NATIONAL SECURITY AND THREAT PERCEPTION: WHEN IS AN ISSUE A NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT?

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ABSTRACT

In this article the concepts of national security and human security are discussed with specific reference to the African and South African situation. It is concluded that there is still no clear indication of when an issue is a national security issue, and when a human security issue should also be viewed as a national security issue.

1. THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

National security is discussed here in terms of views regarding its meaning; the concept of national strategy; threats to national security; and the various levels of security. Finally, there is an application to the African and South African situation.

1.1 Views on national security

Various attempts at defining national security have been made, although in certain views there is no universal definition, as it means different things to different countries. A distinction between traditional (and Western-oriented) definitions of national security, broadened definitions and definitions specifically applicable to Third World countries, has also developed.

1.1.1 Traditional views

Cold War definitions of national security tended to emphasise external

and more specifically military threats. It has been defined as "the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to protect its nature, institutions and governance from disruptions from outside; and to control its borders";[1] as "the condition of freedom from external physical threat which a nation-state enjoys. Although moral and ideological threats should be included, it is really physical violence which is generally perceived to be the ultimate leverage against a state and therefore as the real and tangible danger to its survival";[2] as "a feeling of confidence that the disasters of war and the vagaries of international political life can be avoided or absorbed, either by ultimate victory or good management, so that the state, its institutions and its way of life can continue to exist in a fundamentally unimpaired fashion";[3] and also as "(t)he preservation of the reigning political structure against any change, save change through channels which that structure has previously defined as legitimate".[4]

It has even been stated that national security is an abstraction, an idea, a symbol or feeling until such time as a direct military attack is launched against the state's territorial integrity.[5] National security policy, as an instrument to achieve national security, has been described as "(t)hat part of government policy that has the objective of creating national and international political conditions that are favourable to the protection or extension of vital national values, against existing or potential adversaries".[6] This definition already represents a move away from the traditional emphasis on military security.

1.1.2   Post-Cold War thinking

Definitions such as the preceding are based on the traditional understanding of security and specifically the security of the state. Although the emphasis on security against military attack had already been questioned during the Cold War period, the demise of the Soviet threat facilitated a re-thinking of the concept of security.[7]

Two aspects in particular were increasingly debated. Firstly, the sources of threats to security, which were seen as not only military, but also political, economic, societal and environmental. Secondly, the referent object of security moved from the state to the individual in many interpretations. Furthermore, Buzan in particular refers to the concept of strong and weak states, the latter having weak institutions

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and a lack of political coherence, hence being more susceptible to internal rather than external threats.[8]

Buzan also argues that the concept of national security is difficult to define in a universal context, due to the diversity of states as referent objects. "The concept of security can be mapped in a general sense, but it can only be given specific substance in relation to concrete cases". In the case of strong states, national security can be viewed primarily in terms of external threats. In weak states, only the physical base of the state may at times "be sufficiently well-defined to identify national security".[9]

In some interpretations security is viewed in the widest possible sense, and with individuals rather than states the referent object. Security is seen as meaning the absence of threats and not only war, but poverty, lack of education, and oppression, are for instance viewed as threats or constraints. True security is therefore provided by emancipation.[10]

In a further extension of the broadened concept of security, environmental security is included as one of the main components, as environmental change could lead to acute conflict and violence. This view links to the concept of various sources of security threats and, while certainly partly valid, leads to the danger of 'securitisation', that is transforming issues into security issues by labelling them as such. This means that regardless of whether the issue leads or could lead to violence or conflict, or poses a threat to the state, it is viewed as a security issue.[11]

The preceding debate is summarised in a view which attempts to find some compromise. With reference to the expansion of the concept of national security, it is stated that "(g)ood reasons have been cited for the changes, which are not objectionable, as long as war remains the central focus".[12]

Mathur identifies certain factors that determine national security in any given country, namely geographic and geo-strategic conditions; human and material resources; the level of industrial and economic development; political conditions; socio-cultural conditions; military power; and the types of external and internal threats. However, his very broad view of national security reflects some of the problems of over-extending the concept to include virtually all societal ills.[13]

1.1.3   National security in Third World countries

The distinction between the different manifestations of national security

in 'strong' states and 'weak' states made by Buzan, laid the foundation for the concept of Third World security. The security dilemma for the weak state revolves around domestic threats rather than external threats, and could even include citizens seeking protection from their own state institutions. Static colonial borders have, *inter alia*, also given rise to interstate conflict in Third World countries.[14]

The following general characteristics of Third World national security concerns emphasise the primarily domestic origins of insecurity:[15]

— There is often no single nation within the Third World state, but rather various competing communal groups.
— Regimes tend to lack popular legitimacy as they often represent the interests of an elite or of a specific ethnic or social group.
— The state does not have the institutional capacity to maintain peace and order.
— Threats are perceived to be from and to the regime in power.

The above results in competing concepts of security advanced by different groups in society. The distinction between national security, state security and regime security therefore becomes blurred.

Ayoob identifies three features which have specifically contributed to distinguishing Third World national security from that of the First World. These are the latter's external orientation; the correspondence of state security with alliance security; and the link with systemic security.[16] He concurs with Job that "(t)he low level of social cohesion and of state and regime legitimacy is the root cause of domestic insecurity in Third World states".[17] He justifies what he terms the adoption of a distinctively 'state-centric' approach to security not only to realistically limit the unlimited expansion of the concept, but also because of the role played by political elites in defining security issues in Third World states.[18]

1.2 National strategy

A country's national strategy embodies the broad and specific policies as set out in the national security policy. Its aim is to determine the most effective way in which these national policies are to be attained. National strategy has thus been described as "the art of mobilizing and directing the total resources of a nation ... including the armed forces,

to safeguard and promote its interests against its enemies".[19]

In the national strategy the broad aims of every departmental (specialised category of) strategy, for example political-diplomatic, military, economic and social-psychological, are defined. The linking of these categories at the national strategic level in order to ensure the most effective execution of the national strategy in its totality, is of crucial importance. In turn operational strategies are determined by the departments concerned.

In this regard, it is also stated that national strategy "recognizes the organic relationship between foreign and domestic interests, and coordinates political, economic and military power in pursuit of these interests".[20] At this level strategic guidelines are of necessity broad and general, the detail to be added at lower levels of strategy formulation. The terms 'national strategy' and 'national security strategy' are sometimes used interchangeably, although the latter is specifically directed at achieving security objectives.

The link between various levels of policy, doctrine and strategy is depicted in *Figure 1*.
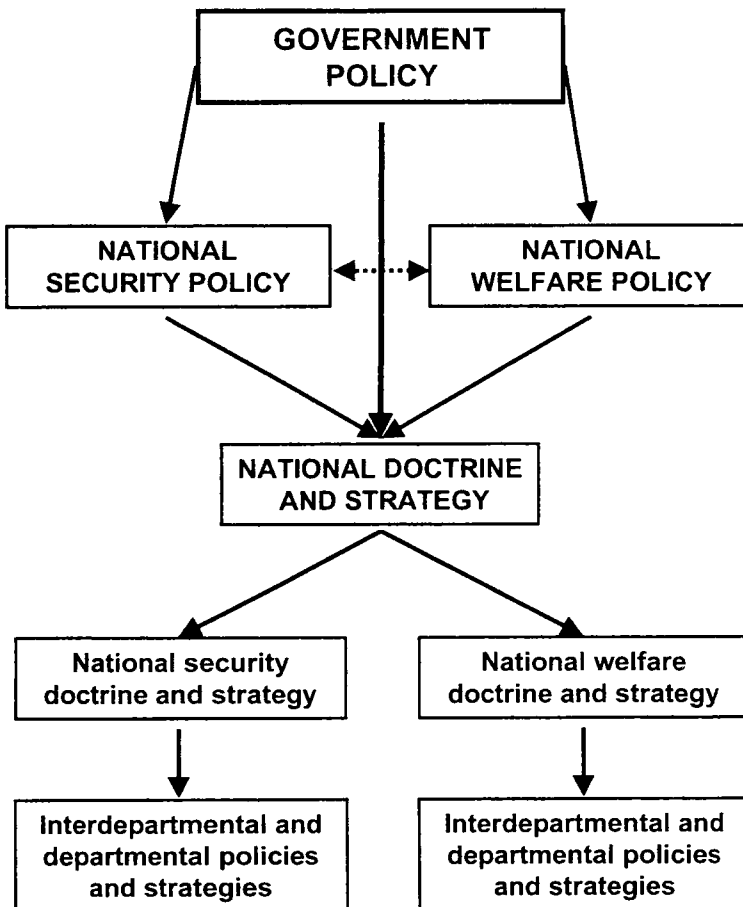
1.3 Threats to national security

Insecurity reflects a combination of threats and vulnerabilities, implying that states can reduce insecurity by either reducing vulnerability or decreasing threats. To some extent this would alternatively entail focusing national security policy on the state itself and lessening vulnerabilities, or focusing on international security by addressing the sources of external threats. The concepts of insecurity and vulnerabilities are, however, also closely linked and a specific approach to security may simultaneously attempt to address both threats and vulnerabilities.[21]

While vulnerabilities are relatively identifiable and concrete, the same does not necessarily apply to threats. Threat assessment is not always an objective process; actual threats may not necessarily be perceived; and perceived threats may not have real substance.

A further issue is the distinction between normal competition, lesser threats, and threats to national security. "The difference between normal challenges and threats to national security necessarily occurs on a spectrum of threats that ranges from trivial and routine, through serious but routine, to drastic and unprecedented. Quite where on this spectrum issues begin to get legitimately classified as national security

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FIGURE 1 :
LEVELS OF POLICY DOCTRINE AND STRATEGY

GOVERNMENT POLICY

NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

NATIONAL WELFARE POLICY

NATIONAL DOCTRINE AND STRATEGY

National security doctrine and strategy

National welfare doctrine and strategy

Interdepartmental and departmental policies and strategies

Interdepartmental and departmental policies and strategies

problems is a matter of political choice rather than objective fact".[22]

However, certain criteria are offered as a basis for identifying national security threats. The type of threat and the intensity of a threat (proximity, probability of occurrence, specificity, consequences and historical setting), are for instance factors to take into account. Nevertheless, measurement remains difficult. Furthermore, decisions regarding the seriousness of threats often tend to ultimately remain political decisions.

Threats have to be defined as capabilities multiplied by intentions, probability, consequences and time-span. If either one is lacking, or very distant, there is no real threat. Intentions may, however, be difficult to determine. Hence, while some actions such as troop deployment are obvious, others are concealed. Even open actions may be aimed at confusion or deception. Preparatory and support actions are some useful indicators as to the intention of any main action, for example stockpiling of strategic materials or military mobilisation.[23]

Betts elaborates on the problem of correctly assessing intentions by referring to unambiguous threats, which require 'factual-technical' warning, and threats which are less clear and require 'contingent-political' warning. The former involves the detection of changes underway in the deployment of capabilities, while the latter involves "predicting decisions and initiatives by other states, groups". This implies probabilistic statements rather than categorical statements. During the Cold War period hostile intentions were often taken for granted or assumed. The post-Cold War situation has resulted in a focus on 'unconventional' threats such as international terrorism, the drug trade, and organised crime, replacing the overall Soviet threat as especially perceived by the United States (US).[24]

A further distinction can be drawn between threat perception based on actual existing threats, as perceived, and so-called 'threat-independent' analysis based on hypothetical contingencies such as invasion. A distinction between different levels of a threat (for example strategic or tactical) is also made.

As far as the sources of threats are concerned, they may be classified by sector, for example military threats, political threats, societal threats, economic threats and environmental (ecological) threats. Within each of these sectors threats may again arise domestically or externally, although the two are often combined. As previously referred to in the discussion of the national security concept, so-called weak states predominantly face domestic threats. Although broadened concepts of

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security have included a wider range of threats or potential threats, caution has been expressed in this regard. "In other words, when developments in other realms ranging from the economic to the ecological threaten to have immediate political consequences or are perceived as being able to threaten state boundaries, political institutions, or governing regimes, these other variables must be taken into account as a part of a state's security calculus". This is especially the case in Third World countries where a 'political' definition of security is essential.[25]

Changing the referent object of security (whether it be regional security, state security, regime security or individual security) will obviously also alter the source and nature of threats to that security. "If we treat security as the security of the state, then we are ignoring the insecurity of people who are under threat from the state".[26] In this regard the concept of national security in its broader sense is often used to include various referent objects within a state, including the state institutions and individuals. Obviously not all threats to the individuals are threats to national security, and in this sense contradictions between individual and national (in the context of state) security arise. Buzan states in this regard that individual security is ultimately subordinate to the higher-level political structures of state and international system. Should extreme tension exist between state and citizens, it is difficult to continue applying the concept 'national security' to the situation.[27] This will subsequently be discussed in the next section.

Finally, the concept of early warning has increasingly been emphasised as being important, not only in terms of military threats or technical warning, but also including the whole threat spectrum.

1.4 Levels of security

In addition to the levels of global security, continental security, regional security and national security (as already discussed), the following levels require attention.[28]

1.4.1 State security

This is equated with sovereignty, a distinct territorial base and a set of institutions that organises, regulates, and enforces interactions of groups within its territorial confines. Threats to sovereignty or state institutions can therefore be deemed threats to state security. Threats to state

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security may also entail threats to regime or to individual security, but not necessarily *vice versa*.

1.4.2   Regime security

This refers to the small body of persons who hold the highest offices in a given state. Threats to regime security are not necessarily threats to state security and *vice versa*. A regime may face political defeat at the polls, but this is not necessarily a threat to state security.

Part of state security (such as territory) may be threatened, but the regime may still feel secure. Although regime security in the positive sense refers to the normal protection of leadership, in the negative sense it refers to protection of the interests of the ruling elite to the detriment of state security and individual security.

1.4.3   Communal security

In a society composed of communal groups, with distinctive ethnic or religious identities, their perceived security may be at stake, as the collective of specific human insecurities. In highly fragmented societies this often tends to virtually replace the concept of 'national security'.

1.4.4   Human security

Human security is said to have four essential characteristics, namely it is a universal concern; the components are interdependent and global; it is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention; and it is people-centred. Although it is difficult to find a universally acceptable definition of human security, it has been described as follows: "it means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life — whether in homes, in jobs or in communities. Such threats can exist at all levels of national income and development".[29]

Human security is, however, not the same as human development, although there is a link. The latter is a broader concept, namely a process of widening the range of people's choices.[30] Ensuring human security does, however, not mean that people have no responsibility to control their own lives.

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The two basic components of human security are freedom from fear and freedom from want. Threats to human security are listed as being threats to the following areas (although they tend to overlap), namely economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. Each of these are seen to require certain conditions, such as a basic income, and physical and economic access to basic food.[31]

Part of the problem regarding an excessive focus on human security is its affordability to the state; whether a threat to individual security has reached the stage where it has already, or may soon, become a threat to national security; the issue of to what extent the state has a definite legal obligation to provide aspects of human security; and the distinction between the causes or potential causes or potential manifestations of threats to national security and the actual manifestations of these threats. These are often confused.

Threats to human security, such as poverty, could therefore exist without this necessarily manifesting (or even potentially manifesting) as a threat to national security. In this regard it has been argued that only if a certain condition or situation leads to violence, unacceptable conflict, or state instability, or has the clear potential to do so (including existing indications to this effect), could it also possibly be viewed as a national security threat. In this regard, threats to law and order are also not necessarily threats to national security, nor is normal national or international competition. The intensity, extent and consequences of for instance violent crime, will determine in a given situation whether it is a threat to individual security and law and order, or also a threat to national security. It has of course also been said that a threat is a threat to national security when a government says it is. This is, however, insufficient, as governments often list priorities for the sake of political expediency, or under- or over-emphasise certain threats. Threats or potential threats from the same source, for example the environment, may pose a threat to individual security only, or to individual and national (and possibly also global) security.

In the Third World context specifically, as has been stated previously, it has been argued that threats to national security must ultimately have a political dimension.[32] Although the concept of 'security software' is important in the Third World context especially, over-emphasis of this dimension could lead to utopian thinking when divorced from national security.

Despite the difficulty of finding a universally acceptable definition of human security and its link with national security, the *Memorandum of Understanding on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa* (CSSDCA — July 2002) stipulates that by 2005, a framework for codifying the concept of human security into national laws as contained in the *CSSDCA Solemn Declaration*, should be established.[33]

As far as the latter is concerned, it is *inter alia* stated that:[34]

> (b) The concept of security must embrace all aspects of society including economic, political and social and environmental dimensions of the individual, family, and community, local and national life. The security of a nation must be based on the security of the life of the individual citizens to live in peace and to satisfy basic needs while being able to participate fully in societal affairs and enjoying freedom and fundamental human rights.

The above does not specifically refer to the concept national security (although it refers to stability) and obviously takes a wide view of security with the emphasis on human security.

Definitions of 'human security' (although the concept has obvious merits) have been criticised for often being too vague and wide, and that virtually any type of threat or even discomfort could constitute a threat to human security. It also does not help decision makers in deciding on the allocation of scarce resources among competing goals if no hierarchy of security objectives is established. "After all, not everything can be a matter of national security with all of the urgency that this term implies".[35]

It has also been stated that human security cannot exist without national security, although the latter may not be a sufficient condition. Human security is mostly threatened in weak states, so that effective and democratic national institutions are a necessary first step to restarting human security.[36]

An over-emphasis of human security can also create false priorities, a false sense of hope and false assumptions as the alleviation of human insecurity does not necessarily mean greater peace and security.[37] Many 'human security' issues are in fact service delivery issues, some on local level.

The Canadian government for instance, although a strong supporter of the concept of 'human security', has also adopted the position that

human security cannot supplant national security, but is a logical extension.[38] Human insecurity is in fact often at least partially the result of bad governance or an emphasis on regime security instead of national security. Buzan also pertinently states that national and international security cannot be reduced to individual security. The pursuit of individual security may also lead to conflict with the state, and individual security may be affected both positively and negatively by the state.[39]

In view of the above it has for instance been suggested that the concept of human security should be more narrowly defined. It should focus on events that transcend state borders regarding their impact on different societies and diverse individuals. Cross-border terrorism, refugees and pollution would then fit this description, as they undermine international peace and security. It may therefore require international intervention. More general human security issues such as basic shelter and food should be viewed as developmental problems.[40]

2. APPLICATION TO AFRICA AND SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 African national security

The following has been stated regarding national security approaches and policies in Africa:[41]

> Currently, it is difficult to determine exactly how most African governments define their security, because most of them do not make their doctrines and calculations public. Instead, it is usually the head of state, the chief of security, army generals, and a small number of fellow officers who make their calculations and take whatever actions they consider necessary. This usually implies a rather narrow definition of security, based on considerations of military defence and regime stability. In addition, a few governments go even further. The readiness of some governments to hastily label any political opponents as 'terrorists', even when they are only advocating legal and non-violent action, suggests that some leaders confuse 'national security' with government survival, or even personal power.

The above implies that the dominant model of national security in Africa

is one defined by the military and security forces, based on immediate military or physical threats to territorial integrity or regime stability. These are obviously seen as being narrow views, not sufficiently taking long-term issues such as poverty and weak governance structures into account. Secrecy about national security contributes to insecurity. There is also often no clear national strategy to promote long-term security.

Threats to African national security, real and potential, are seen to include amongst others:[42]

—   Actual and potential external threats of force projection (invasion).
—   External threats of destabilisation and terrorism.
—   Potential sources of conflict with neighbours such as undemarcated borders, contested natural resource control.
—   Violent crime and banditry associated with proliferation of light weapons.
—   Potential social unrest associated with economic recession.
—   Ethnic, religious and regional cleavages and the incapacity of governance structures to manage disputes peacefully.
—   Insufficiently institutionalised constitutional order.
—   Weak governance institutions and corruption.
—   Mass distress migration due to natural and man-made calamities.
—   HIV/AIDS and its impact on institutions and capacities including security services.

Finally, it is argued that African governments have to prove sceptics wrong who accuse them of defining their national security interests in a short-term military context alone. Transparent and inclusive processes to establish national security doctrines are an essential requirement. The maintenance of some degree of secrecy and of armed forces will remain important in view of on-going armed conflict. However, a balance between meeting immediate needs and addressing long-term strategic priorities has to be found. The development of a clear national security doctrine can become a central foundation for good governance.[43]

To the above it is added that the ultimate aim is common regional security (a security community), and that no internal conflict should be considered purely the domestic concern of a given country.[44]

2.2 The South African situation

2.2.1   *Official views on national security*

The following excerpts from official documents represent some of the more explicit and extensive views on national security in South Africa, although it has been asserted that South Africa has no comprehensive and integrated national security policy and strategy.

(a)   *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*

> **198.** The following principles govern national security in the Republic:
>
> *(a)* National security must reflect the resolve of South Africans, as individuals and as a nation, to live as equals, to live in peace and harmony, to be free from fear and want and to seek a better life.
> *(b)* The resolve to live in peace and harmony precludes any South African citizen from participating in armed conflict, nationally or internationally, except as provided for in terms of the Constitution or national legislation.
> *(c)* National security must be pursued in compliance with the law, including international law.
> *(d)* National security is subject to the authority of Parliament and the national executive.[45]

The *Bill of Rights* in the *Constitution*, again pertains to *inter alia* individual security (human security).

(b)   *White Paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa, 1996*

> In the new South Africa national security is no longer viewed as a predominantly military and police problem. It has been broadened to incorporate political, economic, social and environmental matters. At the heart of this new approach is a paramount concern with the security of people.
> Security is an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the

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process of governance; enjoy the protection of fundamental rights; have access to resources and the basic necessities of life; and inhabit an environment which is not detrimental to their health and well-being.

At national level the objectives of security policy therefore encompass the consolidation of democracy; the achievement of social justice, economic development and a safe environment; and a substantial reduction in the level of crime, violence and political instability. Stability and development are regarded as inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing.

At international level the objectives of security policy include the defence of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the South African state, and the promotion of regional security in Southern Africa.

The Government of National Unity recognises that the greatest threats to the South African people are socio-economic problems like poverty, unemployment, poor education, the lack of housing and the absence of adequate social services, as well as the high level of crime and violence.[46]

(c) *White Paper on Intelligence, 1994*

The maintenance and promotion of national security (i.e. peace, stability, development and progress) should be a primary objective of any government. Since intelligence is an instrument to achieve this goal, the two concepts inevitably represent two sides of the same coin.

...

In recent years, there has been a shift away from a narrow and almost exclusive military-strategic approach to security. Security in the modern idiom should be understood in more comprehensive terms to correspond with new realities since the end of the bipolar Cold War era. These realities include the importance of non-military elements of security, the complex nature of threats to stability and development, and the reality of international interdependence.

...

The broader and modern interpretation of the nature and scope of security leads to the conclusion that security policy must deal effectively with the broader and more complex questions relating to the vulnerability of society. National security

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objectives should therefore encompass the basic principles and core values associated with a better quality of life, freedom, social justice, prosperity and development.

...

The national security doctrine must promote the creation of a societal environment that is free of violence and instability. It must engender, within the context of a transformed judicial system, respect for the rule of law and human life.[47]

It is interesting to note that in the *White Paper on Defence*, threats such as poverty are viewed as threats to the South African people, while national security objectives include a reduction of crime and violence. In a certain interpretation this could be read as some form of distinction between national security issues and individual security issues, although it is stated that "at the heart of this new approach is a paramount concern with the security of people".

In the *National Crime Prevention Strategy* (1996) reference is also made to state security and to national security, which again stops short of labelling crime as a national security issue although it probably is the most serious one currently facing the country.

In this regard, it is imperative to recognise the impact which burgeoning crime rates have in depressing popular confidence in the very process of democratisation in South Africa. As such, crime is sometimes viewed as being a fundamental threat to state security. However, this risks over-stating the problem. Although current crime rates contribute to high levels of popular insecurity and to a loss of stability, it would be wrong to equate the fight against crime with the broader concerns of national security.[48]

2.2.2   Threat perception

The South African Ministry for Intelligence Services released the following national intelligence priorities for 2000:

— Attempts to destabilise the Constitutional Order, Subversion, Sabotage and Terrorism, and in particular urban terrorism;
— Corruption;
— Crime;

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- — Espionage;
- — Poor protective security within the State;
- — Regional Security Dynamics;
- — Continental Stability Issues;
- — International economic and technological threats and opportunities as they relate to South Africa;
- — Ensuring an environment conducive for free and fair local government elections;
- — Extremism and terrorism;
- — Addressing arms smuggling with a special focus on drug dealers;
- — Taxi violence; and
- — Involvement of foreign and South African Security Companies in African conflicts.[49]

Although these do not necessarily all present national security threats and also include some law and order threats, it is interesting to note that the above concentrates on the manifestations of threats and not the causes or potential manifestations or causes (the latter being more distant in time than the former) of threats as is for instance done in the *White Paper on Defence*.

The *National Strategic Intelligence Act, 1994 (Act No 39 of 1994)* also distinguishes between 'national security intelligence' and 'national strategic intelligence', with the former more specifically linked to threats or potential threats to security (the term national security threat is not used here), and the latter referring to estimative intelligence on current and long-term aspects of national security of special concern to strategic decision-making.[50] The functions of the National Intelligence Co-ordinating Committee (NICOC) — including the detection and identification of any threat or potential threat to the national security of South Africa — differ from for instance the function of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) which is stipulated as identifying threats or potential threats, but without specifically referring to national security threats. While NIA is also tasked to identify threats to South Africa and its people, NICOC is tasked with identifying threats to the Republic only, implying that while NIA is not necessarily only focusing on national security threats, NICOC is.[51] It also implies that all threats to the people are not necessarily threats to the state.

As far as the National Security Council (NSC) in South Africa is concerned, it has been stated that most issues that impact on national

interests and security in the broad sense are dealt with on a routine basis by government departments. The "scale and urgency of a matter may, however, elevate its status to a point where an extraordinary response is required". In this regard the main focus areas are expected to be internal stability; disaster relief within South Africa; international obligations; defence of South Africa; and big-event security. The NSC should also prioritise national and foreign security issues for the attention of Cabinet.[52]

Some of the characteristics of issues (critical threats) that require co-ordination at national level through the NSC are as follows:[53]

— High impact on quality of life.
— High impact on South Africa's international standing.
— High impact on South Africa's values and interests.
— The use of threat or force.
— The non-routine nature of the event or issue.
— The urgency of an issue.
— High impact on regional security.

From the above it seems clear that a distinction between 'broader' security issues and national security issues is implied.

3. CONCLUSION

Although national security may have certain generic components for all countries, such as a general desire to protect national sovereignty and territorial integrity, different value systems and perceptions of threats lead to different views on, and approaches to, national security. On some global threats, such as international terrorism, wider agreement is in principle possible. It is especially when government policy itself creates a security threat, that governments are often loathe to label a situation a threat to national security. Often threats to regime security are rendered synonymous with threats to national security. The same applies to a too broad view of 'human security'.

Some of the key concepts in assessing as to whether a threat is indeed a threat to national security, in addition to the criteria set out by Buzan and referred to previously, are the following:

— Is there a threat to state stability (including effective functioning

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of the state), sovereignty or territorial integrity?
— Are any vital national values threatened?
— Are any extraordinary measures required to address the issue?
— Is the threat sporadic or continuous?
— Are there existing wide-spread manifestations, or in the case of a potential threat, some manifestations that have the clearly fore-seeable (not just possible in the vague sense) potential to lead to violence or serious conflict, or an escalation of existing conflict?
— How widespread or localised is the threat?
— To what extent does the threat, or potential threat, involve illegal or unconstitutional activities?
— To what extent does the threat transcend borders, and what type of international reaction does it evoke?

In conclusion, caution against either understating or overstating threats to national security has to be expressed. The point is that security has to be defined in a competitive environment, and hence not all threats are national security threats.

Defining national security too broadly or too narrowly can respect-ively create a waste of resources and aggressive policies, and a failure to prepare for major threats. Weak states tend to more readily view threats as national security threats, especially when they seem to have implications for regime security.[54]

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