

investigation and recommendation to strengthen military accountability to the elected government.

According to SANDF chief director of communication Major-General GN Opperman, who spoke on behalf of defence force chief Georg Meiring, the advantage of the "balance option" is that it conforms fully to the principle of civilian control of the military. It provides transparency and separation of powers, making civilians responsible for the politics of defence policy, programmes and budgets, while the military retains professional responsibility.

Disadvantages, in Opperman's view, are bureaucratic complexity and the possibility of conflicting roles, duplication of functions and activities, and a critical mass larger than the status quo.

Opperman emphasised that the separation and hierarchy of authority between civilian and military leaders in a democracy did not imply that the armed forces were merely a neutral and passive instrument for implementing executive decisions.

Senior officers would invariably attempt to advance their institutional interests in competition with other groups, and would naturally seek to contribute to the formulation of defence policy on the basis of their professional expertise.

It was therefore misleading, he argued, to portray the quest for stable civil-military co-operation simply in terms of maintaining civilian control over the armed services. The challenge was to ensure that the services participated in the development of defence policy without undermining or usurping the authority of the civilian decision makers.

Opperman said tensions between military and civilian leadership in

emerging democracies often resulted from a lack of expert skills and knowledge within the relevant civilian bodies. Lack of experience in ministries of defence and parliamentary defence committees gave rise to frustration within the armed forces and inhibited effective management of defence. This could also create space for soldiers to engage in politics.

He made a number of recommendations for avoiding these problems in South Africa, including programmes on democracy and civil-military co-operation for SANDF personnel; training in military planning and analytical budgeting skills for members of the joint standing committee on defence and ministry of defence staff; and structuring the relationship between military high command and civilian defence bodies to ensure regular and dynamic interaction and co-operation.

Former defence force chief and Freedom Front leader Constand Viljoen told conference delegates that it was wrong to imply that defence management and policy had not previously been under civilian control in South Africa. He described the creation of a civilian defence secretariat as "an over-reaction based on emotion" which would cause tension and undermine the position of the chief of the defence force.

However, Viljoen said the appointment of Lieutenant-General Pierre Steyn as Secretary for Defence would "make a wrong thing work at the beginning".

Laurie Nathan of the Centre for Conflict Resolution argued that the

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## Training a force of good citizens

**I**DASA is making a bid to implement a long-term citizenship education and value orientation programme in the defence force as a contribution to the process of making the force "constitution friendly". The bid is supported by the Military Research Group and the Institute for Defence Policy, both of which have been deeply involved in defence policy activities in recent years.

The programme will involve reshaping the value system of the defence force to bring it into line with democratic principles.

Citizenship education in the defence force is seen as essential in the short-term in order to promote a general sense of stability and legitimacy, according to Geoff Brown of Idasa's Training Centre for Democracy, who is co-ordinating the bid.

An enduring democracy would require the development of new values and attitudes within state institutions, particularly the defence force with the enormous power at its disposal. Effective citizenship education – involving experiential learning, lectures, debate and reflection – should be directed at all levels of the force. The curriculum would include democratic theory, the role of a defence force in a democracy and international law.

Idasa has proposed that an organisation like itself should either conduct the programme throughout the defence force or train the staff of a permanent citizenship education unit within the force.

The issue of value education was also raised at Idasa's recent conference on civil-military relations by Paul-Bolko Mertz, an inde-

pendent defence and security consultant.

Mertz said the image of a soldier in a democratic society was exemplified by his service for the common good and the protection of the human dignity.

He said emerging democratic societies like South Africa needed a politically educated military consisting of responsible citizens who acknowledged the political consequences of the military action they took.

He warned that questions around changing the present defence force culture would not be settled overnight and that leadership development and civic education would be a long process that would grow with the emerging democratic state. The integration process of former political adversaries and military enemies put great pressure on every member to act with tolerance, to cultivate friendship and mutual understanding and to practise professionalism that emphasised ethical and moral norms more than technical standards.

As regards obedience and discipline, Mertz said modern democratic constitutions and international law limited the enforcement of authority which meant that soldiers had to obey legal orders but could disobey illegal orders.

"Any order which demands from the soldier to commit a crime – killing of unarmed civilians, harassment, rape, plunder, torture of prisoners, refusing to render medical assistance – are illegal and are to be refused both on moral and legal grounds," he said.

Mertz argued that these limits on "unconditional obedience" did not reduce combat efficiency; rather it was unconditional obedience that destroyed the initiative, creativity and mutual confidence which formed the basis of good military leadership. ■



Mertz