the global trade in spyware and surveillance technologies follows in Chapter 5. In this chapter, the author also discusses how the proliferation of such technology and spyware could be curbed through activism, disarmament, and anti-war movements. The penultimate chapter reports on intelligence-led policing in Southern Africa, with a focus on how the South African Police Service responded to the #FeesMustFall student protests at tertiary institutions in 2015 and 2016. In the last chapter, Duncan points out the international trend of securitising domestic or home affairs functions, such as national identity and immigration management, with a focus on South Africa and Mauritius as case studies.

Duncan is critical of governments in Southern Africa, especially former liberation movements, for misusing intelligence agencies in a similar fashion as colonial police and ‘policing Special Branches’⁸³² to maintain regime security, instead of implementing democratic reforms, ‘[t]hey have not done enough to transform intelligence agencies and practices from the colonial and apartheid periods, because it has served them not do so’.⁸³³ She observed that since the Global War on Terror (GWOT) (September 2001) and increasing international competition for natural resources in Southern Africa, outside powers from the West and East are promoting their national security doctrines and the practice of mass surveillance in the region, instead of encouraging respect for individual rights, transparency, and accountability. The general disregard for the latter, Duncan argues, blurs the lines between law enforcement and national security. Moreover, she argues that widespread intrusive legislation and intelligence practices have not been reversed to restore civil liberties and democratic freedoms.

Duncan furthermore argues that the popular notion of human security, often promoted by multilateral institutions, is inappropriate to guide the mandates and roles of security institutions in Southern Africa. The concept of human security, combined with a too broad definition of national security, is not considered conducive for establishing accountable intelligence agencies, since the latter may misuse the notion of human security to securitise more sectors, obtain larger budgets, as well as having more invasive powers. Duncan concludes that, in Southern Africa, internal security is increasingly viewed as national security, and police are becoming increasingly militarised in this role, while many intelligence agencies fulfil internal policing roles.

In the case study on South Africa, Duncan argues that the Department of Home Affairs follows ‘an increasingly hostile approach towards foreigners’,⁸³⁴ and is using biometrics, risk technologies, as well as harsh regulations to implement exclusionary practices towards migrants and even citizens.⁸³⁵ Instead of enabling the proper management of migrants, Home Affairs regulations and systems are impractical and inconsistent, especially regarding asylum seekers and children of foreigners.⁸³⁶ Concern is also expressed about the possible

misuse of civic identity data by security agencies in order to expand their mandates.

From a security sector reform perspective, Duncan makes some important and useful recommendations regarding intelligence agencies in Southern Africa.⁸³⁷ Firstly, intelligence agencies must be professionalised and compelled to justify their existence and funding, based on what they do in practice to protect the public against clearly defined threats. Secondly, excessive and unjustifiable secrecy should be phased out. As a third recommendation, the author suggests that legislative oversight should be established over intelligence agencies, including their operational matters, and parliamentary oversight committees over intelligence should be able to hold public hearings, and be supported by an independent inspector general for intelligence. Lastly, due process should be followed to ensure judicial authorisation for targeted surveillance of legitimate criminal suspects, and the enforcement powers of intelligence agencies should be relinquished.

On international level and from an anti-capitalist and socialist perspective, Duncan makes several arguments and recommendations related to eradicating state institutions, national boundaries, and capitalism as “sources” of insecurity. This standpoint hinders the inherent strength of the book, which is a critical analysis of intelligence agencies and surveillance in Southern Africa, from a democratic perspective. These recommendations are naïve within the context of competitive and often adversarial international relations, where realpolitik, the harnessing of freer global trade, strategy, and espionage remain part of statecraft. Domestically, Duncan’s recommendations centre on bottom-up and community-based activities to supplant state institutions in providing public goods, including central planning and intelligence functions. Ironically, some of Duncan’s bottom-up recommendations for communities to provide basic services and security are quite relevant, especially where governments have failed at various levels to provide public goods.

Within the context of debates regarding the South African General Intelligence Laws Amendment Bill,⁸³⁸ its passing by the National Assembly on 26 March 2024,⁸³⁹ its “expansive” definition of national security and disregard for essential security sector reforms,⁸⁴⁰ this book provides valuable principles for the governance of intelligence functions in a democracy. From the perspective of how an effective and efficient intelligence capability should look and operate against non-traditional threats in Southern Africa, the book however provides insufficient recommendations. As Duncan acknowledges, the leftist agenda lacks a roadmap for organising security powers;⁸⁴¹ nevertheless, the utility of the anti-capitalist perspective, is its ability to ‘unmask the system-maintaining nature of national security powers’.⁸⁴² *National Security Surveillance in Southern Africa: An Anti-Capitalist Perspective* is highly recommended for students of security studies, intelligence studies and related fields, since it illustrates how broad national security definitions, mandates and powers, mass surveillance, the unnecessary securitisation of non-military issues, and misuse of intelligence agencies could erode democracy, justice, and civil rights.

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Book Review

The Battle of Magersfontein: Victory and Defeat on the South African Veld, 10–12 December 1899

Garth Benneyworth

Warwick: Helion & Company
2023, 250 pages
ISBN 978-1-915113-79-5

Garth Benneyworth, a South African historian, is a senior lecturer and Head of the Department of Heritage Studies at Sol Plaatje University in the Northern Cape, South Africa. He specialises in the heritage of conflict, focusing on the South African War (1899–1902) and the broader War for Southern Africa (1960–1994). In 1999, Benneyworth was instrumental in building the Magersfontein Battlefield Museum exhibition, and he serves as the chairperson of the Council for the War Museum of the Boer Republics (Anglo-Boer War Museum) based in Bloemfontein. He is also a senior research associate at the University of Johannesburg. His research in archives and on battlefields, spanning some 30 years, resulted in a groundbreaking academic work, covering the run-up to and the actual Battle of Magersfontein, which interlinks military actions and heritage landscape.

Benneyworth's recent book, *The Battle of Magersfontein: Victory and Defeat on the South African Veld, 10–12 December 1899*, is a welcome breath of fresh air in South African historiography, and specifically in the sprawling literature concerned with the South African War (1899–1902). While there is indeed no shortage of literature dealing with the South African War, and for that matter the Battle of Magersfontein, Benneyworth seeks to address and set straight the record regarding the plethora of myths, legends, ideologies, factual errors, fabrications, and sloppy research by numerous self-appointed experts that authored books on the broader war effort and the series of battles in the northern Cape specifically. In contrast, Benneyworth's book, places the Battle of Magersfontein within a strategic, operational, and tactical context, and thus traces the series of events and three battles of Belmont, Graspan, and Modder River, during the conventional part of the war that led to the decisive clash near Kimberley in December 1899 during the so-called 'Black Week'.

To write the book, Benneyworth utilised a range of primary sources, such as diaries, photographs, maps, personal reflections, reports, and earlier interviews with survivors, which were collected over a period of 30 years. These primary sources, were supplemented by a range of secondary sources, including various regimental histories, that Benneyworth located in archives, libraries, museums, and private collections across South Africa, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Moreover, due to his close connection with both

the War Museum of the Boer Republics, and the Magersfontein Battlefield Museum exhibition, the author has an intimate knowledge of the actual battlefield, and he has spent the better part of thirty years familiarising himself with the terrain. Benneyworth's intimate, firsthand knowledge of the battlefield, supplemented with the primary and secondary sources, and a keen appreciation of military history, battlefield archaeology, and military geography, resulted in the publication of this unique, revisionist, and in-depth work on the Battle of Magersfontein.

Throughout the book, Benneyworth takes care to keep the reader informed about the political tensions and military considerations that underpinned the Boer decision to besiege Kimberly at the outbreak of the war, and whose strategic importance was amplified by the rich diamond fields in the vicinity. The strategic political and economic value of Kimberley thus prompted the British to advance on and break the Boer siege. Benneyworth also manages to illuminate key British and Boer figures involved in the battle, such as Lt Gen. Lord Paul Sanford Methuen, Maj. Gen. Andrew Gilber Wauchope, Gen. Piet Cronje, and Gen. Koos de la Rey. Benneyworth also does not fall into the trap of focusing on the decisions and contributions of the senior British and Boer commanders only but makes a concerted effort to emphasise the human side of the war also by concentrating on the experiences of the rank and file from the opposing sides during the Battle of Magersfontein. He therefore illustrates the personal experience of battle, by highlighting the plight of the ordinary soldiers at Magersfontein while under fire and involved in actual combat. He also considers how they experienced the climate and terrain surrounding the battle.

The book, comprising eleven chapters, and substantiated with several illustrations, detailed maps, and images, is a riveting read. However, the focus of the book is on the military and on political aspects surrounding the Battle of Magersfontein, with the results that the social, economic, and cultural aspects related to the battle are often neglected. Nevertheless, Benneyworth's book is recommended for anyone interested in the broader South Africa War, and those specifically seeking a deeper understanding of the Battle of Magersfontein.

Benneyworth makes a key contribution to the still burgeoning literature on the South African War, and his contribution to South African military historiography lies in his detailed interpretation and discussion of the nature, course, and consequences of the Battle of Magersfontein.

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Book Review

Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists: Antisemitism in South Africa from 1948 to the Present

Milton Shain

Auckland Park: Jacana Media
2023, 226 pages
ISBN 978-1-4314-3358-2

Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists: Antisemitism in South Africa from 1948 to the Present is Milton Shain's third instalment on exposing anti-Semitism in South Africa. His earlier works – *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa*⁸⁴³ and *A Perfect Storm: Antisemitism in South Africa 1930–1948*⁸⁴⁴ – provide a solid foundation from which he launches his latest book. These books can be read either individually or as a compelling collection.

In *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists*, Shain departs from the strict chronological narrative preferred by historians. Instead, he provides the reader with easier to read “essay-like” chapters, which follow key themes within a loose chronology. Shain thereby navigates the reader between different manifestations of anti-Semitism in both context and form.

The first chapter commences in 1948, with the accession of the National Party to power under the leadership of Dr Daniel Francois (DF) Malan. During the Second World War (1939–1945), the Afrikaner Nationalists often found themselves as fellow travellers of predominantly right-wing radical – if not fascist – groupings. Prior to and during this war, Malan often employed anti-Semitism and *geldmag* (big business) arguments to attract support and voters from these circles.⁸⁴⁵ After the war, Malan, having no further use for anti-Semitism rhetoric, and sensing its utilisation counter-productive, quickly reached a *modus vivendi* with the Jewish community. Malan's reconstruction of the Jew as a conspiratorial enemy of the *volk* along ideological lines discarded the direct reference to “Semitic” or racial characteristics. Liberalism and communism were now framed as the new enemy of the national and cultural identity of the *Afrikaner-volk*, and the handmaiden of the ‘one world nation’.⁸⁴⁶ Many Afrikaner nationalists however still associated Jews with both liberalism and communism. Such sleight of hand accommodated the conspiratorial world view of nationalist supporters in plain sight, but without the international stigma of fascism or overt support for the holocaust. Despite this, a residual flotsam of national socialism of the Second World War persisted in providing oxygen to anti-Semitism in South Africa.

In Chapter two, Shain discusses those that persisted in placing the Jewish conspiracy central to their world view, and reflects on the extreme fringes of South African anti-Semitism by focusing on the more prolific pamphleteers of the age. Two such pamphleteers, Ray Rudman and Johan Schoeman, are singled out as conduits for the influx of international anti-Semitic material. Despite their efforts, their influence was limited to keeping ‘alive a world of anti-Jewish conspiracy’ in South Africa.⁸⁴⁷ The journalists, Sydney Brown, of the *South African Observer*, and Ivor Benson, the discredited chief assistant editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*, are however treated with more concern. In the 1960s, Brown, through the *South African Observer*, posited the Jewish state and Zionism within the understanding of Jewish power, thereby widening the scope of anti-Semitism beyond the “internationalist” rhetoric.⁸⁴⁸ This framing would place Brown in conflict with the Vorster government. Benson, with a list of credible appointments as a journalist behind him, took up Brown’s mantle in the 1970s. The work of such pamphleteers and journalists on the fringes of public opinion provided not only a constant flow of material to the radical right but also space for holocaust denial, and Nazi memory reconstruction.

Chapter three covers the later years of National Party rule during the 1970s and 1980s, when ideological schism within the party created fertile ground for the weeds of anti-Semitism to grow between the cracks. The blossoming relationship of the Vorster government with Israel dampened the nationalist anti-Semitic discourse, allowing the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) and Conservative Party (KP) to sporadically resuscitate the nationalist anti-Semitic discourse with varied levels of success. As the National Party right wing continued to fragment, smaller groups emerged – each jockeying to be more Christian and more *volk-ish* than the next. This inward-looking world view often cast the Jew as a convenient internationalist enemy of the *volk*. During this time, the right-wing *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (AWB) provided the bridge between propaganda and political action. By “propaganda of the deed”, Eugène Terre’Blanche, leader of the AWB, was able to set the outer bounds to which the parliamentary right could respectably express their anti-Semitism and holocaust denialism.⁸⁴⁹ In 1979, the secretary-general of the HNP, Louis Stofberg, allowed the chairman of the anti-Semitic National Front, Mr Ray Hill, to hijack an HNP platform to launch an anti-Semitic rant. Advocate Martin Louw, son of Eric Louw, the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1955 to 1963, immediately resigned from the HNP in protest.⁸⁵⁰ By 1982, Terre’Blanche had elevated the Jewish question sufficiently for Dr Andries Treurnicht of the KP to disavow any association with the AWB. Although the KP would allow Jewish members, Treurnicht remained sceptical of the extent of the holocaust;⁸⁵¹ however the HNP did not see any need to disassociate with anti-Semitism. In 1987, Stofberg allowed the Reverend Steenkamp, a former minister of the Dutch Reformed Church to deliver a shocking address at an HNP meeting in Bloemfontein, where Steenkamp told the meeting ‘die jode is ’n vervloekte volk’ (the Jews are a cursed nation).⁸⁵²

The antics of the AWB and Terre’Blanche showed how far the Afrikaner right could be radicalised. South Africa however prepared for a more inclusive democratic order: the AWB, and with it, the radical right gradually lost traction. By the later 1980s, the political utility of anti-Semitism waned in the light of the growing reality of black rule. Chapter four traces how anti-Semitism re-emerged within the framework of a multinational

democracy. Ironically, the Israeli state, the very entity that dampened Afrikaner nationalist anti-Semitism, provided the spark for the framing of anti-Semitism in the new South Africa. The proximity of the African National Congress (ANC) with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and communist internationalism informed the emerging vocabulary and agitation of radical activists. The close relationship between Israel and the United States of America and violent reaction to Palestinian (Muslim) nationhood provided a comfortable and convenient target for emerging activists. “Jewish wealth” and conspiratorial world order were easy to rework for a new populist agenda.⁸⁵³ Even though the new discourse in South Africa was careful not to link Zionism and Jewry, the subtext remained readily discernible. Yet, Milton Shain takes care in the preface to the book to differentiate between “ideational” and “programmatically” anti-Semitism, which foreshadows his disinclination to label anti-Zionist discourse and propaganda as anti-Semitic.⁸⁵⁴

Shain, as a historian, further resists the temptation to theorise or generalise beyond his objective of discussing anti-Semitism in South Africa. He could however not escape the inevitable description of a wider eco-system of conspiracy theories in the country. Herein lies the value of the book for military readers interested in the underlying dynamics of disinformation, misinformation, and information warfare. Throughout the book, anti-Semitism is couched in terms of conspiracy, world order, and populist agitation.

Wider reading on anti-Semitism could assist the reader to contextualise Shain’s work. For instance, Stephen Eric Bronner powerfully places anti-Semitism at the centre of the conspiratorial mind-set in an article titled ‘Conspiracy Fetishism, Community, and the Antisemitic Imaginary’.⁸⁵⁵ He underlines Shain’s observations that anti-Semitism rarely travels alone and is nested within other prejudices.⁸⁵⁶ Such nesting of prejudices allows for a broad theorisation and generalisation of Shain’s key observations. Any group can be cast as the “other” within the conspiratorial mind-set. Shain’s trilogy not only debunks the myths of anti-Semitism within the South African context, but also provides a detailed description on how anti-Semitism has been mobilised and weaponised across time and context. Such weaponisation of hatred provides easy answers to difficult questions, sedates the mind of the lazy, and subverts societal activism. A careful reading could provide an astute student with a clear example of how bigotry has been deployed by populist leaders to attempt to subvert South African society and democracy.

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Endnotes

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