

## Trade Union in the Sandf: The Inevitable Consequence of Incompatible Values

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### Abstract

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has recently been plagued by incessant clashes between organisational political leadership and trade unions. The culminating point was the memorable march to Union Building that led to physical clashes between the police and unionised soldiers. That incident created a disparaging image of the military as the protector of the society. The situation necessitated a poignant question to be asked about the causes of that scene and the reasons for the existence of military trade unions (MTUs) in the SANDF. Generally, the underlying cause of unionization in organisations is the dissatisfaction with human resources management practices and the unresponsive leadership. In the SANDF the dissatisfaction is rooted in dichotomous values harboured by soldiers and their leaders. The political leaders expect and demand professional orientation while soldiers ascribe to occupational orientation. This mismatch of values led to perceptions of violation of psychological contract. Due to the power dynamics characterising every employment relationship, employees have a low bargaining power hence join trade unions to help convey their discontent. This decision was unwelcome by organisational political leadership, with resultant focus on fighting unions rather than solving issues affecting soldiers. The protracted differences have been characterised by interminable court cases and clashes between leadership and MTUs. This paper will theoretically discuss the causes of inevitable different values between leadership and soldiers, the perceptions of violation of psychological contract and the sequence of requirements that need to be met before unionization can occur in the military. Lastly, conclusions and recommendations will be suggested that can help to diffuse the adversarial relationship between MTUs and organisational leadership and lead to the desired professional military.

**Keywords:** Military trade unions; South Africa; Values

### Introduction

Moskos' seminal work lamented the erosion of values in the military from institutionalism to occupationalism. The symptoms of these changes are visible in the SANDF in a form of the strengthening orientation towards unionisation and the associated clashes between MTUs and organisational leadership. These clashes are inevitable since the military leaders correctly represent the interests of the organisation and the country while the MTUs represent the interests intended to benefit the soldiers. Furthermore, the inclusion of members from the sector of the society conversant with the utility of unions makes it an automatic expectation that if the working conditions are not satisfactory, they will invoke the services of MTUs.

In South Africa, this topic does not lend itself to be approached differently rather than a labour relations issue. Firstly, most soldiers do not join the military as a calling to serve their country, but to have jobs that can pay for their livelihoods [1]. Furthermore, the post-1994 politicians succinctly expressed their intention to use the military as a job creation institution. This decision was followed by the promulgation of Military Skills Development Act that aimed to employ soldiers for a period of two years, imparting transferable skills that can be used elsewhere afterwards. This program was followed by the National Youth Development Program that also targets disenfranchised youth and provide them with transferable skills in the military. Both these developments highlight the role accorded the SANDF by the current government, which is not inherently bad considering the skills shortage in the country. One of the unintended consequences of these developments is that soldiers also understand their profession as just another occupation, hence expects treatment and benefits similar to those accruing to their counterparts in other occupations. Accordingly, when the conditions of employment are not satisfactory to soldiers they are likely to voice their discontent through

unions since withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover will have dire consequences.

However, this extreme pro-union proclivity threatens to erode the respect and the aura of the profession. The effects will be more pronounced in the society that traditionally used to admire the military profession. However, the approach used by the political leadership does not ameliorate the situation. The open despise and confrontational approach often used by management hinder the possibility of a dialogue that can diffuse the impasse. More often, the leadership focus on fighting MTUs instead of eradicating the need for joining them. The unitary approach desired by leadership can only be achieved through sensitivity to the needs of soldiers and proactively meeting them. This discord between the organisational leadership and the MTUs has the potential to threaten performance, resulting in dire consequences. For example, the summary dismissal (turned into suspension) of soldiers who are alleged to have participated in the 2009 Union Building march deprives the organisation of the manpower needed to perform duties. This study will explore the values held by leadership in contrast to those of soldiers, the impact of a mismatch, consequences of mismatch and the requirements to be met before unions can be regarded as a viable alternative. Lastly, recommendations will be made to meet the needs of both parties without compromising the safety of the citizens.

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Received January 30, 2012; Accepted April 09, 2012; Published April 25, 2012

Citation: Kgosana MC (2012) Trade Union in the Sandf: The Inevitable Consequence of Incompatible Values. J Def Manag 2:106. doi:10.4172/2167-0374.1000106

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## Values of Military Leadership

Values refer to basic principles and tenets that guide a person's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours [2]. These values affect the pattern of decisions made by leaders. Ostensibly, military leaders should have values oriented towards military professionalism. Military professionalism is defined as an individual's fundamental motives for serving and reflects the degree of alignment or fit between an individual's values and the values projected by the organisation [3]. Samuel Huntington in his seminal work identified three elements that characterise a profession: expertise, corporateness and responsibility. *Expertise* entails specialised skill, education and training. *Corporateness* stems from shared use of a specialized skill and an interest in maintaining high standards in the application of the skill. *Responsibility* entails a set of values and an ethical code of conduct [4]. Charles Moskos similarly introduced the institutional/occupational (I/O) paradigm as a framework to describe values harboured by soldiers. Using that framework, institutionalism shares the same characteristics with professionalism.

An institutional approach is based on values and norms. Soldiers ascribing to this approach understand military service much like a religious calling [5]. They serve essentially for reasons of 'service' and patriotism [3]. Challenges such as long working hours, separation from families and extended training periods are ameliorated by a strong sense of individual commitment [6]. Studies indicate that soldiers ascribing to institutionalism are highly committed and deliver high levels of performance in operations [5,6]. The role of providing security to society makes it reasonable for leadership to expect professionalism from soldiers and subjugation of their individual interests [4].

The SANDF leadership also ascribe to this approach. The former chief of the SA Army (Lt Gen Pretorius) succinctly argued that the nature of the military profession necessitates members to subjugate their interests to the greater good of protecting the sovereignty of the country. He added that if the SANDF fail to do so they cannot claim to be military professionals. He also extended the expectation to the civilians working in the military arguing that they are all rendering essential services and therefore even if they retain the right to join the unions, they have given up their right to strike [7]. This stance highlights a general fear from military leadership that occupational orientation will ignore intangibles such as morale, cohesion and obedience of leadership [4]. Such leaders perceive occupational orientations in the military to be the 'taproot' of military disintegration [5].

## Values Harboured by Subordinates in Contrast to that of Military Leadership

In contrast to values held by leaders, contemporary militaries are staffed with soldiers with occupational oriented individuals motivated by marketplace incentives. Soldiers ascribing to this approach understand military service much like a civilian job [6]. The service is seen as ordinary work with established times, tasks and locations. Work beyond normal hours is expected to be compensated *quid pro quo*. Incentives to work and remain in the organisation are extrinsic, such as compensatory time off, increased salaries and promotions [6]. They have intensive interests in compensation and working conditions and determine their value in terms of skill in their specialty. They identify more with similar specialists outside the employing organisation than with the interests of the organisation [5].

The 1994 first democratic elections necessitated transformation to occur on all level of the society. This transformation emanates from

strategic context and the domestic social structure and affects the attitude and values of soldiers [8]. Moskos argued that the policies and actions of the organisations influence the attitudes and values of its members. The advent of an all-volunteer force saw the military moving away from the institutional to occupational orientation [3]. Occupationalism plaguing the militaries is also attributed to modern materialistic society, which requires tangible evidence of success [5]. During recruitment drives, the military service is accordingly presented as an attractive profession that offer opportunities for professional qualification and personal promotion [8]. This is also aggravated by the adoption of a market-oriented approach to the management of the workforce, including widespread downsizing, restructuring and a reliance on retention bonuses and other economic incentives to persuade members to serve [3]. Jans and Frazer-Janz (2009) argued that it will be illogical to expect the contemporary military to be indifferent to conditions of employment, irrespective of the level of professional identification.

Shields found that most soldiers from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces also ascribed to occupational orientation. The study of US reserves found that soldiers with such inclination tend to judge the military service in terms of its benefits-salaries and pensions. The more the military service offers optimum benefits than other organisations, the more likely the soldier will remain [9]. The studies found that, most SA soldiers also share the same values. In the South African Military Academy, Kotze and Duvenhage found a greater shift in values away from institutionalism towards occupationalism. This shift was demonstrated by the South African National Defence Union chairpersons' complaint that soldiers work approximately 72 hours overtime per week and need to be compensated accordingly [10]. Currently, there is a policy for committed overtime payment in the SANDF. Despite these changes, Minister Sisulu was at pains to explain that the relationship between members of the defence force and the SANDF differed from the normal employer/employee relationship [11].

The institutionalization that used to be reinforced through annual exercised has ceased. This decision emanates from the argument that the exercises are far too costly and those resources should rather be used for social developmental purposes. Consequently, soldiers tend to perceive themselves as just other employees who deserve to be remunerated for very effort put in the organization [12]. The constellations of these factors detract from one of the dimensions of a profession as highlighted by Moskos, utility.

In line with the afore-mentioned, it is rather difficult for soldiers to attempt to satisfy higher order needs such as recognition and prestige while their basic bread and butter issues are not satisfied. The SA Interim Commission highlighted the plight of soldiers, who as a result of their insufficient salaries cannot afford low-cost housing and transport to go to work, resulting in unorthodox methods being used such as avoiding train inspectors and hitch-hiking. This prompted the former Deputy Minister of Defence, George as early as 2008 to urge military drivers to assist soldiers on the roads even if they not included in trip authority.

## Psychological Contract Violations

The above situation suggests that there are irreconcilable differences between the organisational expectations and employees' expectations. These incompatibilities emanate from incompatible values and can

lead to perceptions of psychological contract violations. Psychological contract represents a set of unwritten mutual expectations - what the employee expects to give and receive and what the organisation expects to receive and get from the employee [13]. Psychological contract violations occur when an employee perceives that the organisation has failed to fulfil one or more of its obligations comprising the psychological contract. Conceptually, there are two basic causes of psychological contract violations: renegeing and incongruence. Renegeing occurs when the organisation knowingly breaks a promise to the employee, either on purpose or because of unforeseen circumstances. On the other hand, incongruence occurs when the employee and the organisation have different understandings regarding what the employee has been promised. If violations emanate from incongruence like the current perceptions of unionised SANDF soldiers, organisational leaders tend to believe they have lived up to expectations while employees feel that the organisation has failed to keep its promise [14]. The perception of breach of contract is often followed by consequences that affect the functioning of the organisation.

### Consequences of Psychological Contract Violation

One of the results of perceived breach of psychological contract includes a decline in satisfaction [15]. According to progression theory, the response to dissatisfaction differs in intensity and employees progress from less to more intense responses as dissatisfaction persists or intensifies. For example, an employee may initially react to dissatisfaction with increased absence and later quit the job [16]. However, certain options are not viable for some employees. Factors that determine the alternatives the employee is likely to take include; the level of job satisfaction prior to a problem, the magnitude of investment in a job and the quality of job alternatives [16].

For example, when employees have a low latitude and freedom in their behaviour, they are more likely to leave the aversive situation. In contrast, in cases where they feel they have overinvested in the organisation, they may engage in lax and negligent behaviour. In cases where an employee cannot exit the organisation or decrease their contribution without fear of retribution, like in the military, employees may engage in expressive behaviour to get their concerns addressed by the supervisors and higher level manager [14].

### General Soldiers' Responses to Dissatisfactory Conditions of Employment

Rusbolt et al. [16] model holds that as a result of an intensified level of dissatisfaction, employees may choose to exit the organisation, voice their dissatisfaction, remain loyal or be negligent in their duties. *Exit* refers to leaving the organisation by quitting or taking a transfer [16]. It is a painful decision and requires considerable efforts by the employee and the conviction that the situation is not going to improve [17]. In SA, most soldiers are from the lower strata of the society characterised by poverty and poor education thereby making exit a less viable option [18]. *Loyalty* entails passively but optimistically waiting for conditions to improve. The soldiers in the SANDF have been passively raising their discontent and their subsequent desire to unionise since in the early 90s [19]. *Neglect* encompasses passively allowing conditions to deteriorate through reduced efforts, chronic lateness or absences [16]. Neglect is also not viable due to the military's strict disciplinary procedures likely to be invoked for poor performance [7].

The unsuitability of the afore-mentioned options necessitated the soldiers to seek alternative ways of expressing dissatisfaction.

Consequently, voice appears to be a viable option for dissatisfied soldiers. Voice is defined as any attempt at all to change rather than to escape from an objectionable state of affairs [17]. It entails actively and constructively trying to improve the conditions through discussing problems with a supervisor or coworkers, suggesting solutions and seeking assistance from external agencies such as trade unions [14]. However, before unionisation can occur in the military, certain requirements need to be met. There must be a motive to unionise, a mood to unionise and an opportunity to unionise [20].

### The Motive to Unionise

Most studies into reasons why workers join unions conclude that instrumental attitudes to unionization prevail over moral and political commitment. Workers' actions are focused on bread and butter issues and the contents of their pay packets [21,22]. However, their bargaining power as individuals tend to be limited [23]. This necessitates the invocation of the collective principle. Without trade union, individual workers are weak and cannot negotiate successfully for better wages with a powerful employer. The union gives them the strengths and confidence and allows them to confront and negotiate with management on an equal power basis [24]. In the study conducted in South Africa, more than 60% of employees indicated that the main reason for their union membership was to improve wages and working conditions [21].

Similar reasons as those highlighted above have contributed to membership of military trade unions in South Africa [1]. The feeling of neglect by soldiers leads to perceptions of the need for a structure that is capable of representing their interests [25]. The unions then use the perceptions of soldiers' inadequacy to recruit and flourish [26]. The MTU, South African National Defence Union in particular has seen numerous successes in championing the interests of the soldiers, such as the rebuttal of arbitrary suspension of soldiers, the reinstatement of unfairly dismissed soldiers and the call for other benefits such as overtime payment and the improvement of soldiers salaries [11]. However, the desire of political leadership to eradicate the unions threatens one of the efficacious tools that soldiers had to express their challenges [27].

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed an increase in military unionism in many parts of the world. Even in the UK which is often believed to be conservative and unions are traditionally seen as taboos, the British Armed Forces Federation (BAFF) has of late been established [26]. These developments can be partially attributed to the British Ministry of Defense's intention to retrench 16,500 soldiers, including those seriously injured in operations [28]. Furthermore, soldiers' living conditions have recently been reported to have deteriorated significantly, while the grievance procedure has also proved to be unresponsive and unreliable [29]. The reported harassment and discrimination cases were still not attended to four years later, reinforcing perceptions of inefficiency of the chain of command [30]. Consequently, Fox (2002) found that approximately 77% of the British soldiers want a representative organisation.

In the US Army, the general concern over a perceived erosion of fringe benefits led to contemplations of the formation of unions. The study conducted in the US combat forces found that roughly one-third of the sample reported that they would join a military union and support was the highest among junior personnel [31]. In Russia, the perceived lack of an organ to look after the interest of the military prompted



the soldiers to seek to establish unions [32]. To highlight their plight, the Muscovites, supported by their colleagues from the northern and pacific Fleets of the Russian Navy, participated in a strike in Murmansk to express their discontent [33]. Although there was reluctance from the officer corps to join the protest which was prohibited by legislation, they completely supported the grievances and were even prepared to word them [33]. The Association of Russian Trade Union of the sectors of the defence industry called on the organisation to make urgent measures to improve the situation of the soldiers [34].

In SA the prestige and respect that used to accompany the profession have ceased to exist. Before the democratic dispensation in the country, the military used to hold a special place in the society (especially in white communities) and the government of the day [19]. However, the post-1994 soldiers find themselves in a different profession than their predecessors. The profession is disrespected by both politicians and the society. It is not unusual for some parliamentarians to question the utility of upgrading the military hardware, let alone the need for the organisation. These questions persist despite the volatility of the region in which the country is situated. SA is surrounded by the failed and failing states necessitating military security to be one of the priorities. The arbitrary suspension of union members who participated in 2009 Union Building march which is against the laws of the country further highlights the status of the military in the country [35].

Since 1994 the SANDF experienced budget cuts that affected all its facets, including living standards. This spilled over to the soldiers' basic needs. In 2009, some lowest ranks in the SANDF earned a basic salary of R 3000.00 per month [36]. Consequently, some soldiers live in informal settlements due to affordability [37]. In addition, integration was followed by the ostensible need for downsizing which eroded job security of the soldiers [7]. For example, in October 2001 there was a plan to reduce 10,000 members [10]. In March 2008 there were approximately 4000 grievance cases that were unresolved, with some of them dating back three years [38]. In addition, soldiers do not get 'usual' perks (like discount in public transport) afforded to other members in the security sector like the police service [18]. These factors contributed to a belief that the political leadership failed the soldiers and cannot be relied upon to address the soldier's needs [39]. The joint committees on Defence acknowledged in 2001 that there are serious human resource management problems that need immediate attention. The underlying cause of the historic protest action at the Union Building in 2009 was also attributed to dissatisfaction with the remuneration and conditions of service members of the SANDF [11,37].

### The Mood to Unionise

A reason to unionise alone is not enough; it should be supported by the mood to unionize. Similar to other organisations, the mood to organise is generated by perceptions of individual deprivation which becomes concerted into a sense of collective deprivation [40]. Studies of collective bargaining found that unionised employees express greater dissatisfaction with their jobs than their counterparts [41]. However, unlike their counterparts, union members tend to remain in their organisations and express their complaints through voice mechanisms provided by their union [42]. The mood is usually elevated by negative industrial relations regimes characterised by indifferent leaders that frustrate subordinates [43].

The disparaging living conditions in which SANDF soldiers find themselves led to a low morale, that served as a rallying point for

collective identity of those affected [37]. This was aggravated by the 'unresponsive' leadership [12]. Proponents of unionisation argue that the presence of unions provide a platform for soldiers to voice their dissatisfaction [43]. Unionisation appeared to be a panacea especially due to exposure of soldiers from designated groups' to the utility of unions [1]. The integration of statutory and non-statutory forces to form SANDF, saw the change of demographic composition from 33.6 percent black in 1981 to more than 50% in the early 1990s. These new entrants were well inclined to the benefits of unionism [44]. Trade unions played a central role in popular emancipatory projects which challenged poverty and the institutional mechanisms intended to sustain it [25].

### The Opportunity to Unionise

Despite the presence of the mood and the motive to unionize, there also need to be an opportunity to unionise. The opportunity does not only relate to possible legal constraints, but the chances that it will be accepted within the social and political environment [40]. In SA, the open disdain towards MTUs expressed by military leadership created sympathy from certain quarters of the society. The MTUs are supported by a certain segment of the society such as Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) which was willing to challenge the minister's decision to scrap MTUs in court [19]. Furthermore, other organisations in the security cluster, like correctional services and police services, also sympathized with the military, creating a fertile ground for unionisation to occur.

From the legal point of view, the provisions of the SA Constitution that provide certain rights to all citizens-including the military create an opportunity for soldiers to unionize [45]. Like its counterparts in countries such as Portugal [8], Sec 23 of the South African Constitution provides that everyone has the right to fair labour practices, every worker has the right to form and join a trade union and to participate in the activities of the union [35]. However Sec 126B of the Defence Act 44 of 1957 prohibited military personnel from joining or forming the union [26]. On 26 May 1999 the Constitutional Court of South Africa ruled in favour of members who wanted to form a union, thereby granting them labour rights to form and join MTUs, to participate in activities, to engage in collective bargaining and to enjoy fair labour practices. This led to the existence of two MTUs, South African National Defence Union (SANDU) and the South African Security Forces Union (SASFU) [44].

The existence of MTUs is however limited. The scope of Sec 6, 7 and 8 of the Labour Rights of the South African National Defence Force provides that no member of the SANDF is allowed to partake in a strike, secondary strike or incite other members to strike or support or to participate in a secondary strike. No member is further allowed to participate in peaceful and unarmed assembly, demonstration, picket and petition in support of a strike or secondary strike if it relates to the defence matters. Members are however allowed the right to peaceful and unarmed assembly provided this right shall not be exercised while in uniform or displaying military insignia [44]. Furthermore, MTUs are not allowed to affiliate to any political party or labour organisation [35]. In addition, there is a prohibition to any industrial action that can threaten security or disrupt military operations [19].

### The Military Leadership Position

The military as an employer is typically characterised by leaders who in accordance with their professional responsibility, prefer a

unitarist approach to labour relations. This approach is based on the premise that there is no conflict of interest between the employer and the employee and that the involvement of trade unions will only disrupt the functioning of the organisation [1]. A MTU is viewed as an aberrant, incongruent with the unique nature of the military profession as characterised by order and obedience [19].

There is also a general fear among military leaders that the loyalty of soldiers will be divided between the union and the military organisation, with unions forming parallel organisation with the military [1]. It is argued that this situation will threaten cohesion and ultimate combat readiness [1]. This situation is believed to have the capability to compromise operational efficiency. As one Battalion commander mused 'it is not good if the soldier decides not to attack something until he has checked with the shop steward' [29].

In SA, the military leadership's discomfort was visible even before the democratic dispensation in 1994. The leadership of the SANDF's predecessor, the South African Defence Force, after being fully aware of the pending desire to unionise, ratified section 126 of the Defence Act, 44 of 1957 in September 1993 to prohibit soldiers from joining MTUs [26]. Pretorius [7] (1995), the then Chief of the Army, argued that the presence of unions is going to inhibit the military to perform its primary and secondary tasks. This stance was also shared by political leaders. For example, in 2000, the former Minister of Defence, Mosiua Lekota terminated the bargaining process with the MTUs, purporting that the court ruling did not compel him to bargain with unions. His successor, Lindiwe Sisulu also followed a similar line of reasoning, arguing that the Constitutional Court ruling did not state that there shall be unions but that 'there has to be mechanisms put in place to allow the SANDF members their right'. The unmasking of the obfuscating language indicates unbridled dislike for unions [35,38].

Despite the Constitutional Court decision that ruled against the prohibition of MTUs, the leadership was not amenable to unions. The union leadership was treated by the military leadership with open disdain and dismay [39]. In 2009, the leadership of the SANDF arranged for the withdrawal of permission for the planned march to the Union Buildings just a few hours before it was scheduled to start [11]. The protest march was also coined 'a strike' by soldiers disobeying orders and walking off the job whereas in fact, most of the soldiers have been granted leave to participate in the protest and approval had been granted by the Tshwane Metro Council for the march to proceed [46]. The Minister also dismissed the union members who participated in the march and were visible on the police footage [11]. Minister Sisulu argued that MTUs are a security threat and union leadership encourages lawlessness and chaos. She vowed to de-unionise the SANDF by the end of 2011 [47]. In 11 March 2011, the SANDF experienced a brief victory when SASFU was deregistered by the Department of labour [48]. A month later, in April, the court ruled against the stopping of SASFU's status as a union and its complimentary rights [12].

### The envisaged way forward

The SANDF leadership will like to have MTUs scrapped [35]. Boshoff and Heineken [26] (2009) postulate that the argument by the Minister and the Umkhonto we Sizwe and Azanian People's Liberation Army Veterans that posits that labour law is not applicable to the police and soldiers is found to be incorrect and in contradiction with the principles of the SA Constitution. This approach prompted Greeff (national secretary of SANDU) to challenge the Minister to come up with the intended legal way of eradicating unions [47]. Mvovo [12]

(2011) added that the Minister was making a joke. In an attempt to achieve this goal, the Defence Amendment Bill was tabled to restrict, if not completely nullify MTUs.

The implication is that if the bill is passed, it will render MTUs powerless and irrelevant. The Bill will scrap Military Bargaining Councils where salaries and benefits are currently negotiated between unions and the Department of Defence. Instead, the Bill will create a Defence Force Service Commission which will make recommendations on salaries and benefits [35]. This decision is not without hurdles. Firstly, it appears to be squarely focused on emasculating MTUs, not solving the issues that led to the perceived need for trade unions. The preconditions for military unionisation will still be there. This implies that the soldiers will continue to regard MTUs as useful tools for articulating their challenges. In sum, this will mean that MTUs are still going to be part of the architecture of the military labour relations.

Secondly, this move will be in conflict with Sec 23 of the SA Constitution which permits all citizens, by implication-including soldiers to form and join the trade unions. The incongruence between the proposed Bill and the SA Constitution will provide ground for legal challenges, with argument against the constitutionality of such an Act (one it has been passed). Ultimately, this may necessitate the amendment of the Constitution to exclude soldiers from the ambit of Sec 23. The almost two-third majority of the ruling party may see the Constitutional amendments passed. However, the rules restricting union membership is not going to translate into efficient internal mechanisms for solving soldiers' grievances. This can only result in even more disgruntled soldiers, with no platform to vent their challenges.

### Conclusions

It is unequivocal that there are incongruent expectations between the SANDF leadership and the expectations of the soldiers. The leaders of the SANDF want a professional military that is intrinsically motivated, treating the profession as a calling. These expectations exist in the era of all volunteer force characterised by the financial incentives and other enticements intended to attract and retain soldiers.

In contrast, the SANDF is staffed with soldiers with a mainly occupationist orientation who regards the military career as just another job. They are more attuned and interested in benefits and other incentives that accompany their employment. For their efforts, they expect material reciprocation. Most of them chose the military career as the best option or the only available career option for them. Such soldiers are sensitive to conditions of employment and since most of them have fewer options when their career needs are not met, they are likely to experience the violation of psychological contract and accompanying dissatisfaction.

In the SANDF, the most poignant issues are human resources management challenges that determine the career outcomes of soldiers. These challenges are aggravated by an unresponsive leadership that is indifferent to the dissatisfaction arising from organisational practices. Consequently, in some instances, the legitimacy and capabilities of leadership are in question. The dissatisfaction with conditions of employment and the lack of cooperation provided a reason for soldiers to seek an alternative channel that can be used to express dissatisfaction and assist in solving the relentless challenges.

The route taken by the soldiers is the most suitable for them to achieve their goals. From internal, the organisation gave the soldiers the motive to unionise, added the mood by not responding to the situation. The

indifferent attitude created an opportunity to organise by generating sympathizers from various quarters of the society. This sympathy was supported by the country's liberal constitution that extends the right to form and join unions to all employees, including soldiers. The MTUs capitalized on the administrative flaws in the management of human resources and the accompanying uncompromising leadership that display disdain for unions. This unbridled dislike for unions gave the MTUs an edge that they use to prove their utility.

The unions are neither inherently good nor unredeemably tarnished. In line with the old labour relations adage 'every organisation gets the union it deserves', the tenacious dislike of unions distract the focus of the leaders from the challenges facing the organisation. Instead of focusing on and solving pertinent issues affecting the combat readiness and efficiency in the organisation, the leadership is focused on uprooting the unions. Consequently, the perpetual existence of the challenges in the organisation and the unions' seeming instrumentality in solving them gives legitimacy to MTUs. Despite their own shortfalls and differences, MTUs appear to be making strides in representing employees and trying to serve as a pressure group responsive to soldiers needs.

## Recommendations

The demand of organisational leadership for a professional military is understandable and a necessity. This is especially true due to the nature of the profession and the task endowed on the SANDF in the continent. However, the deterministic nature of environmental factors has far-reaching implications necessitating leadership to evaluate its stance. The advent of the all-volunteer force made it ostensible that the values and priorities of the soldiers will vary significantly from what the organisational leadership expects.

- It is recommended that the organisational leadership must focus on the causes of unionization in the military. It is not the lack of civic education that drove soldiers to unionize and march to Union Buildings as suggested by some parliamentarians.
- The identification of the causes will need to be supplemented with responsive leadership that is attuned to the needs of soldiers. The reminder to commanders about their most important resource as soldiers will help alleviate most of the challenges plaguing the organisation.
- The immutable chain of command needs to be seen to be approachable and supportive. Leadership by fear and intimidation deprive the organisation benefits of human capital.
- The adversarial labour relations that exists in the organisation needs to be changed.
- There is a need to accurately describe challenges and refrain from using ambiguous concepts like discipline when soldiers express discontent.
- The organisational culture needs to be accommodating to subordinates when they have differences with their leaders.
- The continued union membership should be used as a barometer to indicate the extent to which the organisation is succeeding in addressing the soldiers' needs.
- The leadership may reconsider a flexible approach intended to reconcile the values of the labour force and those held by

leadership without compromising the ability of the military to perform its duties. It is the reality that confronts the leadership that the values of the subordinates are different from theirs and what is expected of them. This can be attributed to changes in the entire society, as characterised by materialism and the need to demonstrate career success through tangible symbols. A reconciliatory approach will be helpful to align the interests of the organisation to those of soldiers.

- Since the push factors leading to union membership are often human resources related, there is a need for vigorous overhaul of the department. For example, the recent performance appraisal systems are not suitable for most job categories. The courses acceptance procedures need to be attended to. Promotions need to be based on merits (not forgetting the national imperatives). Only people with potential should be promoted.

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