

Addressing Contemporary Challenges in the SANDF

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Photo by Stefan Els

Scope

- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ Key questions
- ❖ Evolution of the National Defence Force
- ❖ Potential drivers of defence reforms
- ❖ Conclusion

INTRODUCTION



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- ❖ Fiscal constraints and competing **priorities**
- ❖ **Structural, functional and operational inadequacies** in the SANDF in the spotlight
- ❖ **Media narrative** and public perception **not positive**
 - Operational fatalities
 - Performance of SAMIM in Mozambique, and the role of Rwanda
 - Audit findings (repeat and unresolved findings)
- ❖ **Defence planning linked to defence industry sustainability**
 - **Reasonable self-sufficiency** in core capabilities, including high-rate of supplies such as ammunition
 - Advances in **technology** require constant investment in R&D
 - Natural and man-made **disasters**, eg COVID-19 and global disruption in supply chains
 - **Geopolitical rivalries**, especially in relation to Artificial Intelligence (AI); establishment of the Defence Artificial Intelligence Research Unit (DAIRU) at the Military Academy augurs well but needs support

INTRODUCTION (Cont'd)



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- National Medium-term Strategic Framework (MTSF): FY2019 – 2024 (revised in 2021)

MTSF Strategic Outcomes: 14 outcomes

Outcome 11: 'Creating a better South Africa and contributing to a better and safer Africa in a better World'

MTSF Strategic Priorities: x 7 priorities

Priority 7: *A Better Africa and a Better World*



South African
National Defence
Force (SANDF)

-
Contribution &
Participation

-
Quarterly & Annual
Reports

Key Questions



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❖ **Purpose: Is the SANDF fit for purpose in relation to current operations?**

- Mandate vis-à-vis resources? → Alignment issues
- Structure vis-à-vis Operations? → Configuration issues (tooth-to-tail ratio)
- Skills base vis-à-vis Operations? → Capacity and training issues

❖ **Budget: What is the actual budgetary requirement for the SANDF?**

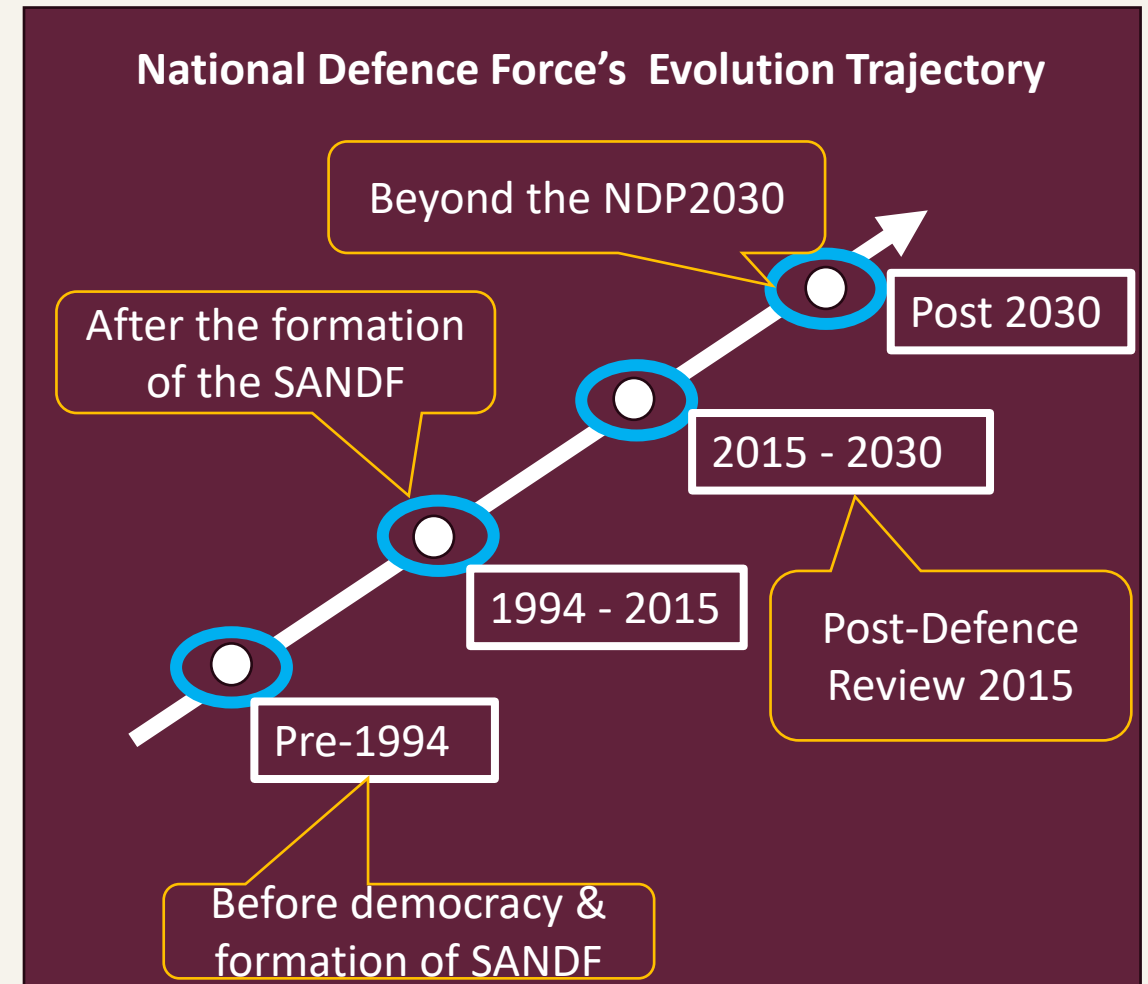
- What is the current ratio: Requirement vs. Allocation?
- Is there a systematic defunding of the SANDF (either intentional or accidental)?
- Who takes the responsibility for the failures/losses/near-misses of the SANDF?
CSANDF/Minister/Parliament/President (Commander-in-Chief)?

❖ **Sustainability: Is there a risk of total collapse of the SANDF?**

- What is the risk appetite of the SANDF commanders? Government? Public?
- What is the recourse for the SANDF/society if collapse is inevitable?
- Has the SANDF considered alternative methods to save costs and to do more with less?
- Viability of some military bases? Endowment Act provisions; encroachment; asset leakage

INTRODUCTION (Cont'd)

Evolution of the national defence force over a
period



Evolution of the National Defence Force: Key Features per Period

Pre-1994

- ❖ National service (**conscription**) → now **volunteer force**; MSDS -Youth require military and technical skills which can later be utilized in civilian capacities
- ❖ **Chief of SADF** was Commander and Head of Dept; always came from the Army and was always male → now **SecDef** is head of dept; accounting officer
- ❖ Ministers of Defence had **military background**
- ❖ **State Security Council** (SSC), chaired by the State President; implementing the Total (Onslaught) Strategy; central to all govt decisions → now **National Security Council** (NSC), chaired by the President, established in 2020
- ❖ South Africa had **nuclear weapons**, the only country on the continent; it **relinquished nuclear power status** due to pressure from the Western countries

Evolution of the National Defence Force: Key Features per Period (Cont'd)

1994 - 2015

- ❖ Development of legislation and **policy documents** (Legislation; White Papers, etc)
- ❖ First **Defence Review** (1998)
- ❖ Signatory to various **international treaties**
- ❖ Strategic defence **acquisition packages**
- ❖ Second **Defence Review process** initiated; focus on mandate requirements, not budget
- ❖ **National Development Plan** (NDP) adopted
- ❖ Participation in **external peace missions**

Evolution of the National Defence Force: Key Features per Period (Cont'd)

2015 - 2030

- ❖ Defence Review 2015 adopted by Parliament
- ❖ One of the milestones: Arrest the decline
- ❖ Defence Review not implemented due to budget constraints
- ❖ Despite these challenges, external missions continued
- ❖ Special Defence Account declined sharply (70,7%, between 2000 to 2023)
- ❖ Shortfall in Compensation of Employees (CoE)
- ❖ Capital acquisition and R&D projects declined

Post-2030

- ❖ Govt has had difficulty achieving NDP objectives.
- ❖ This will mark the renewed focus on achieving those objectives, which will not necessarily include defence

PROTENTIAL DRIVERS OF DEFENCE REFORMS

INTERNAL DRIVERS

- 1) Internal to the DOD: The Ministry; SecDef & CSANDF take responsibility
- 2) SANDF to engage a systematic process of self-correction
 - a) Implementation of plans, including the 'Journey to Greatness' approach as espoused by the CSANDF
 - b) Review of resource management
 - c) Reprioritisation of capital projects in pipeline
- 3) Strong leadership at all levels
 - a. Selection of defence leaders to be rigorous, meritorious and future oriented
 - b. Investment in leadership training
- 4) Rejuvenation:

Symbiotic

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

- 1) Defence matters to form part of the proposed National Dialogue and Defence Industry Lekgotla
- 2) Defence-backed foreign policy to be revisited
- 3) Critical decisions to be made on the future of Armscor and Denel (mandates)
- 4) Public outcry on porous borders requires a renewed focus on border control (decisions on the utilisation of reserves)
- 5) Constitutional principle of 'manifestly illegal order' (Sec 199(6)); from CiC to lowest cmdr
- 6) Commission of Inquiry on potential systematic defunding of defence and national risk exposure
- 7) Defence Review or no Defence Review

Conclusion



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- ❖ National security matters need to enjoy higher priority
- ❖ National Security Council to refocus on the plight of the SANDF to avoid total collapse
- ❖ Bold decisions on: major capital projects; external missions; head count; military exercises
- ❖ Military bases that are not viable to be reconsidered in line with legislation
- ❖ Dealing with ill-discipline, corruption, criminality and audit findings
- ❖ Improve leadership profile, selection, training and appointments
- ❖ Communication strategy (internal and external) to improve image, inform public and celebrate successes

THANK YOU

Special Defence Account

SDA Allocation, FY2001/02 – FY2022/23



Source: DOD Annual Reports, FY2001/02 – FY2022/23