

# The South African Military and Peace Support Missions in Africa

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# Purpose: to discuss the effect of PK on the South African military.



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## Historical-analytical approach.

Research question: How did South African participation in peace missions shape the SANDF?

- The historical and strategic realities.
- Tensions in South African participation in PK.
- Geostrategic changes.
- The future of PK?
- SANDF: Strategic paralysis?

# An historical perspective

## A military in search for a mission - 1990s



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### 1990s - Realignment, policy, doctrine, and structure

IR re-alignment: Reposition of SA into international politics.

1. From unilateral military to multilateral military engagement.
2. From domestic deployments to a focus on foreign affairs.

Contextual realities: Post 2<sup>nd</sup> WW military responsibilities - from warfighting to the management of defence to the management of peace.

Policy development: White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions, 1998.

Doctrinal development: Benchmarking and ops leadership training.

# The key focus of the Mbeki Administration



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## Africa as key area of interests

Africa Renaissance, NEPAD, 'African solutions for African problems'.

Key areas of engagement: diplomacy, economy and military.

Lack of direct control over the economy as an area of influence.

From Mandela diplomacy to Mbeki military engagement.

2000s – increasingly the military becoming a leading instrument of South African foreign policy in Africa.

## Tensions

### IR & Policy:

- South Africa do not want to be seen as a dominant strategic entity.
- Laurie Nathan: Tensions between Africanist, anti-Western, and democratic stances in SA foreign policy.

### Military

- PK as wars of choice; not wars of necessity!
- Where to engage?
- How to engage?

### Tensions:

- Growing political demand vs dwindling military capability
- SANDF systemic tensions – personnel, technology, and budgets;
- National vs Regional vs AU vs UN missions.

# Africa and the world at large.



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## Where are we?

Geostrategic changes in the world at large.

Strategic focus on Central Europe; Middle East; Far East.

Change in the willingness of non-African powers to militarily engage in Africa?

Nature of foreign military engagement in Africa:

- Western powers: no boots; airpower; government level; military diplomacy and professionalism; media/positive/oversight & scrutiny; respect for arms embargos.
- Non-western powers: direct military engagement; PMCs; non-government level; non-media & little scrutiny; illegal weapons transfers.

Growing instability in certain regions in Africa & with certain countries.

# Africa needs to take responsibility for its own security and problems!

## Africa as “the most demilitarized peace of real estate in the world!”

1. Who is filling the void given the lack of military capacity of African states?

2. Ed Luttwak – “Give War a Change” – Infinite nature of African conflicts.

3. African conflict & peace-making is a business: And NGOs need to stay in business!

4. South Africa in a post-peacekeeping era / phase:

- Lack of a defence budget: “. . . while it may be the military who wins battles, it's the economies that win wars.” <https://www.reuters.com/world/top-nato-official-calls-business-leaders-prepare-wartime-scenario-2024-11-25/>
- Declining South African military capacity.
- Endstate: Effectiveness of South African military deployments into Africa?
- Rising reality of domestic security priorities.
- Questions about South African foreign policy priorities and military engagement in Africa.
- A lot of noise about Israel and Ukraine & not a murmur about Sudan or Mali!

# Current deployments



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Withdrawn from Mozambique.

Many questions about the SAn forces in SADC mission in the DRC:

- Nature of the deployment: Purpose and endstate.
- Deployment vs employment.
- South African military capability.
- Ability to support South African forces: intel, strat airlift, log, CAS, medical.
- In-theatre leadership and disciplinary issues . . .
- Morale seems to be a major issue.
- Political commitment vs military scandal?

Where do we go from here?



# How did South African participation in peace missions shaped the SANDF; is it all bad news?



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## Strategic paralysis since 1994: How to align the SANDF in structure, personnel, and equipment with the nature of the existing budget?

Peace missions exacerbate the non-alignment between the nature of the budget and the structure, personnel, and equipment.

Leadership and bureaucratic inertia; decisions on the SANDF as a military vis-à-vis a peacekeeping force.

Deteriorating structural ability to support and sustain peace missions.

Dwindling effect on the morale of the South African forces.

### The positive:

- Valuable tactical and operational experience.
- Command experience in some instances.
- Pockets of excellence – SF / Rooivalk / heliborne & riverine ops.

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## Q&A