



ISS SEMINAR

MANAGING AND REFORMING THE DEFENCE SECTOR

Hosted by the Security Sector Governance Programme (SSG)

ISS CONFERENCE ROOM

Pretoria, 12th October 2009

Keynote Speaker: David Chuter

Facilitators and discussants:

- (a) Dr. Naison Ngoma: Head of Programme - SSG Programme**
 - (b) Stephen van Neel: Senior Researcher - SSG Programme**
 - (c) Major General (Retd.) Len Le Roux – Independent Consultant**
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Introduction

In 2000, the ISS published a monograph by Dr. David Chuter entitled Defence Transformation – A Guide to Issues (ISS Monograph No 49). This publication focused mainly on the experiences from Southern African armed forces. The South African experience in particular presented an interesting and perhaps complex process. However, this process has been regarded as one of the most comprehensive and successful transformation processes. It has been almost ten years since this monograph was published. Cognizant of the ever-changing environment, the time was regarded as opportune for yet another discussion on defence transformation, particularly taking into account the contemporary

environment. This is the rationale of Dr. Chuter's effort to produce a new book on defence transformation.

The book shares the broad structures of the previous publication but also deals with a number of new subjects and developments. In his book, David reiterated the importance of a well-functioning security sector and identified it as a pre-condition for stability in any state to ensure economic, political and social development.

Under the auspices of the Security Sector Reform Programme (SSG) the ISS held a seminar entitled Managing and Reforming the Defence Sector. The seminar sought to discuss new findings on the discourse of defence and reforming the defence sector and the manner this contributes to the enrichment of the discourse on defence transformation.

STEPHEN VAN NEEL: OPENING REMARKS

Stephen van Neel welcomed participants to the seminar and provided some brief introductory remarks on the defence transformation after a short presentation of the mission and vision of the ISS including the Security Sector Governance Programme and some of its activities and projects.

Stephen noted that the transformation of the security sector has become one of the fundamental requirements in consolidating the process of democratization in many countries which has pre-occupied policy thinking to the extent that it is often regarded as a pre-condition to establishing a well-functioning state. He cited David's articulation of this requirement when in which David states that: "governments realized that a well-functioning security sector is fundamental for economic and political development as it is the foundation of stability in any state".

Stephen went on to argue that this realization could be the reason why so many governments have accepted the idea and made it an imperative to implement Security Sector Reforms (SSR). These reforms have been particularly noted in the last decade of the previous century and the first period of the new century. There is a believe that security sector reforms give leverage to the democratically-elected political leadership over the security sector and by implication ensures proper oversight, control and governance of this sector. This is easier said because oversight of the security sector as a new concept, was up against strong resistance perhaps more so from the military because some military professionals influenced by their rigid understanding of military affairs would not accept what could be seen as interference of civilians into military affairs and this often exacerbated the complexity of implementing a sound reform process.

The defence sector is an integral part of a generic security sector and its importance has been well articulated in almost all literature dealing with the topic of the security sector. The military remains an important policy instrument for many governments and in some instances the only instrument that can respond effectively to deal with emergencies and other missions as required. And for that one needs an affordable, appropriate, accountable and adequate defence capability that can respond to those challenges as Len Le Roux argues.

Stephen reiterated that it is for this reason the conversation over defence reforms and management was being held with a scholar who has written extensively on defence transformation – Dr David Chuter. Stephen noted that it is not the first interaction between him and the ISS because a collaborative initiative started in the year 2000 when a monograph was published called “Defence Transformation a short guide to issues”. The first publication focused mainly on the experiences from South African Armed forces and a whole lot of us know that the South African experience presented an interesting and perhaps complex process. However, this process has been regarded as one of the most comprehensive

and successful transformation processes. It has been about ten years since the monograph and perhaps it is time for another conversation on defence transformation and Dr Chuter has realized that.

DAVID CHUTER: MANAGING AND REFORMING THE DEFENCE SECTOR

David began by thanking the ISS for inviting him once again and by recalling his previous interactions with the ISS, the last of which was in 2000 during which time the ISS published his monograph on Defence Reform. He noted that the monograph had been well received with about 10000 copies already published and translated into different languages though he was unsure of how many copies had been downloaded over the internet.

In beginning his presentation, David observed that many foreigners have come into Africa with their own ideas and tended to tell rather than suggest what Africans ought to do in regard to defense reforms and management. This in his opinion was the wrong approach. However he stated that it was his intention to contribute toward the debates that are already taking place in South Africa, remarking, "I have never pretended to understand your country better than you do. I still don't."

David outlined his reasons for writing the book especially since he has already published a monograph on the same subject. Some of these reasons include the fact that life progresses on everywhere and as such things change, as do the debates on defence transformation. Secondly, the monograph was published in 2000 and since then, he argued that he knows more than he did before due to the acquired knowledge over the years. Thirdly, most countries are currently in a post-transition phase following the post-cold era. States are no longer doing business the way they used to and are moving away from the status quo. States must move forward from the transformation stage that they are now in. Lastly, there is huge new literature, which recognises defense transformation of the defense sector as critical to the overall reforms in the security sector.

In opening the discussion, David introduced the policy hierarchy, which demonstrates: the place of defence in a country's policy hierarchy; the security community; threats and tasks and intelligence. The policy hierarchy demonstrates policy in order of importance. First is government policy, followed by foreign policy, then the security policy and finally the defence, police/intelligence policy.

David defined the security policy as the process of maintaining, coordinating and employing the assets of the security sector so that they contribute optimally to the nation's strategic goals while a "defence policy is the process of maintaining, coordinating and employing the assets of the defence sector so that they contribute optimally to the nation's security policy goals." However the security policy has become militarised when the reverse should instead be the case. The security community is about using the defence policy to further a government's security policy goals. These structures remind us that these policies are not simple and that it is an iterative process. Government is divided into a number of *sectors* of which security is one. They all follow basically the same rules. Defence and the others come at the bottom not because they are unimportant but because they are about *implementation*.

A government's security policy implies missions, which require planning, which in turn require planning. Planning on the other hand requires capabilities, which in turn require programmes that require procurement. There is a link between policy and the actors but one can only have a policy, which can work within one's programme. A government may change its strategic orientation. For example, from *defence* of terrain to *control* of terrain. Ultimately there will be many practical changes in defence policy as a result.

A security community is also necessary if one wants to produce a security policy. Important actors Ideally this should work through a bottom-up consensus. There

are also no purely military or civilian tasks. It is possible from the security policy outlined earlier that all threats are tasks but not all tasks are threats. It is the task of the military to deal with threats as they occur. The military underpins the foreign policy of a state by use of force or threat of use of force in support of government policy. Security policy is not an amalgam or a compromise but a higher order of policy, determining what follows. "Threat" as it is normally understood is an idea from 19th century Europe. It has become much less important since 1945, although threats do still exist in certain places. A simple formulation given the policy hierarchy set out earlier David argues that: *All threats are tasks, but not all tasks are threats*. This is to say a return to the traditional concept of the military as being to *underpin the foreign and domestic policies of the state with violence or the threat of violence*.

Finally, David spoke about intelligence reforms, remarking that enormous efforts are still devoted to confusing this subject though he does not know why that is the case. "Intelligence is not a substitute for intelligence" he said, adding that "*it's not a magic formula that can solve all your problems*." Most countries have tried to deal with the intelligence sector by introducing layers of control when the problem is on tasking. It has also been proven that it is easier to produce good results by stating what should be done rather than what they should not be done. This in his opinion is the best way of managing the intelligence sector. That is through tasking. Tasking is better than control and this follows naturally from the policy hierarchy.

MAJOR LEN LE ROUX: COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS ON THE BOOK

Le Roux praised David on his new book noting that his earlier monograph had been used extensively and pre-empted a lot of the debate on SSR. Len noted that to a large extent, the debate on SSR started with defence reforms. He noted that this new book has a lot of practical application and has refocused the debate on defence reforms.

Len however wondered if it would have not have been more apt for the title of the book to be 'governing' rather than management of the defence because governing is more encompassing of the issues around defence. He also took note of some few gaps in the book such as collective security efforts and how they how they should be factored in national defence policies and the privatisation of security including internal private security companies. He also raised questions on the approach the author has used of using the threats based approach in designing defence policies. Len argued that a risk-based approach is rather preferable noting that it allows for more flexibility in a defence policy. This risk-based approach is what South Africa has used when designing its defence policies.

The use of the word violence was also raised with the suggestion that referring to that the government as wielding the legitimate use of violence connotes a negative perception of a government condoning the use of violence thus reducing its credibility as being democratic.

Commenting on civil military relations, Len noted that these relations are two-way, adding that this relationship cannot work if it is not based on mutual respect and understanding. He further added that it would be useful to offer more practical guidelines on how to enhance these relations and the need to move away from theory to practical applications.

Len also suggested to the author to make some further contribution in his book on counter-intelligence, adding that the chapter on transparency and accountability should be restructured and made more conclusive.

**DR NAISON NGOMA: MANAGING AND REFORMING THE DEFENCE
SECTOR - A PERSPECTIVE**

Dr. Ngoma praised David for his forthcoming book noting that it has been a long-awaited and much needed book serving as sequel to *Defence Transformation* by the same author.

Dr. Ngoma then offered some comments that had been forwarded to him by Martin Rupiya who had also commented on the book. Martin had noted three issues: the first is that 'the book has provided a basis of debunking several security related conceptual myths. Aspects of civil military relations; "threats" reduced to tasks and the broader role and function of the military in society has shown how some concepts have fossilised in time and become marginalised. The fact that many still regard it as a useful function to engage in strategic or threat analysis demonstrates how operatives have created a niche which normally cannot be challenged by those not in the field or discipline and therefore allows their mundane tasks to remain partly relevant.'

The book also addresses two audiences: the practitioners and scholars noting that the author should be prepared to spend some time refining and expanding where and how the existing concepts have become defunct against the possibility of some reviewers coming back with a series of rebuttals that will take away attention from his current focus.

Dr. Ngoma then posed and offered the following questions and comments:

- To what extent is the African setting represented? This is taking into consideration the fact that Africa has unique defence issues peculiar only to its milieu, issues which place unique challenges to the defence sector in Africa and as such make these issues unique to the rest of the world.
- Does Africa require militaries? The challenge is a national security strategy. Few if any countries have viable national security strategies. Possibly if there were to be national strategies then several African countries would move away

from the traditional military to model the defence of countries for instance in Central America

- Civil and Civilian control: All too often, when the idea of control is introduced, it is usually in civilian control. David's attempt to make the distinction between civilian and civil is interesting as are the concepts of subjective and objective control.
- Subjective vs Objective control: these are interesting concepts but the defense sector is different from other sectors of government unlike what David argues in the book.
- Is a dominant civilian intelligence necessarily preferable to a dominant military intelligence?

DAVID CHUTER: RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

In response to the comments by Len and Dr. Ngoma, David said he chose that particular title for the book because he was striving to keep it up to date and topical, though he would still reflect further on Len's suggestion.

David agreed that approaches to collective security should be taken into consideration when designing defense policies. He also noted that private security issues are of importance and this industry is an example of how the traditional monopoly of the legitimate use of violence has broken down and more so when government transfers its security responsibilities to such companies.

When talking about risks and threats, both target the same issues but approach them from different directions. It is just a choice of words. David also agreed that a security community cannot work unless the relationships are based on mutual respect. Respect and mutual understanding are absolutely fundamental in civil military relations. It is also necessary for a government to be as transparent as

possible. However, transparency and accountability increase the input or output of information that can be manipulated and used for selfish gain.

Whether civilians should control the military is questionable because there is no fundamental rule that this should always be the case.

Plenary comments

If David's book were to be published then it would mean that the concepts and language used are acceptable and the question that this then raises is how to move forward from the debates around defence management and reforms. So much information is being produced and not necessarily knowledge around the subject. SSR is such a big and global business with everyone bringing his or her own interests and agenda. One must not forget that these reforms are aimed at increasing or bringing about effectiveness and efficiency into the security sector. One must also be careful about the rhetoric used in SSR debates.

The ISS should also organise a roundtable discussion with role players and other relevant stakeholders in the defence and other security sector actors and this will enhance the debate on defence management and defence reforms.