



THE USE OF POLITICAL OVERSIGHT OVER MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS IN A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

Parliaments are important institutions for oversight in the context of R2P and SDG16:

- It is an institution of accountability – ensuring the military remains accountable to civilian leaders.
- It promotes transparency.
- It can contribute to R2P through (1) acting against the abuse of power, and (2) enabling proper and capable deployments.

How to review parliamentary oversight?

- Authority (Legislative mandate).
- Ability (Financial, technical and human resources to conduct oversight).
- Attitude (Sufficient will and motivation to conduct oversight).

Scope

- The SA Parliament: Ability for oversight?
- The use of deployment oversight tools.
- Stakeholder views.
- External perceptions (Social media landscape analysis by MurMur intelligence).
- Conclusion.

DEFENCE OVERSIGHT: ABILITY

Ability to conduct oversight of R2P deployments:

- Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans (PCDMV).
- Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD).

Means of conducting oversight of deployments:

- Parliamentary debates.
- Parliamentary questions.
- Special defence inquiries (*not utilised*).
- Oversight visits.

Context when reviewing defence oversight:

- After 1994, significant interest in defence and a high level of parliamentary oversight.
- From 1998 to 2013, data shows a decrease in total defence oversight activity .
- 2015 Defence Review shifted somewhat from previous policies on likely deployment scenarios, specifically domestic deployments – therefore track deployment oversight after 2015.

DEPLOYMENT DEBATES

Committee debates:

- JSCD considers Presidential letters of deployment (domestic and international).
 - 22 Domestic deployment letters.
 - 24 International deployment letters.
- Shift from 5th Parliament to 6th Parliament:
 - More immediate consideration of letters; more letters considered.
 - More detailed deployment briefings held.
 - Briefings more publicly accessible.
 - Debates on capable R2P deployments and cases of abuse of power.

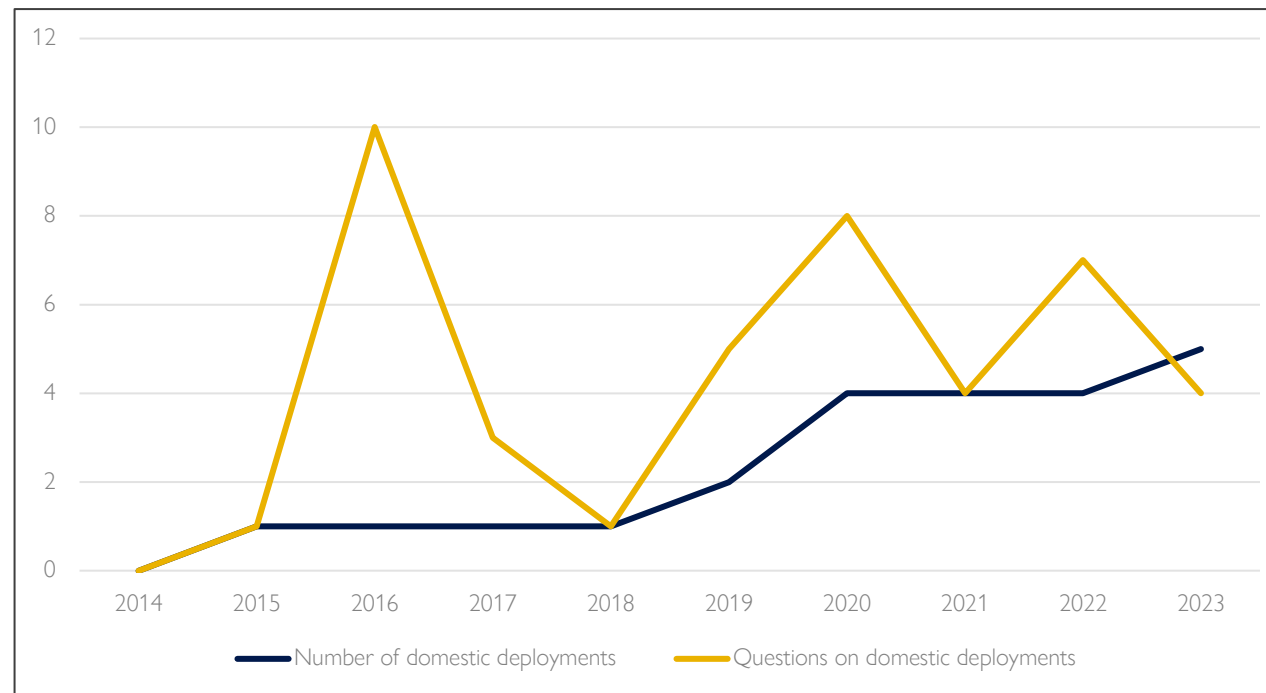
House debates:

- Despite increased committee debates in 6th Parliament, no real elevation to the level of House debates.
- 6th Parliament's JSCD called for House debates.
- Mostly procedural debates, but:
 - Additional NCOP debates scheduled on SANDF Cape Flats deployment in 2019; Border safeguarding in 2022.
 - Matters of SEA cases in the DRC formed part of NA debates, e.g. Budget debate.

DEPLOYMENT QUESTIONS (I)

Questions on domestic deployments:

- Oral questions: 48 of 193 related to domestic deployments (balanced between ANC and opposition).
- Written questions: 43 of 621 related to domestic deployments (largely opposition).
- Deductions:
 - Questions increased as domestic deployments increased.
 - Many written questions unanswered (12/43).
 - Border safeguarding predominant.



DEPLOYMENT QUESTIONS (I)

Questions on international deployments:

- Oral questions: 10 of 193 related to international deployments (balanced between ANC and opposition).
- Written questions: 9 of 621 related to international deployments (mostly opposition 8/9).
- Deductions:
 - International deployments not prioritised in questions.
 - Balanced approach - Focus on SEA cases, funding and force capabilities.

DEPLOYMENT VISITS

Visits to domestic deployments:

- 3 visits, only during the 6th Parliament:
 - 2019 SANDF Western Cape deployments.
 - 2020 Border safeguarding deployments.
 - 2021 KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng following unrest.

Visits to international deployments:

- 2018 visit to SANDF in the DRC as part of MONUSCO.

Deductions:

- Improvement in the 6th Parliament.
- Non-utilisation of sub-committees for international visits.
- MPs find oversight visits one of the most useful oversight tools.

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

Views on the use of the SANDF and associated risks:

- Responses varied on domestic deployments.
- Consensus on the need for border deployments.
- Distinction between risks in international and domestic deployments:
 - *Domestic:* SANDF not trained for domestic roles; abuse of power possible; society becomes accustomed to SANDF deployments – impact on perception.
 - *International:* Abuse of power; impact of poorly funded and equipped SANDF on R2P missions.

Perceptions on parliamentary oversight of SANDF deployments:

- MPs view Parliament's oversight role as purely reactive – need for ex ante involvement.
- Need for more information – may require closed meetings.
- Focus on the need for oversight visits.
- Questions on the effectiveness of the Ombud.

Oversight of deployments in the 6th Parliament:

- Consensus of improvement during 6th Parliament.
- Impact of Covid-19 on oversight.
- Require more engagement with external stakeholders.
- More information from SANDF needed – executive dominance.

EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS

- Societal views on governance structures as measured by Afrobarometer and the Mo Ibrahim Index, reflecting a drop in trust in these structures since 2006.
- To gain further insight, SIGLA requested a social-media landscape analysis to track societal views on the SANDF, R2P deployments and the role of parliament (MurMur Intelligence).

SYNOPSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Key deductions from social media landscape analysis

On international deployments:

- Inclusion of SANDF in international discussions means SANDF still viewed as a foreign policy tool.
- Limited focus on SANDF's active international deployments (poor communication).
- Lack of discussion on SANDF's R2P roles and SDG16.

On domestic deployments:

- Dominant discussions: Crime, policing, border safeguarding and the SANDF's deployments to ensure domestic stability (such as those to protect Eskom infrastructure, address illegal mining and assist the SAPS with combatting crime in the Western Cape) - Links to the expanded concept of R2P with a domestic focus.
- Societal desire for the military to play an increasing role is apparent.
- Some questioning SANDF capabilities – negative perception.

On Parliament:

- SANDF/Parliament discussed in the context of crime, SAPS and immigration.
- Discussions politicised and driven by political figures/political parties.
- Perception more negative when Parliament included.

CONCLUSION

- Trajectory of deployment oversight since the late 1990's was generally negative, but significant improvement visible in the 6th Parliament. E.g. more positive use of oversight tools (questions and debates).
- Scope for growth - Special inquiries, visits to deployment areas and House debates.

Oversight needs impact!

- Oversight still lacking depth (visible in: Consequence management on SEA and deployment capabilities).
- MPs generally felt disenfranchised in their ex-post oversight mandate - executive dominance.
- Debate on deployments not elevated to a higher level – No critical debate around R2P and SDG16.
- Better communication of oversight activities to public required from Parliament.
- In the context of rising domestic deployments, oversight will be key; therefore...

Going forward:

Authority 

Ability 

Attitude 



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THANK YOU

