CHALLENGES FOR DEFENCE MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

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Introduction

Management is principally concerned with the efficient use of resources in order to achieve desired outcomes. In the case of public sector management the taxpaying public supplies the resources and they should therefore also have a say in the outcomes that they desire and the process by which this is achieved. Obviously there is a limit to how involved individuals can get in bureaucratic processes and it is for this reason that in democratic societies representatives are elected to take responsibility for the management of the state on their behalf. The overall responsibility for the formulation of policy, for the planning and budgeting to achieve such policies, for overseeing the execution of these plans and for exercising strategic control therefore rests with parliament.

Defence is one of the sectors of government and defence management should therefore be equally accountable to parliament and subject to parliamentary oversight and control. National defence policy should be developed in as consultative and open a way as possible and should be approved by parliament. Defence planning, programming and budgeting should equally be done in a transparent manner and approved by parliament. Civil authority must monitor the execution of defence activities and ensure effective strategic control over defence management.

The argument is often made that defence is a sensitive subject and requires special treatment and greater confidentiality. This argument is correct, but the question remains: Who decides on what is confidential and what not? The answer is simple. Parliament, through legislation, determines the extent of acceptable defence confidentiality and the procedures for exercising oversight of the defence function.

Yet, defence management is not only about control and oversight. It is equally important that defence management pursues effectiveness, efficiency and professionalism in the execution of its functions and at the same time aligns the defence sector with the cultural values and norms of the society that it serves.

This paper aims to explore the challenges for defence management in Africa

and to provide an insight into some best practices to serve as examples for regional states in the process of transforming their defence establishments to democratic norms. The paper rests heavily on the South African example.

A conceptual framework for defence management

As stated in the introduction, management is principally concerned with the efficient use of resources in order to achieve desired outcomes. In the case of defence the required outcomes or outputs are:
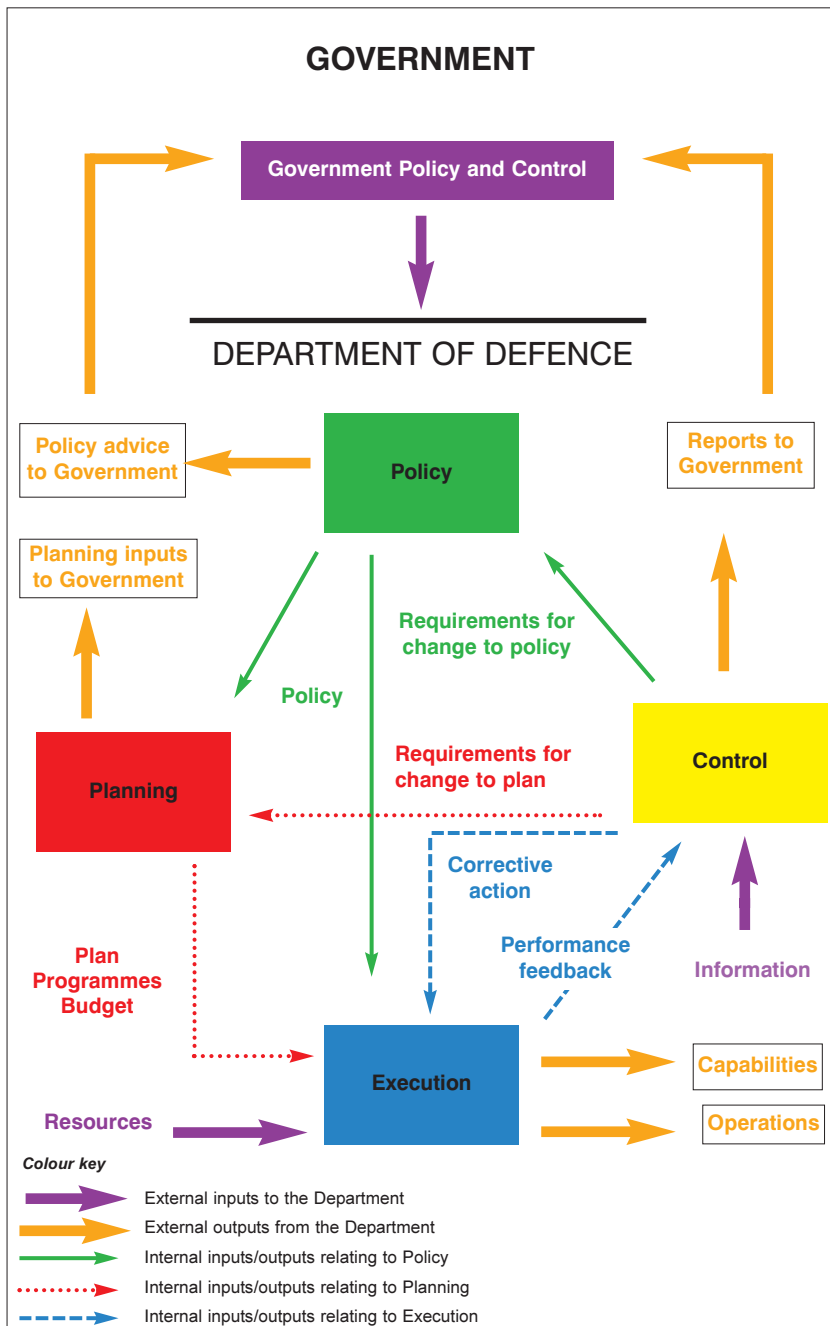• defence capabilities or mission-ready military forces;
• successfully conducted operations; and
• administrative inputs to government in the form of policy advice, planning inputs and reports.

To produce these outputs, defence receives two main inputs. These are government policy and resources. Within the defence establishment, these inputs are converted to the outputs through a process of policy formulation, planning, programming and budgeting, execution of the plans and internal controls and corrective action. This process is shown schematically in the diagram opposite.

The diagram illustrates both the internal management processes of a defence organisation as well as the interaction of defence with government. Defence does not make national defence policy or the final strategic defence plan. It produces, through internal processes, policy options and advice to government as well as planning inputs into the national planning and budgeting processes of government. These inputs are considered at various government forums such as cabinet and parliament, and on approval become the official defence policy and plan. The defence department then converts these internally and executes the defence plan, in accordance with policy and the approved budget, to produce the desired outcomes.

Similarly there are internal control processes within defence departments, but there is also an external control and oversight process. Defence reports to government on its performance according to the plan by means of regular financial and other progress reports and government – by means of inspections and audits – maintains oversight of the defence function.

This process can only work and ensure appropriate, adequate, affordable and accountable defence for the nation if there is an open and mutually respectful relationship between government and the defence establishment. Government should respect the professional inputs from the defence establishment, ensure that it does not misuse defence for party political or personal reasons and ensure that defence is adequately resourced, equipped and financed to do its job. Defence leaders on the other hand must have respect for the constitution, the principles of democracy and the role of government in

GOVERNMENT

Government Policy and Control

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

Policy advice to Government

Policy

Reports to Government

Planning inputs to Government

Requirements for change to policy

Policy

Planning

Requirements for change to plan

Control

Corrective action

Plan Programmes Budget

Performance feedback

Information

Resources

Execution

Capabilities

Operations

Colour key

External inputs to the Department

External outputs from the Department

Internal inputs/outputs relating to Policy

Internal inputs/outputs relating to Planning

Internal inputs/outputs relating to Execution

directing the defence function on behalf of the voting public. The South African White Paper on Defence (1996) states that "the Department of Defence respects the right and duty of Parliament to exercise independent and critical judgement on defence policy and practise"[1] but goes on to say, "However, the government recognises that civil–military relations will only be stable if the requisite control is accompanied by the fulfilment of certain responsibilities towards the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and its members".[2]

These responsibilities, as described earlier in this paragraph, are elaborated upon in the White Paper.

Challenges and best practice

Militaries in Africa are generally a power unto themselves, not transparent to civil society and inefficient. Defence budgets are closed to public scrutiny and very little control is exercised over defence expenditure. In general, defence management is not aligned with the principles of defence in a democracy. To change this situation and to align defence with modern best practice in democratic countries, African governments and defence establishments face some challenges, namely, to:

- establish good governance and ensure adherence to the constitution;
- establish democratic civil–military relations;
- establish defence policies aligned with the challenges facing the region, including a clear role definition for the military forces;
- improve efficiency in defence management;
- enhance the professionalism of the defence sector;
- further enhance collaborative security in the region; and
- institutionalise good planning, programming and budgeting practices in defence establishments.

Governance

Good defence management and healthy civil–military relations are premised on the assumption of the existence of good governance of the state as a whole. All too often in Africa, the problem with defence is not that the militaries are 'out of control' but rather that governments are misemploying their militaries for regime security, party political goals or the entrenchment of personal power. This often leads to an over-politicised military with the consequence of the military, having been invited in, eventually landing up running government.

It is therefore important that the roles and functions of the militaries as well as the rules and procedures for their employment be clearly established in law and that parliaments have a clear authority in vetoing the employment of the military. The employment of the military by the 'commander-in-chief' or president should be constitutionally subjected to parliamentary approval.

Democratic civil–military relations

Africa has a bad record of military interventions in government and militaries that are not accountable to civil authority. This has led to the general situation where there are poor civil–military relations. Civil society does not trust or like the military and sees them as a power unto themselves, as not serving the national interest and as wasting scarce resources on 'toys for boys'. On the other hand, militaries in general think of civilians as ignorant of security matters and not trustworthy to share in 'the affairs of defence of the state'. The challenge to defence management is to break down these perceptions and barriers and to build mutual understanding, respect and trust.

The essential elements of good civil–military relations are:

- *Effective and dynamic political oversight over defence establishments.* This is best accomplished through the establishment and empowerment of parliamentary defence committees through the constitution or other legislation. Furthermore, the members of such committees need to be capacitated for the execution of their tasks by the provision of sufficient resources, access to military institutions and programmes designed to enhance their understanding of defence and security matters. Similarly political oversight requires the establishment of civilian defence ministries responsible for the political guidance and control of the military. Such ministries need to be equally capacitated especially by the provision of civilian staff members who have high-level qualifications in strategic and military studies as well as in public and defence management.

- *Transparency and accountability in defence sector management.* Transparency and accountability are crucial issues in the allocation and management of defence resources for all levels of planning, programming and budgeting. If defence resource allocation and management are not transparent, defence will never be able to achieve public support or the cooperation and support of broader government. If not accountable to government and the people, defence becomes a cause unto its own and will not be aligned with national interests and priorities. It will easily be corrupted and decision making will be easily manipulated towards self-interests. Civil involvement and control of overall budget decisions, as well as careful auditing at all levels, can help ensure that resources are actually used to accomplish policy objectives. Nevertheless, the most effective solution to this problem is a commitment at all levels to national interests and objectives and the development of clear and transparent policy, planning, programming and budgetary processes and systems to implement them. These processes must of necessity be aligned with the national management framework. Transparency and accountability are enhanced through the system of performance agreements as this relies on the definition of clear output objectives and performance standards and the agreement as to the required resources. The system is also

based on negotiation, ensuring better insight, understanding and co-operation.

• *An informed civil society.* Everybody cannot and does not want to be an expert on defence matters or even, for that matter, be involved in the defence debate. On the other hand, if civil society is ignorant of and uninterested in defence matters, it would not be possible to create healthy civil–military relations and defence would in fact have a licence to 'go its own way'. It is therefore imperative that academic institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the media develop expertise in defence matters and defence management matters in order to inform broader society and also to influence governments in general and parliaments in particular. Such academic institutions and NGOs have the responsibility of doing research to bring to the table fresh and alternative options for improved defence policy and management.

Role definition for defence forces

The question 'What are the defence forces for?' needs to be answered in Africa. The present answer is almost universally 'to defend and protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state' or 'to defend the country against external aggression'. Yet few African defence forces are designed or prepared for this task but are rather used for what would generally be described as 'secondary roles'. This begs the question 'What are defence forces *really* for?' The challenge is to clarify the roles of defence forces in the present African reality and in support of the ideals and goals of the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This entails:

• examining and prioritising the risks and dangers facing the continent such as inter-state threats, intra-state threats, international terrorism, warlordism, transnational organised crime, piracy and others; and

• establishing national policies and strategies for combating these risks and dangers, defining the roles and tasks of defence forces in support of such policies and strategies and designing, equipping and preparing them accordingly.

Efficiency

Africa, more than any other region in the world, needs to ensure maximum efficiency in defence management and practice. Requirements for defence and security are high, but equally important are the requirements for social upliftment and economic development. On the other hand, resources are very scarce. It is therefore crucial that every cent spent on defence be spent as efficiently as possible. Areas that need special attention to contribute to efficiency include:

- *Sustainability in defence planning.* If defence plans and programmes are not sustainable over time, this will lead to the non-maintainability and ineffectiveness of capabilities. Sustainability will only be achieved if governments commit themselves to the approved defence plans, if all planning is done on full lifecycle costing and if defence budgets are expended in the most efficient manner possible. Care must also be taken in planning to evaluate accurately the effect of currency fluctuations on the lifecycle cost of capital equipment.
- *The funding of operations.* It is not possible or desirable to budget for the execution of military operations other than routine operations that can be foreseen and accurately planned well ahead of time. Most military operations come at short notice and in the running financial year for which the budgets have been developed and approved many months ago. Examples are peace support missions, major disaster relief missions and even limited war. It is submitted that trying to budget for the unforeseeable will result in a misappropriation of funds. The only way to handle this problem is by the existence of central contingency funds managed by the national treasuries. For large-scale contingencies exceeding the capacity of such a contingency fund, governments will have to revise the total national budget, regarding both departmental allocations and income.
- *Tooth-to-tail ratios.* All possible efforts must be made to ensure the optimal tooth-to-tail ratio of defence forces and departments. All too often supporting structures are bloated at the cost of operational capabilities. Determination of the size and capacity of support structures can only be done once the force designs have been determined. Modern business process re-engineering techniques can assist in the solution to this problem but will only be effective if top-management is committed to this cause and is ruthless in its application.
- *Direct client–supplier relationships.* In many defence forces certain structures exist through historic reasons only. The client (e.g. a combat service) is forced through organisational culture or other interests to make use of the services of such an organisation and is not allowed to 'shop for this service' elsewhere. This is bad practice and entrenches inefficiency. Accordingly, clients for services should be allowed freedom of choice as well as the freedom to establish direct client–supplier relationships.
- *Reserve or part-time forces.* Efficiency in defence can probably be best improved with the use of reserve or part-time forces. There is little need for countries at peace to maintain large regular armies, air forces and navies. The same degree of security and risk reduction can be obtained through the formation of small but highly professional regular forces (the so-called core force concept) backed and supported by a substantial reserve capacity. This has the added benefit of enhancing defence access to other professions as well as improving civil–military relations.

- Other potential solutions for the improvement of efficiency include outsourcing and public-private partnerships, improved 'jointery' between services, improved management information through the use of better information technology, the better use of civilians in defence departments and improved management and leadership through education, training and development. Of these the improvement of management information through the use of better information technology might be the most crucial aspect to the improvement of efficiency in defence organisations.

Professionalism

One of the main objects of management should be to entrench good principles and to practise such principles in the organisation to ensure durability and sustainability into the future. Management should strive to create a learning organisation that will correct itself and continually adapt to changing circumstances and new best practices. The challenge is to build professional defence establishments supportive of the norms, values and needs of the African people. This entails:

- incorporating robust civic education programmes into defence sector education, training and development programmes. This includes developing understanding and acceptance of international humanitarian law, constitutional provisions, defence and other related security legislation, the principles of civil–military relations and the rule of law;
- developing modern command, leadership and management practices in defence establishments to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, high morale and good discipline; and
- ensuring equitable gender and population group representation within defence establishments. This is crucial for creating defence forces that are truly representative of the people and non-partisan and non-discriminatory. If defence forces are not representative of the people they will lack credibility and general acceptance by the voting public.

Collaborative security

The challenge that faces Africa is to move away from a competitive or national self-dependent approach to defence and security to a sub-regional and regional collaborative approach to security. This entails:

- developing defence policies based on the principles of non-provocative and confidence-building defence. The challenge is to create defence establishments that can effectively defend their countries without posing a threat to neighbours;
- establishing regional confidence- and security-building measures including sub-regional arms registers and support for arms control regimes;

- improving the capacity of regional and sub-regional organisations to manage the diverse security challenges and strengthening their mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution;
- enhancing regional and sub-regional early warning systems;
- establishing standby arrangements for peace support and other combined operations;
- creating a viable peacekeeping capacity on the continent;
- establishing the maximum degree of interoperability between national security services;
- developing improved regional and sub-regional managerial and command-and-control capabilities and mechanisms;
- investing in combined skills development and training through regional and sub-regional interchanges and joint exercises;
- establishing rapid reaction capabilities on the continent; and
- establishing a collective and integrated disaster management capacity.

Planning, programming and budgeting

No meaningful programming and/or budgeting can be done without the existence of a long-term or strategic defence plan, just as no meaningful plan can exist in the absence of guiding policy. Within the protective function of government, which includes intelligence, policing, justice and correctional services (or prisons) as well as defence, planning is contingent by nature. This means that requirements are driven by outside factors such as internal crime levels and external instability. In the case of defence, planning must be done for a very uncertain future environment. This is complicated by the long period required to build and prepare defence capabilities, which implies the maintenance of certain capacities purely for possible future eventualities (defence contingencies).

For budgeting and expenditure control processes to be efficient and economic, they must be based on well-argued and elaborated plans and programmes. In terms of oversight and control, the emphasis of parliamentary committees and other oversight bodies should be on scrutinising the strategic plans, more so than getting involved with the details of budgets at unit level. Budgets can look good and expenditure can be exactly according to budget, without contributing in any way to the achievement of national defence policies and priorities. It is therefore crucial that oversight bodies understand the planning, programming and budgeting logic, ensure that defence departments establish processes and procedures aligned with the principles of good public sector administration and insist on involvement from the outset of the process and not only in the approval of the budget.

The defence planning, programming and budgeting process is an iterative process involving negotiation between all levels of defence management.

Planning is largely top-down based on an analysis of requirements and environmental factors as well as on an estimate of available resources. As it moves down in the organisation – through performance agreements between superiors and their subordinates – more and more accurate costing is done until, at unit level, accurate zero base budgeting can be done. These unit level budgets, in turn, are added from bottom-up to constitute the total defence budget. This obviously entails much iteration to 'make ends meet resources'.

The planning, programming and budgeting process is the central feature of defence management for providing resources to the defence force to ensure 'the defence and protection of the state, its territorial integrity and its people' in alignment with national security and defence policy. The process rests on the rationale that defence budgets should be the result of good long-, medium- and short-term plans that are based on open and clear defence and national security policy. All plans, programmes and budgets should be driven by clearly defined and agreed upon outputs.

The defence planning, programming and budgeting process should clearly be aligned to and integrated with the national public expenditure management process and therefore the principles applied to defence management should not differ markedly from those applicable to other activities of government.

The quality of these processes is crucial for ensuring national defence and security whilst not making the opportunity cost of defence too high in terms of other social and developmental priorities. Inefficiency and imprudent use of scarce resources will undermine security and the broader national interest.

In the final instance, defence planning, programming and budgeting must be based on modern management practices, principles and procedures and on accurate research, analysis and strategic assumptions. It must have a long-term focus and be the product of an inclusive process. It must be innovative and ensure permanent efficiency improvements in order to make defence affordable. While the nature of planning, programming and budgeting systems may vary internationally, the basic processes, techniques and principles put forward in this paper should assist in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of defence as well as greater transparency and accountability in defence resource allocation and management.

Critical success factors for meeting the challenges to defence management in Africa

The challenges to defence management in Africa, particularly in emerging democracies, are varied, wide-ranging and complex. As has been indicated it encompasses a variety of interrelated aspects. To ensure transformation in present practices to meet these challenges will require dynamic leadership and commitment. It is submitted that there are seven critical success factors that have to be met to ensure success in future defence management in Africa. These are:

Institutionalisation of democratic governance and institutions

The defence sector is just that, a sector of government. It does not exist in isolation and cannot be treated differently from other sectors of government. For the defence sector to adhere to the principles of transparency, accountability, efficiency and improved service delivery, government itself must live up to these principles. Defence must therefore be managed within the bigger picture of democratic reform and good governance. It occurs within the ambit of the consolidation of democracy, promotion of human rights, good governance and the creation of a culture of accountability and transparency. If these conditions do not exist, it is unlikely that any attempt at transformation of defence management will be either successful or sustainable.

Robust democratic oversight

Parliamentary committees must be actively involved in all major aspects of defence management. They must not simply act as 'rubber-stamps' to key policy issues emerging from the defence sector. To be able to do this, such committees must empower themselves by getting expert advice from knowledgeable civil society organisations such as academic institutions and NGOs involved in the defence and security debate. They must also be willing to spend plenty of time in debate with defence sector officials and to visit structures at ground level in order to enhance their understanding of the realities of the sector. In the final instance, parliamentary committees and parliament must accept responsibility for the results of defence sector activities as they ultimately make the decisions.

Decisive and strategic leadership

Within the defence sector, the responsible ministers and top-management must personally lead and give direction to the defence establishments. This is not the responsibility of the departmental strategists and planners. They act as the expert advisors to top-leadership and obviously do the groundwork for them. However, it is for top-management to provide the vision and drive for real transformation in defence management. It is also the responsibility of top-management to engage with the political decision-makers in open and vigorous debate about the future of the defence sector.

Cooperative relations between officials and politicians

Everything possible must be done to establish trust and good relations between political decision-makers and officials in the defence establishments. This should be developed into a partnership accepting co-responsibility for defence

and security matters. In a good partnership every participant understands his/her role and recognises and respects the roles of others. Defence and security issues are too important to be based on an adversarial and antagonistic relationship. To enhance relations, time and effort must be spent on team-building activities.

Alignment between policy and budgets

Parliament and cabinet must ensure that the defence policies they advocate and approve are within the scope of affordability of national budgets. Unaffordable 'day dreaming' policies lead to inefficiency and unsustainability in defence forces and to eventual institutional collapse.

A management focus on strategic control

In most organisations management tends to focus on policy making and planning and to neglect strategic control. In transformational organisations, strategic control becomes the principle focus of management. Once goals have been set and implementation begins, management must continually monitor the external and internal environments for changes that can disrupt the achievement of the set goals. Such changes will trigger the requirement to change internal policies, strategies or plans or alternatively to instigate timely corrective action where members are sub-performing. Where strategic control is neglected, the organisation will soon find itself out of line with the set vision and strategy.

Learning culture

If transformation of defence management is to be sustainable in the long term, it is necessary to invest in the people of the sector through education and training programmes. Examples are civic education programmes at all levels but especially at ground (entry) level, professional continuation training and encouraging and supporting employees to develop their academic and managerial qualifications. We live in a rapidly changing world and must therefore continually adapt to new circumstances. To remain abreast of developments it is imperative that a learning culture is inculcated into the defence establishments of Africa.

Conclusion

Defence management in Africa comes from an era in which it was considered to be the exclusive reserve of the militaries and in which civil oversight and control did not exist. In many cases the military was either highly involved in

government or the 'de facto' government of the country. This has left a legacy of mutual distrust between African militaries and civil society and poor civil–military relations. Lack of civil oversight and control has also led to inefficiency in defence management.

The positive changes towards democracy and good governance on the continent now provide the scope for change, and this poses many challenges to the management of defence establishments in Africa. The first of these is the establishment of good governance of the military and robust civil–military relations. At the same time there is great need to align defence policies and capabilities with the real needs of Africa and African nations. Africa cannot afford militaries that are not specific to its real needs. To ensure peace and stability on the continent, all must be done to consolidate and advance the improvement of collaborative security through the strengthening of regional and sub-regional organisations. Finally, defence establishments need to ensure greater efficiencies, professionalism and the institution of good planning, programming, budgeting and financial control procedures and practices.

This requires the institutionalisation of democratic governance and institutions, robust democratic oversight over defence, decisive and strategic leadership and cooperative relations between officials and politicians. Within defence establishments, it is also important to alignment policy and budgets, to focus on strategic control and to create a learning culture.

If this is achieved, defence establishments will be able to play their rightful and important roles in Africa for the good of all her people.

Notes

1   South African White Paper on Defence (1996), Chapter 2, p 8.
2   Ibid, p 10.