Chapter Four

Namibia’s Experience of DDRRR

4.1 Introduction

Namibia experienced DDRRR\(^{414}\) in a UN peace operations context at the end of the Cold War. This followed extended involvement by the UN (preceded by the League of Nations) and a prolonged anti-colonial struggle dating back to the 1960s. The New York Accords of 22 December 1988 facilitated the implementation of Namibia’s (formerly South West Africa) independence plan as outlined under UN Security Council Resolution 435(1978).\(^{415}\) UN Resolution 435 provided for the establishment of the multidimensional UN Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG).

UNTAG was essentially a political and policing operation tasked with creating and managing conditions for Namibia’s democratic transition to independence. Central components of the plan included the disarmament and demobilization of South Africa’s colonial forces and liberation forces as well as the UNHCR voluntary repatriation operation. This meant that UNTAG provided the institutional framework for

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\(^{414}\) UNTAG’s mandate specifically covered disarmament, demobilization and repatriation. In this study these are grouped under the broader DDRRR terminology.

disarmament and demobilization of armed formations.

The UNHCR operated under UNTAG’s overall mandate and dealt with the repatriation of refugees. This aimed at facilitating the participation of willing and eligible voters in Namibia’s independence elections. UNTAG also dealt with the maintenance of law and order, humanitarian assistance, creation of a fair legal apparatus, and ultimately the preparation and actual conduct of elections. UNTAG’s task was formidable as Namibia, with its prolonged history of discrimination, lacked any semblance of democratic structures.

The UN’s comprehensive involvement in Namibia’s transition meant that the country’s DDRRRR assumed international significance:

Every step was followed with the closest attention, not only by the people of Namibia themselves but by the members of the Security Council, who had set the process in motion, by the international community at large, by the media and by a multitude of non-governmental organizations.416

Following UNTAG’s exit the independent Namibian government had to implement the reintegration of the demobilized combatants. This was linked to the establishment of a new and professional military force that was carried out with Kenyan and British assistance. The government, however, did not formulate and implement comprehensive and effective reintegration programmes for the demobilized combatants and returnees.

This chapter examines how the UN carried out aspects of DDRRR and the outcome. In the first of six sections it gives a historical background to the establishment of UNTAG. Here, elements of Namibia’s colonial history and anti-colonial struggle germane to the country’s DDRRR process are identified. Then follows an assessment of UNTAG’s institutional framework for managing aspects of Namibia’s DDRRR process. The chapter finds out that despite its complicated start, UNTAG ultimately presented a comprehensive and effective international institutional framework to carry out disarmament and demobilization. Third, the chapter examines the UNHCR-led voluntary repatriation process. The fourth section looks at the independence government’s efforts at reintegrating the demobilized fighters. Namibia’s disarmament and demobilization were carried out under the UNTAG international institutional framework and were not linked to the reintegration component of the DDR process.

The chapter assesses how the government’s failure to plan and implement comprehensive reintegration programmes led to the ineffective reintegration of the demobilized fighters. The ex-fighters threat for post-war instability was not immediate. However, ex-fighters eventually mobilized to seek recognition and recompense for their war time sacrifices. What is noteworthy, however, is the government’s eventual implementation of a job-offer-scheme in response to ex-fighter protests for welfare support and recognition. An examination of the reintegration of returnees precedes the conclusion section.

4.2 Background to UNTAG
This section focuses on those dimensions of Namibia’s colonial history and protracted liberation struggle that impacted the country’s transition to independence and DDRRR under the international UN framework. The significant prolonged involvement by the UN started when the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations conferred upon the British Crown for and on behalf the government of South Africa a Class C Mandate over South West Africa, in December 1920. South African forces had defeated German troops in the First World War. The British King delegated the mandate to the government of the Union of South Africa.417

The League of Nations ineffectively discharged its duty of supervising the mandate thereby allowing South Africa to contravene it with impunity. Following the replacement of the League by the UN, the territory was placed under the Trusteeship system. However, in 1948 South Africa annexed Namibia and imposed racial domination and exploitation of the territory’s human and economic resources. UN General Assembly Resolution 2145 (1966) subsequently revoked South Africa’s mandate and declared the territory be the direct responsibility of the UN. A series of UN resolutions aimed at facilitating Namibia’s independence were subsequently passed. These developments meant that Namibia’s transition to independence, and by inclination DDRRR, was the primary responsibility of the UN. South Africa’s intransigence delayed the UN’s implementation of the Namibian independence plan until the conclusion of the New York

417 Colonies of states defeated in the First World War were placed under the Mandate System. The principle of the mandate regime was to place inhabitants of colonial territories on the road to self-government through the promotion of their well being and development.
Accords in December 1988.

The United States represented by Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, played the leading role in the Namibian negotiating framework through its “constructive engagement” and “linkage” policy to settle the Angolan-Namibian conflicts. This mediation and facilitation process adopted Resolution 435(1978), providing for UN supervised elections, as the basis for Namibia’s transition to independence. It was greatly assisted by crucial developments that reshaped the major stakeholders and international actors’ stance and commitment towards the implementation of the Namibian settlement plan.

Apartheid South Africa’s multi-frontal Total National Strategy proved to be unsustainable. The decisive battle for Cuito Cuanavele, between October 1987 and June 1988, in which the MPLA forces, buttressed by an escalated Cuban military involvement and Russian assistance, gained dual aerial and ground ascendency inflicting high casualties on the SADF/UNITA alliance. At the same time violent internal protests against the apartheid regime in South Africa was rising. The changing international context that was characterized by new-found accommodation between the Soviet Union and the West also meant a common desire to co-operate in carving out peaceful solutions for regional conflicts. The FLS also demonstrated unwavering regional support for the settlement of the procrastinated issue. This coincidence of international, regional and strategic proceedings at the end of the Cold War contributed in making the international aspects of the Angola-Namibian conflicts ripe for resolution.
The negotiations culminated in the signing of the tripartite New York Accords by Angola, Cuba and South Africa on 22 December 1988. The Agreement was accompanied by a bilateral treaty between Angola and Cuba on the withdrawal of Cuban troops. The tripartite Agreement facilitated the implementation of Resolution 435 that provided for Namibia’s transition to independence under UNTAG. It enshrined provisions for the phased withdrawal of the Cuban troops from Angola - that was to be monitored and verified by UNAVEM I - , the withdrawal of South African forces from Angola and the implementation of Resolution 435 from 1 April 1989.

South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO), a major party in the Namibian conflict was excluded from the negotiations. It was thus not a direct signatory to the New York Agreement. While SWAPO was not formally involved in the drafting of the various international agreements - mainly between Angola, Cuba and South Africa - it was constantly informed about the contents of the agreements through other interlockages. SWAPO’s “partners especially the Angolan government would not take any position to the detriment of SWAPO.”

The liberation movement, which had partnered the Angolans and the Cubans in their war against SADF/UNITA in Angola, had, endorsed the preceding cease-fire agreement enshrined in the Geneva Protocol of 8 August 1988. SWAPO and South Africa had

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418 The three countries later became members of the Joint Commission created to oversee the implementation of the agreement.
419 Interview with Phanuel Kaapama, Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Namibia, 11 November 2004, Windhoek
separately signed letters to UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, pledging to abide by Resolution 435, and the ceasefire. Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Martti Ahtisaari, revealed in 1992 that there was no “face-to-face” signing of a ceasefire between SWAPO and South Africa because the latter “simply refused to sign a document with SWAPO.”\footnote{H. Weiland and M. Brahan, (eds.), \textit{The Namibian Peace Process: Implications and Lessons for the Future}: A review of an international conference jointly organized by the Arnold Bergstraesser Institut and the International Peace Academy, 1-4 July 1992, (Freiburg, Arnold Bergstraesser Institut, 1994), p.74} SWAPO’s letter, however, “did not give express endorsement to the provisions on withdrawal north of the 16\textsuperscript{th} parallel”\footnote{C. Thornberry, \textit{A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia’s Independence}” (Windhoek, Gamsberg} – an issue that was to be of fatal implications to the commencement of the independence process.

SWAPO’s endorsement of the tripartite agreements could have been influenced by the fact that PLAN was militarily inferior to the South African forces making prospects for a military triumph improbable. Instead, the diplomatic settlement of the conflict and the organization of free elections presented SWAPO with a feasible avenue to power. SWAPO had, all along, embraced a multi-pronged liberation strategy that embraced the armed and diplomatic struggles.

The ultimate implementation of Namibia’s independence plan and DDRRR under UN supervision was a result of the international agreement and SWAPO’s anti-colonial war effort. The nature, scope and intensity of the war for independence influenced the implementation and results of Nambia’s DDRRR. SWAPO’s formation in 1960 with the primary objective of achieving total political and economic independence for Namibia through the employ of “all possible means” provided a framework for organized anti-
colonial struggle in Namibia. The UN recognized SWAPO as “the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people”.\textsuperscript{423} South Africa’s steadfast refusal of the process of political negotiation and compromise, against a backdrop of weak international pressure, compelled SWAPO to embark on liberation guerilla warfare that transcended ethnic identities. The shift from futile non-violent political protest to armed liberation struggle was logical. “There came a point when the Namibians, who had been submitting petitions to the United Nations and to Western governments, said: ‘We have now come to the end of our non-violence. We are now going to take up arms and fight with violence.’”\textsuperscript{424}

Namibia’s liberation war mainly pitted the Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO’s military wing against the South African Defence Forces (SADF) from August 1966 to 1989.\textsuperscript{425} This meant that Namibia’s DDRRR would involve one liberation army. The SADF, whose presence in Namibia was illegitimated by the UN, were an external army that could be easily withdrawn from Namibia in the post-war era. South Africa established indigenous forces to fight against PLAN, alongside the SADF, such as South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF), citizen and commando forces. The San, also disparagingly known as the Bushman, whose tracking and hunting skills were considered invaluable in the bush war against SWAPO were recruited as SWATF soldiers. South

\textsuperscript{423} This was potentially problematic in that other political groups, who felt discriminated against, would claim that UNTAG would favour SWAPO.

\textsuperscript{424} Reverend Albertus Maasdorp, the Deputy General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, quoted in S. Groth, Namibia, The Wall of Silence: The Dark Days of the Liberation Struggle, (Wuppertal, Peter Hammer Verlag, 1995), p.25

\textsuperscript{425} The former Soviet Union, China and the Organisation of African Unity, through its Liberation Committee, weighed in with logistical and training support for PLAN. Many SWAPO recruits were also
Africa also trained the counter-insurgency *Koevoet* (crowbar) that terrorized Namibians. These forces had to be included in the process to establish Namibia’s national armed forces and DDR programmes alongside PLAN combatants.

The war was prolonged and bitter. Fighting was most intense in the northern part of the country and in Angola. Major military confrontations occurred during the 1980s. Approximately 11,291 PLAN fighters, 2,000 civilians and 715 South African security forces were killed in the war.\(^{426}\) The liberation war became entangled in Cold War and apartheid politics. It was internationalized through the strategic, military, educational and other support by foreign countries. SWAPO, for instance, received support from both the Soviet Union and China. Its recruits were trained in China and it adopted the Maoist guerilla strategy.

PLAN mainly launched its military forays into Namibia from Angola. The independence of Angola in 1975 galvanized PLAN’s liberation war effort. The Angolan government provided SWAPO with sanctuary and allowed it to establish rear military bases near the border. This provided PLAN with a considerable operating front and enabled easier access to Namibia. However, SADF countered by invading Angola and supporting UNITA to establish control over southeast Angola thus restricting PLAN’s cross border operations and liberation warfare in Namibia itself. PLAN also established bases in Zambia. Its guerilla strategy, however, had notable implications for post-war training at Angolan and Cuban military units.

disarmament and demobilization. PLAN forces were scattered across extensive areas where there had been fighting, strafing, bombing...there was no question of clear cut bases, and SWAPO could not provide...detailed organizational tables containing the details of personnel, weapons, and ammunition, something that is standard for a regular army.427

This later posed problems for the disarmament and demobilization of PLAN that was planned to take place in Angola, where the liberation army had its main bases.

The SADF and PLAN both laid landmines mainly in the northern areas. At the end of armed conflict in Namibia there were “eleven minefields with a combined area of 353,510 square meters that had 44,594 mines.”428 A major challenge to post-conflict demining was that “The SADF left no detailed records of where the mines were laid in the minefields, although there are records of the number planted. PLAN did not keep accurate records of where it laid mines” although “Generally, fences and warning signboards were erected around minefield perimeters.”429

A refugee population was generated by the brutal colonial system and armed struggle. Many Africans escaped from the oppressive and exploitative South African rule in Namibia and its crack down on the liberation struggle. South Africa’s machinations had included the imposition of de facto martial law and compulsive creation of SWATF.

These horrific confrontations left some victims psycho-socially traumatized.

In all, between 44 000 and 90 000 Namibians, mainly SWAPO supporters were made refugees out of a pre-independence population of 1.4 million. Angola and Zambia, offering asylum to some 69 000 and 7 000 Namibian refugees respectively, were the major destinations. Some of the youth who fled Namibia and joined SWAPO in exile returned as guerillas. Others remained in refugee camps or were sent abroad to study and acquire skills to prepare them to productively contribute to independent Namibia. The UN Institute for Namibia was established in Lusaka, Zambia to train Namibians. While in exile, some refugees reportedly also experienced traumatizing experiences, such as detention and torture at the hands of SWAPO. These diverse characteristics and experiences meant that refugees were not a homogenous group and would reintegrate differently in post-conflict Namibia.

The South African forces raided SWAPO’s sanctuaries in Angola. The “Cassinga massacre” – the 4 May 1978 aerial bombing of a SWAPO camp in Angola by the South African military which left about 600 dead – is an illustrative incident. The camp, attacked as part of South Africa’s strategy to provoke SWAPO into abandoning the independence negotiations, “was not primarily a PLAN base, but a refugee relocation and training centre of about 3,000 people”.430 Information that came out from South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission revealed that the brutal attack, in which many

women and children died, resulted in gross human rights violations against civilian occupants of the military camp, and was possibly the single most controversial external operation by the SADF.\textsuperscript{431} More than 300 SWAPO members were also killed and many more others maimed or captured during South African forces’ attacks on SWAPO facilities in and around Chetequera. Survivors of these attacks were left with physical and psychological scars making them candidates for post-conflict trauma rehabilitation.

Another poignant feature was the important role played by the churches in Namibia’s struggle for independence. While initially silent about the brutal German and South African colonial rule in Namibia the churches made a marked about turn. This was evidenced by eventual “widespread interaction between the churches and the nationalist movement, the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO). Some individual church leaders also hold (held) key positions in SWAPO.”\textsuperscript{432} This laid a strong foundation for the church’s role as UNHCR’s major implementing partner in the repatriation operation.

The above characteristics of Namibia’s anti-colonial politics and relations fundamentally influenced the implementation and outcomes of the Settlement Plan. The following section analyzes the international institutional framework set up to implement the independence plan. It assesses how it practically executed the DDRRR component of the plan and the results.

\textsuperscript{431} TRC report may lead to action on Nam war crimes, \textless http://www.namibian.com.na/Netstories/November98/trcnam.html\textgreater Accessed on 12 July 2004
\textsuperscript{432} P. Katjavivi, P. Frostin, and K. Mbuende, \textit{Church and liberation in Namibia}, (London; Winchester, Mass, Pluto Press, c1989), p.3
4.3 The Institutional Framework

4.3.1 UNTAG’s mandate and DDR

UNTAG had a clear authority to carry out two “Ds” and one “R” of DDRRR—disarmament, demobilization and repatriation. Its unprecedented multifunctional mandate explicitly incorporated those DDRRR elements that were essential for Namibia’s peaceful and democratic transition to independence. The mandate included:

- ensuring the early independence of Namibia through free and fair elections under UN auspices,
- to monitor the cease-fire,
- ensuring that troops (both SADF and SWAPO) were confined to bases,
- supervising the rapid reduction and eventual removal of South African military forces,
- maintenance of law and order, repeal of discriminatory laws,
- release of political prisoners, prevention of intimidation and repatriation and return of refugees.\(^{433}\)

Resolution 435 also provided for the disbandment of all “ethnic and paramilitary” units. Disarmament and demobilization were thus incorporated into the overall strategy to create secure conditions for Namibia’s transition to independence. The return of the Namibian refugees was also emplaced in UNTAG’s mandate as a prerequisite for

democratic elections and political independence.

In discharging its tasks UNTAG was guided by the fundamental UN principles of consent, impartiality, restraint and non-employment of force except “only in self-defence including defence of United Nations Transitional Assistance Group posts, positions and vehicles under armed attack or in support of other UNTAG troops under armed attack.” UNTAG would be perceived as neutral by the parties. This, combined with its broad mandate, shored the confidence of the parties and made the transition easier.

The diverse nature of UNTAG’s mandate meant that it comprised a military component of about 4,500 personnel, 1,500 police as well as 2,000 international and local civilian staff from more than 120 countries with a US$416 million budget. This was, in fact, a reduction from the originally planned military component of 7,500 and a US$700 million budget. The UN Security Council had reportedly been determined to slash the size of the military component as a cost-cutting measure. Through Resolution 629 (1989) the Security Council instructed then Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar to consider financially prudent measures that would, however, not work against UNTAG’s success. The centrality of DDRRR components in UNTAG’s mandate and the operational realities were thus unmatched with the originally contemplated massive resource allocation.

434 B. Mwarania, Kenya Battalion in Namibia, (Nakuru, Media Document Supplies, 1999), p.57
436 According to the Secretary General’s advance report to the Security Council UNTAG would have needed 7 infantry battalions totaling about 5,000; 200 monitors; and specialist units totaling about 2,300 to effectively discharge its specific military mandate.
Despite the budgetary and logistical reductions, UNTAG remains one of the most generously supported UN missions. For instance, the Security Council approved just US$132.2 million for UNAVEM II that was established two years later after UNTAG to work in a more “complex socio-economic and political context.”\footnote{G. A. Dzinesa “A Comparative Perspective of UN Peacekeeping in Angola and Namibia” International Peacekeeping, Vol 11, No 4, Winter 2004, p.652} UNTAG’s budget was managed under a “fully effective system of financial controls.”\footnote{C. Thornberry, A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia’s Independence” (Windhoek, Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers, 2004, pp.53 and 379} These, and other factors elaborated on further down, enabled UNTAG to accomplish its DDRRRR assignment.

A major strength of UNTAG was that it had a clearly crafted deployment and implementation plan guided by a programme designed much earlier by the Contact Group. The Contact Group comprised the two global economic powerhouses, the USA and Britain as well as West Germany, Canada and France who had attempted to implement their “Proposal for a Settlement of the Namibian situation in the 1970s with the involvement of the UN, South Africa, SWAPO and Front Line States. The Group’s 1978 settlement plan was endorsed by the Security Council following a positive report by a UN survey mission on Namibia. The plan was the basis for UNTAG’s strict timetable.

UNTAG, with the cooperation of South Africa and SWAPO, was required to follow the following programme that was elaborate on disarmament and demobilization as well as repatriation of refugees:
March 1989

- Core UNTAG staff arrive in Namibia to prepare for the establishment of the mission.

1 April 1989 (D-DAY)

- Formal cessation of hostilities.
- Restriction to base of South African and SWAPO forces.
- Release of political prisoners and detainees begins
- Repeal of discriminatory and restrictive legislation.
- The SRSG and most UNTAG civilian, civilian police and military personnel arrive between 1st April and mid-May. They are deployed to 50 plus locations (including district centres throughout the territory and assume their duties in accordance with phasing and deployment plans)

By mid-May 1989

- Refugees and other returnees begin to return to Namibia.
- General rules for elections issued.
- Reduction of South African forces to 12 000.
- Repeal of discriminatory and restrictive laws completed.
- UNHCR assists in return of refugees and other returnees.
- UNTAG staff continue monitoring activities.

By early June 1989
• Reduction of South African forces to 8 000.
• Release of political prisoners and detainees completed.
• All UNTAG activities continue.

By 1 July 1989
• Further reduction of South African troops to 1 500.
• Military installations on northern border put under UN supervision or de-activated.
• All UNTAG activities continue.

1 July 1989
• Voter registration begins. Official start of electoral campaign.
• The implementation of the electoral process, including the proper registration of voters and timely tabulation of voting results conducted to the satisfaction of the SRSG.
• Second major contingent of civilian UNTAG arrives to support the supervision and control of the electoral process.

Early October 1989
• Electoral campaigns continue.
• Third major contingent of civilian UNTAG staff, poll watchers (seconded from governments) arrive in Namibia. They join the second civilian contingent in UN centres for assignment to designated polling stations.
Early November 1989

- Elections to Constituent Assembly, which is to draw up and adopt a constitution.
- UNTAG civilian staff cover all polling stations during the balloting.
- Certification of elections by the Special Representative.

Late November 1989

- Completion of withdrawal of remaining 1,500 South African troops.
- Closure of all bases
- Convening of the Constitutional Assembly
- The mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary General and of the UNTAG will extend through the transitional period leading to independence

Date unspecified 1989

- Conclusion of the Constitutional Assembly
- Steps necessary prior to installation of new government
- Independence

Despite its well-stated schedule UNTAG experienced a complicated start. This was partly due to the bureaucratic nature of the UN institutional framework. UNTAG’s Chief Aide to the SRSG, Cedric Thornberry, contended that the UN is not a “potent international authority with autonomous resources and powers. It is, instead, a representative of the
member governments that make it up.\textsuperscript{439} The implementation of Resolution 435 and the setting up of the peace operation was particularly hamstrung by disagreements surrounding the size of its military component and other aspects including down-scaling the budget. While the tripartite New York Agreement had been signed on 22 December 1988 the Security Council only approved the implementation of Resolution 435 through its Resolution 632 (16 February 1989). Resolution 632 made no fundamental changes to Resolution 435. While the former granted UNTAG political authority it did not grant the operation financial authority. Impediments to UNTAG’s full operationalization were only removed on 29 February 1989 with the General assembly’s approval of its budget.

The debate surrounding UNTAG’s budget and implementation had disrupted its effective mobilization and emplacement in Namibia. Cedric Thornberry’s apprehension over the potential impact this had on UNTAG’s capacity to go along with the 1 April 1989 start-up later proved true. On 16 February 1989 he noted:

Everybody knows (for we have been chanting it like a mantra) that we need two-and-a-half months to purchase, acquire, set up, deploy, in such a huge and complicated terrain. And yet they have been willing to put us in, nearly naked – for that’s what we’ll be – even if we get a budget tomorrow.\textsuperscript{440}

The delay in the full emplacement of UNTAG in Namibia had serious effects for the maintenance of the cease-fire and the early phases of the transition process. UNTAG was not ready to monitor the movement of armed groups and their confinement to bases. On the day on which the ceasefire was to come into effect – 1 April 1989 – South African

\textsuperscript{439} C. Thornberry, \textit{A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia’s Independence}” (Windhoek, Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers 2004), p.32
forces clashed with PLAN combatants in Namibia’s northern border areas.

PLAN argued that it had been engaged in establishing military bases in Namibia that would be monitored by UNTAG, only to be ambushed by South African forces. For its part, South Africa argued that it was responding to an ‘offensive’ intrusion by PLAN from Angola targeted at establishing a significant SWAPO political presence inside Namibia. South Africa claimed that SWAPO had launched a willful incursion aimed at attacking South Africa’s bases and strategic installations. It also said that SWAPO was intent upon implementing the Zimbabwe African National Union’s (ZANU) strategy whereby unarmed ZANLA cadres politicized the masses in villages in the run up to Zimbabwe’s independence election. These counter-accusations reflected the sensitive security atmosphere that was created by mutual distrust and suspicions between the parties. UNTAG’s judgment confirmed PLAN’s explanation.

In a significant response to the ‘fiasco’, the UN Secretary-General ‘reluctantly’ sanctioned the redeployment of the South West Africa Territorial Police (SWATF), an interested party that was supposed to be confined to base. This threatened the perception of the UN/UNTAG as an impartial institutional framework. SWATF exploited this authorization to engage in brutal counter-incursion activity in which more than 140 PLAN combatants were killed. Ezi N. Ifejika said SADF and Koevoet also mowed down “the innocent men and women in Ovamboland who were in no way connected with

440 C. Thornberry, A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia’s Independence”, p.43
441 L. Cliffe, et al...The Transition to Independence in Namibia, (Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner, 1994), p.88
442 L. Cliffe, et al...The Transition to Independence in Namibia, (Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner,
the fighting.” The then skeletal UNTAG contingent of military observers was ill-prepared to effectively monitor and verify the crucial troop confinement to cantonment areas and to deal with serious cease-fire violations resulting in a bloody start for UNTAG. Cleophas J. Tsokodayi noted:

By 23 March 1989 advance contingents numbering only 600 were deployed in Namibia, a figure that rose to only 783 as at 1 April 1989 instead of the 4,650 authorised. Of the 783, only four were in northern Namibia, according to SWAPO President Nujoma. UNTAG did not even have a presence in Angola.

General Prem Chand, head of the UNTAG military component, elaborated:

Because of certain time factors and certain decisions which were beyond the control of UNTAG, what we could have had on the border at the time was not there at all. We didn’t have one single infantry man, not one. So far as UNTAG was concerned there was no question of being able to do anything.

The Secretary-General’s eventual mediation detonated the potentially explosive situation that threatened the UNTAG mission through a possible resumption of war and secured the parties’ recommitment to the peace process. The Joint Commission had in advance of the Etjo agreement crucially agreed that PLAN forces would be escorted to bases north of the 16th parallel under UNTAG and the Administrator General’s –South Africa’s colonial governor in Namibia- supervision. Theo-Ben Gurirab, then Namibia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, noted that eventually “UNTAG succeeded in Namibia because the

1994), p.85
445 National Archives of Namibia, UN Pages, File A.624
Namibian people, regardless of their political differences, were ready for it. They saw it as a midwife to assist the birth of an independent nation.”\textsuperscript{446} This mitigated widespread skepticism on whether the in-country and global affairs were indeed effectively transformational.

The expansion of UNTAG’s operational and logistical capabilities was expedited, enabling it to establish a nationwide strategic presence and authority over and above the parties. Its military units were soon airlifted to Namibia such that by mid-May the military was fully deployed- six weeks ahead of the end of the June schedule. By November 1989, UNTAG components were deployed at almost 200 locations throughout the territory.\textsuperscript{447} UNTAG deployed a handy one military observer for every six fighters enabling effective monitoring of disarmament and demobilization.\textsuperscript{448} UNTAG Deputy Force Commander, Brigadier Daniel Opande, commented:

\begin{quote}
I would like to say that April 1 was a difficult time for everybody, and the military, the UNTAG military, on that particular day…was not to its strength. We did not have the manpower and we did not have various components of our military in place to do the job that we were required to do…But as time went on, we caught on, and we managed to do our best with the number of man we had on the ground and we eventually caught up.\textsuperscript{449}
\end{quote}

UNTAG’s subsequent projection of a strong institutional framework made it credible and increased the chances of its success. Ultimately, notwithstanding its difficult start,

\textsuperscript{448} G. A. Dzinesa “A Comparative Perspective of UN Peacekeeping in Angola and Namibia” \textit{International Peacekeeping}, Vol 11, No 4, Winter 2004, p.653
\textsuperscript{449} National Archives of Namibia, \textit{UN Pages}, File A.624
UNTAG fulfilled its central objective of ensuring a peaceful, transparent electoral process and a smooth transition to independence.

The delay in the implementation of Resolution 435, from 1978 till 1989, was in some respect a blessing in disguise. It meant that UNTAG and the appropriate working group had been on the drawing board for more than a decade. During this period the core of the working group – SRSG, Force Commander, Police Commissioner, Directors of Elections, and Administrations and of the SRSG’s office - continued to meet and touch base. Some members were also seconded to other peacekeeping operations during the prolonged hiatus “to learn the trade”. 450 This provided UNTAG personnel with invaluable practical peacekeeping experience.

The SRSG worked in conjunction with the South African colonial governor, the Administrator General. The Settlement Plan had stated that South African continued presence and administration in Namibia would not be recognized. This was the irony of resolution 435 because while portraying the UN objective as “the withdrawal of South Africa’s illegal administration from Namibia” it “implicitly recognized South African authority over the territory”. 451 The Administrator General continued to head the civil service during the transition. This potentially problematic arrangement did not, in the ultimate, derail UNTAG’s work.

The UN’s determination for UNTAG to succeed was exemplified by the Secretary General’s establishment of a high-level Namibia Task Force at the UN headquarters in New York. The Secretary General chaired the Task Force that also comprised his Chef de Cabinet, the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, the Under-Secretary-General for African questions, the Legal Counsel, the Military Adviser, the Secretary General’s Spokesman and supporting staff. It met daily to coordinate the Secretariat’s role and to provide policy guidance and maximum support to the SRSG in Namibia.
Figure 4.1: Map showing UNTAG military deployment
Figure 4.2: Map showing UNTAG civilian deployment

UNTAG civilian deployment as of November 1989
Whilst fulfilling elaborated and dedicated tasks in the field, UNTAG components worked in close co-ordination towards the central objective of ensuring a peaceful, transparent electoral process and smooth transition to independence. The SRSG, ably assisted by 42 nation-wide and functional political Offices coordinated the operations of UNTAG.

UNTAG presented a comprehensive institutional framework. The closely-knit civilian component comprised the Special Representative’s Office, the Independent Jurist, the office of the UNHCR, the Electoral Division and the Administration department. This was complimented by CIVPOL and the military component. The successful implementation of the Settlement Plan hinged upon an educated and informed Namibian population. The SRSG, in conjunction with the political offices designed and implemented a massive outreach programme that sensitized Namibians about the independence plan and the objectives of UNTAG’s role. This included its military component whose successful discharge of its complex tasks was crucial for the success of the whole mission.

4.3.2 UNTAG’s Military Component and Disarmament and Demobilization

Disarmament and demobilization were part of the Settlement Plan and were concretely enshrined in UNTAG’s mandate. Reintegration was not. UNTAG’s military component carried out the military aspects of the Settlement Plan. These included monitoring the cease-fire, confinement of the parties’ armed forces to bases, monitoring the dismantling of South Africa’s military presence in Namibia and maintaining some degree of
surveillance over Namibia’s borders. Eight infantry battalions, village-based commando units and two bushman battalions were earmarked for disarmament and demobilization. Approximately 32,500 non-SWAPO forces had to be disarmed and demobilized. About half of these had to be withdrawn from Namibia to South Africa. While providing for the disarmament and demobilization of military forces the Settlement Plan recognized the continued need for SWAPO to maintain law and order in an efficient, professional and non-partisan way to enable the creation of conditions conducive for free and fair elections.

UNTAG military component -whose maximum strength reached 4,493, consisting of 300 military monitors and observers, 3 infantry battalions and logistic units- was a wide geographically representative team. It comprised soldiers from 21 countries. The monitors and observers were drawn from Bangladesh, Czechoslovakia, Finland, India, Ireland, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Poland, Sudan, Togo and Yugoslavia. The three infantry battalions of 850 troops each were from Finland, Malaysia and Kenya. The first two were deployed in the northern part of Namibia because that is where the greater armed activity occurred and was home to the majority of the country’s population. The Kenyans were deployed to the south and centre of the country. There were eight specialist units: engineers from Australia, signal corps from the United Kingdom, airplane pilots from Spain and helicopter pilots from Italy, logistics units from Canada, Denmark and Poland, and a medical unit from Switzerland completed the team.

452 C. Thornberry, A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia’s Independence” (Windhoek, Gamsberg
The UN’s selection of UNTAG member countries resonated with the Security Council principles including willingness and capacity to participate, good geographic spread and acceptability to all parties. Finnish military support to the cause only made sense, one may conjecture, as SRSG Martti Ahtisaari was Finnish. Kenya, for its part, had participated in the earlier Commonwealth Monitoring Force in Zimbabwe. Poland had a proven track record; at the time it had “been more active in peacekeeping support than any other of the East Europeans.”453 Sweden was omitted despite preparedness to help and an admirable peacekeeping record. Having rendered support to the Namibians, Sweden was unacceptable to South Africa. The choice of countries that provided specialist branches was in all probability based on the willingness of countries that had that limited expertise to participate. This, perhaps, explains why South Africa was pressured to accept Australia, Canada and Denmark, countries hitherto sympathetic to the Namibian cause.

Considering its problematic inauguration, UNTAG to its credit, monitored the cease-fire and restored confinement of forces to bases by 13 May 1989. Progress was made in the dismantling of South Africa’s military presence. As mentioned earlier in this study, the planned schedule implied that the South African forces would be reduced to 12 000 by mid-May, to 8 000 by early June and to 1 500 by July leading to final withdrawal by November. By 24 June all but 1 500 of the SADF had left Namibia. The remaining 1 500 South African forces, known as the “Merlyn Force”, were withdrawn after the

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453 C. Thornberry, *A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia’s Independence*” (Windhoek, Gamsberg
certification of the elections on 21 November 1989 in line with the Settlement Plan. General Prem Chand, UNTAG Force Commander noted that this was facilitated by SADF’s “support, assistance and cooperation.”

SWATF, which on D-Day numbered 21,661 mainly officers on secondment from SADF, was demobilized by 1 June 1989. Disarming and demobilizing SWATF was facilitated by the fact that South Africa maintained well-organized records of its forces. The local forces established by South Africa, namely the citizen and commando forces numbering 11,578 all ranks, had been demobilized before D-Day. The demobilized forces’ arms, military equipment and ammunition were verified and deposited in 13 drill halls guarded by UNTAG infantry. The double-lock system whereby one key to a depository building remains in the custody of local hands and the other in UN hands was actively imposed on the nationwide network of storage drill halls.

UNTAG encountered challenges during the disarmament and demobilization process. The process was diluted by South Africa’s evasiveness and time buying antics. South Africa aimed at maintaining a strategic presence in Namibia’s security sector. The majority of the “demobilized former” South African controlled military personnel retained their camouflage, maintained contact with their “former” commanders and remained on payroll. These “demobilized” personnel were responsible for widespread intimidation and destabilization activity particularly in the sensitive and populous northern areas.

Macmillan Publishers), 2004, p.51
454 National Archives of Namibia, UN Pages, File A.624
The problem-prone dismantling of the notorious counter-insurgency paramilitary *Koevoet* unit is even more revealing. Instead of disbanding the unit and dismantling its command structure, in line with the Resolution 640 (1989), South Africa “infiltrated” about 2 000 of the original 3 000 members of *Koevoet* into SWAPOL by-passing the demobilization provisions and effectively maintaining its military machine in Namibia. This resulted in a bloated police force of 6 300 instead of the proportional size of 3 300. South Africa’s then Chief of Police in Namibia, General Dolf Gouws, argued that this would keep the ex-*Koevoet* employed and prevent them fighting SWAPO during the transition.

The UN, however, had the political will to ensure effective disarmament. It exerted pressure on the South African administrators compelling the demobilization of 1 600 ex-*Koevoet* members of SWAPOL under UNTAG supervision by 30 October 1989. The ex-*Koevoet*’s arms were retrieved and sent to Windhoek. This effectively brought the menacing unit under UNTAG’s control and eased the transition process. Most of the heavy weapons that were collected during the disarmament process were transported to South Africa by the SADF under UNTAG observation. On account of manpower and financial limitations there was, however, no specific programme for the collection and disposal of small arms and light weapons. Notwithstanding this, the disarmament levels reached buttressed the irreversibility of the transition process.

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Disarmament of PLAN was carried out in Angola. PLAN troops who had been in Namibia on 1 April 1989 were assembled at designated camps before being escorted under UNTAG supervision to assembly points north of the 16th parallel in Angola. In spite of a slow start more than 5,000 were ultimately confined to bases in Angola. The initial difficulties can probably be attributed to PLAN’s fighters dispersal following the clashes of 1 April 1989 and the intimidating visible presence of South African forces outside their bases. UNTAG’s small team of 31 military monitors, based in Lubango, Angola and known as UNTAG A (Angola), supervised the disarmament and confinement of PLAN to camps by the Angolan military. Angolan General Ndalu later asserted that all SWAPO personnel retreated north of the 16th parallel. Peter Shivute, Permanent Secretary in Namibia’s Ministry of Defence, said:

“Strictly speaking they (UNTAG) made sure that we deployed, first it was the 16th parallel then back inside (Angola), it was as far as Lubango. Lubango was far. It was where the headquarters of PLAN was and for us, those who were working in the headquarters, to see these (UNTAG) people we could believe that this was a serious engagement (and) we have to (disarm, demobilize and) go back home. There was no choice.”

A PLAN contingent of 80 fighters, supervised by UNTAG and the Angolan military, remained behind to guard the liberation army’s weapons in Angola. Angola, in a move that demonstrated the utility of roping in adjoining host countries, was fulfilling its

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459 Interview with Peter Shivute, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Defence, Windhoek, 12 November 2004
460 C. Thornberry, A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia’s Independence” (Windhoek, Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers 2004), p.125
461 Interview with Peter Shivute, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Defence, Windhoek, 12 November 2004
earlier commitments to assist in the restriction and monitoring of PLAN combatants in its territory.

Disarming and demobilizing PLAN encountered difficulties created by the dotted deployment of PLAN combatants and the absence of accurate information on its force posture and military equipment. SWAPO also reportedly maintained a reserve army outside the UN monitored military bases in Angola in case the peace process collapsed. While the exact strength of this unit cannot be established some sources put the figure at 10,000.\textsuperscript{462} These complexities, however, did not derail the process and by the end of November 1989 many PLAN combatants had been disarmed and demobilized and the assembly camps closed.

A procedure of the Settlement Proposal provided for the return of disarmed PLAN members to vote in Namibia’s independence elections. Many ex-PLAN guerillas were thus among the first returnees “demobbed and coming home as civilians”.\textsuperscript{463} The UN noted that almost all SWAPO forces returned from Angola to Namibia as civilians to participate in the independence elections.\textsuperscript{464} Expeditious repatriation of PLAN meant that the minimal UNTAG-A avoided the potentially calamitous task of monitoring ex-fighters for dangerously long-lay periods in assembly areas. The reserve army, however, only repatriated outside the UNHCR managed operation in late 1989.

\textsuperscript{462} N.J. Colleta, \textit{Beyond Repatriation: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Namibia}, p.6
\textsuperscript{463} D. Lush, \textit{The Last Steps to Uhuru: An Eyewitness Account of Namibia’s Transition to Independence},
UNTAG’s mandate ended before a solution was found on the demobilization and reintegation of SAWTF’s two bushman (San) battalions stationed in the northern part of the country. Members of these battalions and their families had no established villages to return to and thus encountered resettlement difficulties in the post-war period. In March 1990 some 1,925 bushman soldiers and their dependents relocated to Kimberley in South Africa in line with earlier promises by South African generals.\textsuperscript{465} The situation remained precarious for those who stayed behind. In May 1990 about 4,500 of these bushmen who had remained at the abandoned Omega military base in the Western Caprivi were saved from starvation by the South African government’s provision of 7 tonnes of food. The World Food Programme eventually catered for them.

\textbf{4.4 UNHCR Repatriation Operation}

The Contact Group’s settlement proposal that was adopted by the UN was clear on the international institutional framework for the implementation of a voluntary repatriation programme in advance of the independence elections:

- All Namibian refugees or Namibians detained or otherwise outside the Territory of Namibia will be permitted to return peacefully and participate fully and freely in the electoral process without risk of arrest, detention, intimidation or imprisonment. Suitable entry points will be designated for these purposes.

\textsuperscript{465} C. Thornberry, \textit{A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia’s Independence}” (Windhoek, Gamsberg...
• The Special Representative, with the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other appropriate international bodies, will ensure that Namibians remaining outside Namibia are given a free and voluntary choice whether to return. Provisions will be made to attest to the voluntary nature of decisions made by Namibians who elect not to return to Namibia.

Nicolas Bwakira, head of the UNHCR repatriation operation, explained the agency’s threefold mandate as “First, to organize the return of Namibians from outside. Second, to assist them after their return. Third, to make sure that their rights – those rights which would be guaranteed by the amnesty – are fully respected.”\textsuperscript{466} This reflected the UNHCR mandate of assisting the voluntary return of internationally displaced persons across borders to their home countries.

The UNHCR presided over the repatriation of Namibian exiles from 46 countries to enable them to participate in the election process. During its main operation UNHCR coordinated the voluntary return and reception of 41 088 Namibians; 33 258 from Angola, 3 760 from Zambia, 1 621 from Cuba and 2 449 from about 40 other countries\textsuperscript{467} (See Table 4.1). It is documented that for election purposes SWAPO had in its submission to the UNHCR inflated the numbers to be repatriated to 75 000 while the

\textsuperscript{466} National Archives of Namibia, UN Pages, File A.624
South African government gave a much lower 16 000. The majority of the returnees were potential voters and repatriation afforded them the chance to participate in the independence electoral process. About 68.5% of 41 088 exiles who were repatriated in advance of the elections were over 18 years of age and therefore eligible to vote.469

Table 4.1 Age-sex breakdown of returnees to Namibia, 15 September 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>2 038</td>
<td>2 126</td>
<td>4 164</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>1 846</td>
<td>1 956</td>
<td>3 802</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>1 657</td>
<td>1 661</td>
<td>3 318</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>1 067</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>1 652</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18+</td>
<td>16 438</td>
<td>11 714</td>
<td>28 152</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>23 046</td>
<td>18 042</td>
<td>41 088</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% 56.1 43.9 100.0 -


A significant feature of the UNHCR repatriation process in Namibia was that it indiscriminately incorporated both classical refugees and disarmed SWAPO fighters. Cedric Thornberry noted that

UNHCR, contending that it could not distinguish between ordinary refugees and ex-PLAN fighters, disregarded the intended return procedures set out in the Settlement, and brought back thousands of SWAPO’s military on its refugee flights, unarmed and in civilian clothes. Thus, by August 1989, UNTAG-A was reporting that most PLAN personnel had disappeared.470

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470 C. Thornberry, A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia’s Independence” (Windhoek, Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers, 2004), p.159
For SWAPO, it was crucial that these members participate in the independence elections. At the programme design and institutional levels the dual repatriation offered a chance for the implementation of a specific and integrated returnee (refugees and disarmed fighters) reintegration programme. However, this opportunity was not taken as the SWAPO government would not differentiate returnees from stay-at-homes in the post-war reconstruction efforts.

The repatriation operation was significantly facilitated by the cooperative arrangement among the UNHCR, SWAPO and the major host countries- Angola and Zambia. This ensured UNHCR access to host countries to organize pre-repatriation logistics including registration and vaccination of the exiles as well as transport arrangements. The exiles’ socio-economic data and preferred return destinations were some of the information collected during the registration process. However, given the sensitive nature of the information it was not productively used to design reintegration and rehabilitation strategies.

In executing the repatriation process, the UNHCR received varied assistance from related UN agencies and programmes namely the World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Education and Scientific Organization and the Scientific and Cultural Organization. This meant that there was a comprehensive international institutional presence. The WFP provided 9 000 tonnes of food and UNICEF US$250 000 to the repatriation exercise. UNICEF provided transitional
assistance worth US$1.5 million ranging from medical supplies and comfort items for mothers and children in reception centres and vehicles for the CCN. It also made available school materials, teachers’ salaries and transport that enabled the continuing education of returnee children of primary school going age.

The UNHCR invited the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) to participate as its main local implementing partner with the agreement of South Africa. The UNHCR settled for the CCN because it had the needed capacity and also because the CCN could be trusted by the returnees who were concerned about their security. Nicolas Bwakira, head of the repatriation exercise for UNHCR, clarified then:

UNHCR does not have the necessary manpower to carry out to implement the assistance programme which we finance in each operation. We need therefore to use the experience, the expertise which exists in the country. In selecting our partners we must make sure that they have the necessary experience, the necessary social infrastructure and also the confidence of those whom they are serving. In this case, after having considered a number of organizations we have found out CCN was trusted by those Namibians who would be returning.472

The churches had been principled allies of Namibia’s prolonged liberation movement “and church organizations built up a network of publicity, communication, and organizational focus in support of SWAPO…Thus, it was natural, that the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) should be the body to undertake the reception of the returned SWAPO exiles and combatants”473 The CCN’s acceptance of the UNHCR’s invitation was also unsurprising as the churches had obliged to the earlier UN call for

472 National Archives of Namibia, UN Pages, File A.624
473 L. Cliffe, et al…The Transition to Independence in Namibia, (Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner,
assistance in 1978 after the adoption of resolution 435. In April 1989, the CCN and UNHCR signed an agreement to work together in the repatriation operation.

In order to effectively assist the repatriation process the CCN established “a dedicated and largely autonomous implementing agency, the Repatriation, Resettlement and Reconstruction Committee (RRR Committee). The RRR Committee consisted of 7 delegates from the member churches and 5 full time officers, namely, a coordinator, transport, logistics’ and administrative officers and a treasurer. The CCN’s Executive Committee assumed policy making obligations whereas the RRR Committee was the implementing organ. A Director was responsible for coordinating the overall programme with the assistance of expert programme officers in finance, logistics, construction, social services, information, health and administration. 474 CCN eventually identified 600 people to work in the reception centres countrywide. 475

The RRR’s principal task was the reception and short-term care of returnees prior to their departure for homes or other chosen destinations. 476 This task included installation of cooking and sanitary facilities, water and electricity supply in reception centres, transportation of returnees from entry points to reception centres and then to their respective homes or special centres run by CCN member churches, as well as provision for special categories including orphans, the elderly and disabled.

1994), p.32
The RRR productively derived lessons from other states’ previous experience of repatriation and resettlement. Namibia’s repatriation exercise particularly learnt tangible lessons from Zimbabwe’s own exercise. This enabled the Namibian process to avoid certain practical and operational difficulties. In an interview, Immanuel Dumeni, coordinator of the RRR programme explained:

The RRR committee enabled us to make contacts with brothers and sisters in the frontline states, especially with the Zimbabweans who went through repatriation and resettlement less than 10 years ago. They shared with us their experiences and gave us good advice. We shared ideas and got rich experiences from the neighbouring Christian councils as well.\textsuperscript{477}

Joint training seminars of the Administrator-General’s staff, UNHCR and the CCN were conducted “to create inter-agency cooperation and understanding as well as to build up confidence and trust on a personal basis.”\textsuperscript{478}

The refugees and returnees’ security was provided by UNTAG Coys. The international UN civilian police also played an instrumental security provision role in the repatriation operation. The UNTAG military and CIVPOL components, in addition to providing security at entry and reception centres, also escorted returnees on their journeys to their home destinations. In the volatile northern areas Finnish and Malaysian battalions continued to conduct patrols. Overall, UNTAG succeeded in creating a stable security

\textsuperscript{477} Interview on RRR programme in Namibia Resource Package
situation in which the UNHCR’s comprehensive and sustainable repatriation operation facilitated the enfranchisement of returnees. 479

However, a number of challenges had to be surmounted. First, the clashes between SWAPO and SADF delayed the implementation of the repatriation operation by one month. Second, prolonged and complex negotiations by the UNHCR with the South African government to secure a comprehensive amnesty for all repatriates also delayed the process. The exiles were apprehensive about returning home to the insecure conditions that they had fled from. Third, illegal operations by Koevoet in the northern areas initially intimidated and impeded refugee returns. UNHCR’s flexible schedule for Namibia’s repatriation programme enabled the delay of the process until these obstacles had been removed. 480

Mediation by the Secretary General resolved the first challenge. UN-led negotiations led to the declaration of a blanket and unqualified amnesty for all Namibian exiles on 6 June 1989. The amnesty removed obstacles to their repatriation and subsequent participation in the electoral process. The firm guarantees of amnesty built the refugees’ confidence in eventual safe reintegration and helped to expedite the repatriation process. The discriminatory and repressive laws that could have been used to intimidate returnees and prevent participation in elections were repealed. Political activities in reception centres that could have compromised the security situation were also banned paving the way for

480 D. Gallagher and A. Schowengerdt, “Participation of Refugees in Post Conflict Elections” in K Kumar,
the smooth rollout of the repatriation process.

Despite the above positive security developments the exiles remained apprehensive. The CCN productively sent an advance fact-finding team from Angola and Zambia to Namibia that gave positive feedback and reassured the exiles on the security situation. Vitalis Ankama, a member of the team, commented:

Our team managed to visit Owamboland and Kavango in the North, as well as Windhoek. We spoke to many people, and they expressed concern about their security. But they were also satisfied that the South African Defence Forces were leaving the area…As a result of the visit, we were able to put our faith in UNTAG, and to have confidence that we would not face discrimination once we returned for good.481

The withdrawal of South Africa’s military forces as part of the broader disarmament programme was also facilitative of repatriation.

Senior SWAPO leaders including Hage Gottfried Geingob, Libertine Amanthila, Theoben Gurirab, Hidipo Hamutenya and Pendukeni Iivula Ithana returned during the earliest phases of repatriation. This was followed by SWAPO’s early appeal for national reconciliation that crucially enhanced confidence in the peace process given the tenuous security situation. CIVPOL’s gradual effective deployment and monitoring defused local tensions particularly in the sensitive northern areas where ex-Koevoet elements had sought to identify and possibly harass SWAPO returnees.

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The above developments cleared the way for the UNHCR voluntary repatriation operation. The voluntary nature was influenced primarily by the fact that the operation was part of a broader peace and transitional process from the flight-causing colonial politics and war to independence. A respondent revealed:

I had to return to Namibia as part of the United Nations organized repatriation exercise. When we stayed abroad, the main idea was that we were struggling to achieve independence for Namibia. The purpose was being achieved through negotiations and the United Nations peace plan. When the United Nations through its agency, UNHCR, started the voluntary repatriation exercise there was no reason for us to continue staying outside.482

The repatriates were returned mainly by air and some by road. Return by air was the most appropriate as many of the refugees had to be expeditiously and safely repatriated from war-torn Angola. They were transported to three entry points, namely Windhoek Airport and Grootfontein and Ondangwa military bases. In order to facilitate an orderly and well-managed system of arrival the UNHCR discouraged relatives and friends of returnees from attempting to make contact at the entry ports. This was because there were no details as to which returnees were on which flights. Attempts were made to ensure the presence of RRR Committee members at the entry ports to monitor the treatment of returnees. At these places, Reception Officers explained the logistical and administrative arrangements, including the period of stay importantly

482 Interview with Returnee Informant 1, 8 November 2004, Windhoek
Figure 4.3: Map Showing Reception Centres
avoiding future misunderstandings thus retaining the trust of the informed returnees.\textsuperscript{483}

The repatriates were then moved to five reception centres at Dobra, Okahandja, Mariabronn, Ongwediva and Engela from which they searched or were assisted to look for their relatives. The centres, administered under the auspices of the RRR Committee of the CCN, were strategically located to avoid proximity to military bases and clashes between supporters of the different political parties.

At the centres the returnees were registered and given food, clothing, health care and basic household necessities. The rationing card given to returnees contained their name, trade, date of arrival and marital status and not only served as ID documents but assisted in the administration process.\textsuperscript{484} The assistance package did not include cash to prevent the UNHCR being seen as indirectly funding SWAPO’s political campaign as the majority of the returnees were SWAPO members. Assistance was also strictly relief in scope to circumvent divisions and conflicts between returnees and remainees who would view the former as receiving preferential resettlement treatment.\textsuperscript{485} For instance, the UNHCR supplied a month’s food rations although the World Food Programme providing additional assistance.

From the reception centres returnees were then transported to their home destinations for, largely, self-reintegration into the mainstream society. The Lutheran World Foundation played a prominent role in this transportation programme. Arrangements had also been

\textsuperscript{483} “Report on Namibia” 14 March 1990, SACC/NCCR File AC623 12.8
\textsuperscript{484} “Report on Namibia” 14 March 1990, SACC/NCCR File AC623 12.8
\textsuperscript{485} H. Weiland and M. Brahan, eds, \textit{The Namibian Peace Process: Implications and Lessons for the Future}: A review of an international conference jointly organized by the Arnold Bergstraesser Institut and
put in place for the reception centres to provide information and link returnees with their families. Informal information sharing where returnees informed expectant relatives of the repatriation schedule of the outstanding caseload were also useful in facilitating eventual link-up.\textsuperscript{486} CIVPOL effectively discharged monitoring and security duties at all the entry points and reception centres. This greatly ensured the safety and security of returnees.

The funding of the UNHCR-managed repatriation operation was not part of UNTAG’s budget. The repatriation programme encountered funding problems. The initial budget earmarked for the operation in 1978 was US$33 million for about 40 000 returnees. This was revised upwards to US$58 million at the end of 1988 before financial and other pressures forced the scaling down of the budget to US$36 million in 1989. Mark Cutts noted:

\begin{quote}
More than US$36 million was (had to be) spent on the return of just over 40 000 refugees. Almost half of this amount was for the airlift operation to transport returning refugees and to deliver relief supplies. UNHCR considered this mode of transport essential, partly because it was unsafe to transit through southern Angola, and partly to make up time lost due to the April incursion and delays caused by the lengthy negotiations to win full amnesties from South Africa for the returning refugees.\textsuperscript{487}
\end{quote}

The UNHCR sourced its funding from voluntary contributions since the repatriation operation was not directly part of UNTAG’s budget. In spite of a promising start eventual fundraising difficulties encountered meant that the UNHCR ran short of the required

\textsuperscript{486} Interview with Returnee Informant 1, 8 November 2004, Windhoek
amount. This resulted in it failing to “wind up the relief part of the operation properly, even though UNTAG itself had a budget surplus of some five million dollars”. While the UNHCR repatriation operation was generally orderly and successful it was not accompanied by comprehensive long-term returnee reintegration programmes. The UNHCR adopted a policy to provide a platform for the returnees’ self-sufficiency by assisting construction of shelter, providing agricultural tools and seeds.

In a notable move, however, the UNHCR urged the wider community to facilitate the integration of returnees. This included encouraging the community to view the returnees as having special needs making it imperative for the community “to understand that refugees are not a threat, but rather, that they themselves are threatened. Find out from your local refugee agency what you can do to help; or befriend a refugee family and help them get integrated into Namibia – in what might be – for some- a totally new country.” In addition to reducing the burden on the assistance agencies this would foster returnee and stay-at-homes reconciliation and confidence building.

The sticky points and difficulties that characterized the disarmament, demobilization and repatriation processes were inconsequential to the conduct of elections. CIVPOL, whose strength was increased to 1 500, ensured that SWAPOL maintained law and order in an

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489 S. Brown, “The contribution of local and international agencies” in R Preston, The Integration of Returned Exiles, Former Combatants and Other War-Affected Namibians, (Windhoek, NISER, 1993), p.4, pp.16-17
“efficient, professional and non-partisan way.” 491 It accompanied SWAPOL on its patrols; monitoring its general operations including investigations, conduct at election campaign rallies and its presence during the registration and electoral process. This fundamentally created an enabling environment for the conduct of a democratic electoral process.

An overwhelming voter turn out was witnessed during the 7 to 11 November elections testifying to unobstructed voter participation. More than 97 per cent of the eligible voters cast their secret ballot in conditions of tranquility at the nationwide web of 207 fixed and 143 mobile polling stations. The SRSG declared that freeness and fairness were the hallmark of the whole electoral process. The final results released on 14 November revealed that no party had polled the two-thirds majority. The major contesting parties, SWAPO and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance secured 41 and 21 seats respectively. The remaining 9 seats were split among five of the eight smaller parties. The contesting parties accepted these results.

In the post-election period and the run up to independence, UNTAG’s civilian presence was gradually reduced. CIVPOL continued to play a crucial role in maintaining law and order. The military component was wound up in early 1990 as the Namibian Independence Plan progressed smoothly. UNTAG’s overall mandate was officially terminated on 20 March 1991. UNTAG’s remaining personnel vacated Namibia

490 National Archives of Namibia, File A.624
immediately after independence with the exception of Nigeria’s police and Kenya’s military contingent under government to government arrangements designed to assist Namibia establish a balanced and functional security sector. The UNHCR concluded its repatriation operation in June 1990 having also assisted the few exiles who had failed to return ahead of the elections.

4.5 Establishment of the Namibia Defence Force (NDF)

Namibia assumed a new defence posture with the formation of a cohesive NDF initially targeted at a strength of 5,000 to protect the integrity of the newly independent state as well as create employment for ex-fighters intent upon pursuing military careers. The formation of a new NDF meant that in Namibia none of the two formerly warring parties would perceive they were being absorbed into an existing military establishment. The NDF was established by the Defence Amendment Act, 1990 (No. 20 of 1990) that was promulgated in December and amended the original Defence Act (No. 44 of 1957). D. Hammambo, former Commander in Chief of PLAN, was appointed the first Chief of Staff of Staff of the NDF by the President.

Integration was supposed to occur on a parity basis (50-50), with recruitment on an equal basis from demobilized PLAN and SWATF members. However, in practice there were disparities in the integration process as former PLAN fighters were given priority over ex-South African forces. This was partly because PLAN ex-fighters proportionally

492 A. Du Pisani, Rumours of Rain: Namibia’s Post-Independence Experience, (Johannesburg, SAIIA,
constituted the majority and that some ex-SWATF left with the SADF. The result was that the NDF, provisionally targeted at a strength of 10,000 on grounds of economic sustainability, was 7,500 strong at the ratio of two ex-PLAN members for every ex-SWATF/Koevoet member in 1993. 493 This was a potential source of tension within the new society but “it did not boil over and did not create serious challenges of instability for the state.” 494 Women ex-PLAN and ex-SWATF were initially excluded from the NDF and were only appointed to subordinate roles and positions when they eventually recruited.

President Nujoma invited the British government to assist with the establishment of the NDF and the Ministry of Defence. A 57-strong BMATT contingent, headed by Brigadier Tony Ling, helped the selection and training of members of the unitary NDF. Kenbatt offered assistance during the early phases of the integration and retraining process. Integration of the two armies was successful. The countries that played significant roles in support of the liberation struggle such as China, the former Soviet Union and Cuba were excluded in the process of establishing the new military and ex-fighter reintegration. The new government read the signals of the change that was sweeping across the former Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War and recognized the need to take on board an internationally accepted and important country such as the United Kingdom. 495

1991), p.5
494 Interview with Professor Andre du Pisani, 10 November 2004, Windhoek
BMATT’s training programme involved 8-week Leadership Cadre courses that embraced physical training, weapon handling and firing, tactics, administration and leadership. This prepared graduates for command and instruction positions. Training was modeled around the British military doctrine. Brigadier Ling, head of BMATT in Namibia, commented: “When soldiers are put together and go through the hardships of training they become colleagues.”

The government’s adoption of the reconciliation policy, including ruling out of war trials and persecutions, suppressed potential antagonisms between the former PLAN and SWATF members of the new NDF.

Closely linked to the reformation of the defence forces was the transformation of SWAPOL to NAMPOL to maintain law and order. NAMPOL was established by the Police Act, 1990 (Act No. 19) and the President appointed Lt-General P.A. Fouche as the first Inspector-General and head of police. Ex-PLAN fighters were drafted into NAMPOL alongside ex-SWAPOL members “to balance the political allegiance of the force.”

During the integration and subsequent reintegration processes the Namibian government dealt with ex-combatants of diverse categories. These included ex-PLAN commanders who, basing on their superior educational and professional status, looked forward to a professional career in the NDF or other government departments.

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495 Interview with Peter Shivute, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Defence, Windhoek, 12 November 2004
496 The Star, 2 May 1990
file…lacking skills beyond bush survival and warfare” expected SWAPO to continue fending for their welfare.\textsuperscript{499} This was unlike the numerous PLAN “dissidents”, some of them who had been held in SWAPO detention camps and were unsure of their fate. Ex-SWATF and Koevoet whites entertained hopes for employment by their kith and kin “in a (Namibian) labour market dominated by South African business.”\textsuperscript{500} Some ex-SWAPOL, including ex-members of the notorious Koevoet, preferred to continue in the Namibian Police (NAMPOL).

Gender considerations were also critical. PLAN female combatants expected their participation in the dual fight against colonialism and male oppression to translate to equal educational and professional opportunities with men in the post-war set-up. Despite obvious differing backgrounds and aspirations, the ex-combatants generally shared high levels of optimism and expectations.

\textbf{4.6 Creating a Time Bomb?: Post-independence reintegration of ex-fighters}

Namibia’s post-conflict socio-economic polity was guided by the government’s declared adoption of the policy of reconciliation and commitment to consolidatory institution building and good governance. The preamble of Namibia’s homemade Constitution reads: “We, the people of Namibia…will strive to achieve national reconciliation and to

foster peace, unity and a common loyalty to a single state.” The subsequent “Forgive and Forget” national strategy encouraged the Namibians to confine wartime animosity and atrocities to obscurity in pursuit of the creation of a firm foundation for peace building, national development and reconstruction. Andre du Pisani commented: “the incoming government proclaimed that its policy was national reconciliation, nation building, unity that essentially provided the ingredients that made the integration of the armed forces, demobilization, demilitarization relatively easy but it was not a complete process.” The post-independence peace building process was to be aided by the independence government’s inheritance of a functional, albeit small economic infrastructure that survived hemorrhaging during the liberation war.

A major peace building task and responsibility of the independence government was the implementation of the final phase of the DDR programme - the crucial reintegration of the demobilized combatants. Notwithstanding UNTAG’s commendable implementation of its broad mandate Namibia’s disarmament and demobilization was not linked with reintegration. PLAN ex-fighters recalled:

These (needs assessment and reintegration) issues were never raised. It was a matter of the process would be carried out under UN supervision and then during the transition period the UN will supervise until we go to our polling stations. There was nothing else that was promised, no assessment at all.

I was disarmed in Lubango, Angola. We were issued with forms, demobilization items mattresses, blankets etc and then issued with demobilization forms then flown to Namibia, to Windhoek and kept in the transit camps for 3 days and

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501 Constitution of the Republic of Namibia
502 Interview with Professor Andre du Pisani, 10 November 2004, Windhoek
503 Interview with Ex-PLAN Informant 1, 9 November 2004, Windhoek
thereafter our families collected us. We were all issued with the same items irrespective of your age, sex or the size of your family. It was just the same.\textsuperscript{504} Disarmament and demobilization, including the withdrawal of SADF had been executed under UNTAG’s supervision. This meant that Namibia had no constitutionally established defence force at independence. The independence government had to preside over the formation of the Namibian Defence Forces (NDF) and the reintegration of demobilized fighters who could not be absorbed into the new forces. UNTAG effectively discharged its preoccupation of supervising the birth of a new Namibian nation. Ensuring the human security of the ex-fighters and ex-refugees in Namibia was a responsibility of the government.

The NDF and NAMPOL combined, presented a major employment destination, absorbing between 8,000 and 10,000 combatants offering stability to these and their dependants.\textsuperscript{505} These security sector employment beneficiaries represented a fraction of the considerable ex-fighter population that neared the 57,000 mark.\textsuperscript{506} The superfluous ex-fighters’ reintegration encountered significant programmatic inhibitions as shall be explained further on.

The imperative need of an elaborate and comprehensive ex-fighter reintegration programme was apparent. Rosemary Preston, however, observed that “In Namibia after demobilization, beyond a decision to assist disabled returnees, there was no rehabilitation

\textsuperscript{504} Interview with Ex-PLAN fighter Col. M. Nakanduvungileh, 12 November 2004, Windhoek
planning or any intention to facilitate fighter integration into society.”\textsuperscript{507} This has been partly attributed to the broad framework of state policy that was preoccupied with the political imperatives of nation building. Andre du Pisani observed:

The problem though was the reintegration process and its locus within the broad framework of state policy was not fully integrated in the sense that the priorities were very powerfully political. The priorities were creating the state, establishing the new state, consolidating power quickly and developing, aggressively, the policy of national reconciliation- in other words the nation building project. The military was really a key element and it is really true that if you look back in retrospect the first fruit of national reconciliation was actually the new NDF and structurally the most important element at the early stage was the relatively successful process of integrating former combatants and establishing the new defence force.\textsuperscript{508}

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, Peter Shivute, concurred that “the government-elect had to decide on what were the priorities, and security was number one. There was a vacuum because at the end of the day UNTAG had to pull out and we were left with a problem in Namibia. The defence force is not yet ready, not yet trained.”\textsuperscript{509}

The prospects for planning a comprehensive and effective ex-fighter reintegration strategy were also compounded by the fact that in Namibia an unknown number of both male and female combatants served during the war. At the time of demobilization in 1989, there was no systematic collection of socio-economic data on the combatants. This means that figures can be extremely inaccurate.\textsuperscript{510}

\textsuperscript{508} Interview with Professor Andre du Pisani,10 November 2004, Windhoek
\textsuperscript{509} Interview with Peter Shivute, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Defence, Windhoek, 12 November 2004
\textsuperscript{510} E. F. Barth, Peace as Disappointment: The Reintegration of Female Soldiers in Post-Conflict Societies:
Vincent Mwange, a PLAN ex-fighter, also pointed out that “SWAPO never kept records in exile. So there is no accurate number of the strength of PLAN. This is also a constraint to know exactly how many were demobilized. If you do not know the exact number, how can you end up saying this much has been achieved in terms of reintegration.”\(^5\) What the government eventually embarked on were stopgap measures that failed to satisfy the disgruntled, unemployed ex-fighters who posed a serious security threat on account of their military background. This meant that “Namibia’s DDR left room for a ticking time bomb waiting to explode.”\(^5\)

4.6.1 *The Economic Context and Roll Out of DDR*

The incomprehensive reintegration strategies were compounded by an adverse economic context. Namibia’s economy had been held hostage by apartheid South Africa’s prolonged control. Predictably, the UN-controlled transition to a formal democratic system was accompanied by a neo-colonial economic structure. At independence 90 per cent of Namibia’s import and export trade was with South Africa. It was not only South Africa’s economic domination but minority ownership of the means of production. An estimated 5% of the population controlled 71% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in


\(^5\) Interview with Ex-PLAN fighter Vincent Mwange, Chief Research Information Officer, National Council of Namibia, 11 November 2004, Windhoek

\(^5\) Interview with Phil Ya Nangoloh, Executive Director, National Society for Human Rights (Namibia), 12 November 2004, Windhoek
1989. These asymmetrical economic relations were conserved in line with the government’s adoption of the policy of national reconciliation. In addition the country had a small formal private sector that was capable of supporting only 5.1 per cent of the Namibian population. Independence was not accompanied by an economic “boom situation” with the country recording a small real GDP growth of 0.2% in 1990, which was 23% lower than in 1980. Low mineral prices, over exploitation of fishing resources, a prolonged drought, financial mismanagement and the liberation were some of the counterpart factors behind the depressed economic performance.

The neo-colonial economic relations, slow economic growth and selective nature of reconciliation limited the employment prospects for the majority of the unattached ex-fighters. William Nhara stressed that:

Much of the economic and civilian sector in Namibia remained under South African control. There was an antagonistic relationship between the government and the whites who controlled the private sector. They were not part of SWAPO’s philosophy and did not co-operate with the government. Mention of their (ex-) guerilla status would not aid their (war veterans) situation. Whatever integration there was, was mainly in the government (public sector) and not private sector.

Namibia’s economy was not immediately restructured to facilitate economic growth and job creation. A reoriented, balanced and expanding economy would have absorbed the ex-fighters, buttressing their human security which was crucial for long-term stability and

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516 Interview with William Nhara, Director: Southern Africa Institute for Democracy and Good
In spite of the informal sector’s potential to meet the reintegration goals of alleviating poverty and creating jobs for unskilled and semi-skilled ex-fighters the government did not prioritize its development. In addition to lack of governmental support informal proprietors encountered impediments including:

- poor appraisal of project feasibility
- limited market access
- lack of project management and bookkeeping skills
- lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- lack of access to credit and secure work site
- lack of technology and skills

These factors adversely impacted players in the informal sector like small businesses, cooperatives and hawkers thereby frustrating a more equitable distribution of income among the poor, unemployed ex-fighters.

State-centred intervention was focused on the public sector that remained the major employment destination. The majority of the skilled returnee population was employed in the public sector. However, the size of the expanding public sector was restrained by budgetary considerations. Also, most PLAN fighters had been engaged in military activities and found it hard to compete against ‘civilian’ returnees who had pursued

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education and training in exile. Unemployed PLAN ex-combatants lamented:

I am appealing to those fellow comrades who are boasting at having had training abroad and saying that they are the ones with degrees and diplomas and should get jobs. What about the people who were at the battlefront during the liberation of our country, and who are not educated? What are we going to do? Many of us are illiterate people who only know how to fight?...Many of them (‘intellectuals’) are now proud and arrogant because they have been given jobs and are driving luxurious cars.”

“I was 12 when I left for Angola. At 17 I became a combatant and now I am suffering. I’ve been looking for a job, but people in Namibia do no want to recruit ex-fighters because we don’t have certificates for studies” and “We were in exile fighting for liberation, but when we came back home there no jobs for us. We need jobs, permanent jobs.”

Many ex-combatants whose employment prospects were restricted by their lack of formal qualifications remained with the mainstream unemployed returnee population years into independence.

Ex-SWATF members were better placed than their ex-PLAN counterparts. For instance, SWATF ex-fighters continued to receive salaries from South Africa after discharge until Namibia’s independence. This was strategically meant to facilitate their civilian reintegration and to retain their loyalty to SADF in case Namibia’s transition to independence collapsed. The fact that their eligibility for conscription hinged on possession of a standard 8 level of education stood them in good ground for civilian employment and reintegration. SWATF ex-fighters had established homes and did not therefore face serious accommodation problems. In 1991/92 South Africa implemented a

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518 *Namibian*, 23 July 1990, “Unequal Comrades” (Letter to the Editor)
520 N.J. Colleta, *Beyond Repatriation: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in*
compensation scheme comprising “a one-off payment of 12 000 Namibian dollars (US$2 600) to former Koevoet and SWATF forces as a gratuity to tide them over until they found employment.” Some former SWATF, represented by a union, also planned protests in July 1997 to demand these gratuities that they claimed to have not received. The Namibian and South African governments insisted the money was disbursed.

In 1991 the unemployed former PLAN combatants were paid a nominal one-off gratuity of R1 400. This followed demonstrations by ex-fighters in Windhoek who demanded recompense for their liberation war efforts. The funds derived from R36 million offered the Namibian government by the South African government. Initially meant to cater for ex-South Africa forces the amount was split to cater for the ex-PLAN fighters as well after protestations by the Namibia government and eventual negotiation with South Africa. Transparency and accountability in the disbursement was lax: “The payment was effected through a commercial bank, and leakages were substantial because of lack of records.” As a result of the opaque compensation payment process some PLAN ex-fighters claim not to have benefited. Notwithstanding this, besides temporarily reining in war veteran demonstrations, the cash-payment was not a lasting solution to the problem of social reintegration.

Likewise, the succeeding two-year (1991 and 1992) Development Brigade (later Development Brigade Corporation) training programme, designed to impart practical

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Namibia, p.21
521 The Financial Gazette, 10 July 1997, “Namibian war veterans protest for jobs”
agriculture and construction skills sufficient for sustainable post-graduation income generation to the unemployed ex-combatants, was not effective. Twelve centres, countrywide, were created to train a planned 7 500 and 10 350 ex-fighters as construction workers and agricultural producers respectively.523

Institutional and operational problems including lack of funding, lack of technical expertise and qualified personnel as well as inappropriate training resulted in the Development Brigade programme failing to acquire self-sufficiency status and wean the trainees into productive employment or viable projects. These flaws were reminiscent of those that plagued Zimbabwe’s earlier Demobilization Directorate managed demobilization policy of 1981. This showed that Namibia’s process had failed to learn tangible lessons from Zimbabwe’s ill-fated reintegration initiatives.

Bilateral donors such as Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and later the European Community withdrew sponsorship on the basis of negative evaluation reports on the performance and viability of the Development Brigade. The dependency syndrome amongst the Brigade members who believed that the government had to indefinitely guarantee their welfare and employment aggravated the situation. The Development Brigade project also confined ex-fighters together and reinforced their separateness thereby undermining their reintegration into society.524

524 Interview with Professor Andre du Pisani, 10 November 2004, Windhoek
A highly centralized control regime militated against the implementation of curricula based on a consultative needs assessment of the applicants and the job market. Ex-PLAN Vincent Mwange noted:

the Development Brigade instead of becoming an institution that imparts skills to ex-combatants it ended up like a project where ex-combatants became dependent on because they could not find any jobs after the so-called training that was offered by the Development Brigade. Probably there was no needs assessment or employment assessment of the job market whether what was being offered was on the job market. So the guys remained unemployed after finishing the training.525

Simon Shikangala, the Development Brigade manager, admitted its shortcomings: “In 1992 to 1993, the training was disorganized. There weren’t enough training materials, the instructors were generally of poor quality and the syllabus was not properly arranged.”526

Most of the ex-combatants ended up with the same level of skills and were not very successful in finding formal employment and remained relatively marginalized. The unemployed Development Brigade graduates swelled the ranks of the already existing unemployed ex-fighter population with serious implications for political stability. It is not surprising that in 2003 the government decided to close the Development Brigade and replace it with a profit-oriented, but, equally ill-fated Development Brigade Corporation.527

The Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (MLLR) devised a broad

525 Interview with Ex-PLAN fighter Vincent Mwange, Chief Research Information Officer, National Council of Namibia, 11 November 2004, Windhoek
527 The now defunct Development Brigade Corporation is currently under a presidential commission of inquiry into its activities.
Resettlement Programme targeted at meeting the longer term needs of the returnees and internally displaced persons. The Development Brigade was strategically placed under the MLLR as land was central to its success. However, as MLLR Permanent Secretary, Frans Tsheehama, explained ex-fighters were not a preferential target group under the land reform programme:

Land resettlement was designed to benefit every Namibian and ex-combatants were not treated as a special category. They have been a part and parcel because we have mentioned the ex-combatants, the fighters, the San people, the marginalized Namibians. The ex-combatants are part of the categories that we target. However, in terms of number(s) that will not be easy because when we resettle, we settle on the basis of applications that are coming in. We do not ask whether you were an ex-combatant. So all of us I think in this country are sort of ex-combatants, all formerly disadvantaged Namibians because we all have been at the periphery of the societal development.

In addition, stifling factors including the government’s policy of reconciliation produced a snail-paced and ambiguous land settlement scheme. Thomas Ohlson summed this up: “The ruling party, by emphasizing reconciliation in the hope of gaining stability and attracting foreign capital and assistance to boost reconstruction, shelved earlier demands for redistribution of wealth, especially land.” The result was that by August 2001 only 35,000 Namibians had been resettled on commercial farmland leaving 243,000 communal farmers, including many unemployed war veterans, eking out an existence on small plots.

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529 Interview with Frans Tsheehama, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands, Rehabilitation and Resettlement, 12 November 2004, Windhoek
The government’s willing-seller, willing-buyer land reform policy perpetuated the colonial land ownership with black commercial farmers owning only 2.2 million hectares in comparison to a substantial white area of about 30.5 million hectares.\(^{532}\) This had the impact of postponing sustainable ex-fighter reintegration. MLLR Permanent Secretary, Frans Tsheehama, said that in order to appease the increasingly impatient Namibian population and fire up speed in the land resettlement programme hitherto “very slow and cumbersome” the government plans to “marry the willing seller-willing buyer with the expropriation which has been provided for in the constitution.”\(^{533}\) While expropriation notices have been given for identified farms none have been acquired as yet.

4.6.2 Special Categories

The physically impaired ex-combatants confronted a double jeopardy compared to their able-bodied counterparts. In addition to the absence of a generalized comprehensive reintegration strategy there were restricted governmental rehabilitation programmes for the wartime injured and psychologically distressed combatants. This occurred when about 10 per cent of the ex-combatants suffered from physical and psychological disabilities.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) ran the solitary rehabilitation centre for former PLAN fighters (hitherto based in Angola) who required specialized

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\(^{532}\) *The Chronicle*, 18 August 2001. In 1989 an estimated 4 045 white commercial farmers owned about 45% of the total land area and 74% of potentially arable land.

\(^{533}\) Interview with Frans Tsheehama, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands, Rehabilitation and
treatment at Nakaye in Ovamboland. The Centre aimed to offer training to facilitate sustainable disabled ex-fighter reintegration. Operating on a shoestring budget the centre could only accommodate 180 ex-combatants under “unacceptable” living conditions with inappropriate training programmes.\textsuperscript{534} Not surprisingly, within a year, in July 1990, the number of interns had plummeted to 71. The 71 included 5 carpenters, 10 agriculturalists, 11 telecommunications and typing specialists, 9 cane furniture makers, 12 orthopedic mechanics, 6 tailors and 9 leather workers, all with some level of qualifications. However, these could still not secure employment while the centre would not profitably use their skills.

One practical recommendation in a study specifically carried out to enhance Namibia’s reintegration was that “there were few counseling facilities available in Zimbabwe. Namibia should not ignore the psycho-social problems of its war affected people.”\textsuperscript{535} Cases of mental stress were naturally high among the ex-fighter population in general and the disabled ex-fighters in particular who suffered restricted access to psychiatric and counselling services.

The creation of the MLLR in 1990 provided a dedicated ministerial framework for the implementation of rehabilitation of people with disabilities. The government took over charge of most rehabilitation activities, including the ELCIN centre, which now caters for

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Resettlement, 12 November 2004, Windhoek
\textsuperscript{535} S.T. Makanya “Lessons from elsewhere: Integration strategies in independent Zimbabwe” in R. Preston, \textit{The Integration of Returned Exiles, Former Combatants and Other War-Affected Namibians}, (Windhoek, NISER, 1993), pviii
the broader disabled population. More importantly, the Namibian government has made a policy shift from the institutional rehabilitation of people with disability to an emphasis “on what we call Community Based Rehabilitation. We in fact bring the services to the people with disabilities. They come and demand from the government that this is what we need. So it is led from their side than government itself. We are not prescribing like we are giving medicine but we give them an opportunity to be part of the mainstream society.” This usefully facilitates grassroots oriented rehabilitation and raises the awareness of the community in what relates to dealing with disability. In addition every financial year a budgetary provision of N$500 000 is set aside by the MLLR to subsidize activities of associations for people living with disabilities. The CBR approach, however, does not single out disabled ex-fighters as a special target group. This also makes it difficult to assess the impact it has had on disabled ex-fighter rehabilitation.

Further and targeted assistance for disabled ex-fighters was put in place in 1998. This was in response to pronounced ex-fighter protests for jobs and welfare assistance. In June 1998 the government cobbled up a temporary programme for unemployed veterans with severe disabilities that entitled them to receive a monthly allowance of N$350 for 12 months. In its first month of existence at least 93 ex-combatants in four regions, namely, Caprivi, Kavango, Otjozondjupa and Oshana, benefited. The arrangement was planned to expand to cover 300 registered disabled ex-combatants at a total cost to the government of N$1.2 million for the one year.

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536 Interview with Frans Tsheehama, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands, Rehabilitation and Resettlement, 12 November 2004, Windhoek
Nghidinihamba Ndilula, General Manager of the Socio-Economic Integration Programme for Ex-Combatants (SIPE), who administered the above interim arrangement, stressed that “It (the allowance) is not compensation of any kind but purely an alternative payment in the absence of a disability bill,” that would be scrapped once new legislation catering for grants by the Ministry of Health and Social Services was enacted.\textsuperscript{538} The grant which now officially comes from the Ministry of Health and Social Services has since been increased to N$500 per month per individual. Similar allowances were also granted the aged ex-fighters who could not be absorbed under the government’s ex-fighter employment programmes. Ex-fighters, however, claim that the allowance is not substantial enough to cater for their basic needs.

There were also no specific reintegration programmes for female ex-fighters. Vanessa Farr noted:

\begin{quote}
In Namibia, women guerillas returned home, changed from military clothing into dresses, which were considered gender-appropriate civilian attire, and were sent to refugee rather than demobilization camps, where they received no benefits, retraining or psychological counselling to assist them in their reintegration.\textsuperscript{539}
\end{quote}

Women were later given the same general skills and vocational training as men ex-fighters. Former PLAN female freedom fighter Pauline Dempers said that women encountered difficulties since “there was no effective way of reintegrating the ex-

\textsuperscript{538} The Namibian, 29 July 1998 “War veterans start receiving disability allowances”
\textsuperscript{539}V. Farr, Gendering Demilitarization as a Peacebuilding Tool, (Bonn, BICC, 2002), p.23
They also had to face the challenge of readjusting to traditional and feminized civilian life:

I had to dress as a civilian…I had problems putting on a skirt for the first time in years. I was feeling awful. You could see the difference in skin colour between my arms and legs, because I used to wear trousers all the time.541

Ex-PLAN single mothers faced greater difficulties in the absence of dedicated support initiatives:

But at the time (wartime), the women didn’t feel that it was bad to have these children. You didn’t feel it until you got back home. That is when you realized this was bad…Like now, when they are not able to take care of their children, now is when they realize this was bad. During the war SWAPO was taking care of all the kids…It is now that they feel it because it is so difficult to maintain those kids.542

The reintegration process relegated female freedom fighters to official oblivion against a backdrop of a conservative society. Ex-combatant Teckla Shikola observed:

[N]o one mention[s] the contributions women made during the…struggle. That’s true all over the world. You never find an appreciation of what women did. Men appreciate women who cook for them, and they respect women who fought in the war with them, but after independence, they [don’t] really consider women as part of the liberation movement.543

540 Interview with Pauline Dempers, PLAN ex-combatant and National Coordinator, Breaking the Wall of Silence, Namibia, 8 April 2005, Pretoria
543 T. Shikola, “We Left Our Shoes Behind”, pp.147-148
It is not surprising, thus, that woman ex-fighters were active participants in post-independence protests calling for government assistance. For instance, a list compiled by the jobless ex-fighters demonstrating at Okahao in 1998 indicated that there were 115 women, 65 men and 7 children gathered at the northern town.\footnote{The Namibian, Poverty grips former combatants <http://www.namibian.com.na/Netstories/Ops6-99/let14180699.htm.> Accessed on 15 July 2004} Those female ex-fighters who finally managed to secure government employment got unsuitable jobs:

\begin{quote}
I just want to single out the female ex-fighters who are shamefully placed in the department of roadworks of the Ministry of Works. It is very cruel to offer such an arduous job to women, jobs which even men find difficult to do. Imagine a woman, and a mother, standing in the hot sun all day long. Can’t the people responsible for allocation of jobs to these people think about that?\footnote{The Namibian, “Women On The Roads” (Letter to the Editor) <http://www.namibian.com.na/Netstories/Ops6-99/let14180699.htm.> Accessed on 15 July 2004}
\end{quote}

Another vulnerable category has been PLAN’s ex-detainees or “dissidents”. While the main body of PLAN unarmed fighters repatriated under the UNHCR operation an outstanding caseload comprised those “SWAPO acknowledged that it had arrested and imprisoned…(those) accused of spying for South Africa during the war.”\footnote{SWAPO later released some of the detainees. On 4 and 29 July and 8 August 1989 232 ex-detainees were returned on special flights by the UNHCR.\footnote{The Namibian, Poverty grips former combatants <http://www.namibian.com.na/Netstories/Ops6-99/let14180699.htm.> Accessed on 15 July 2004} The issue of SWAPO detainees remains controversial to date with Namibian human rights organizations challenging UNTAG/UNHCR investigative reports carried out in 1989 and cleared SWAPO of continued detention.}

It is significant, however, that some of these SWAPO ex-detainees who repatriated late received limited settling-in assistance and also found it difficult to be reintegrated despite
the government’s adoption of the policy of reconciliation. “Considering that most of the ex-SWAPO detainees come from families who are SWAPO supporters, their experiences in many cases have caused friction or even slits in their families, and have thus impeded their reintegration.” A former SWAPO detainee revealed:

After we were released from the dungeons we were registered by the UNHCR. We were flown to Namibia by the UNHCR. There was tension at the airport and we could not even come out of the airport until the UN intervened. I was given a pot, a few tins of fish, a blanket…that is what I can remember. That was all maybe because we were not part of the main programme. I left the country as a SWAPO member. When I returned I was a so-called traitor. That was also very difficult for my family. We could hardly talk about how this happened and why it happened to me. My mother up until now did not ask me why I was detained. My brothers only did after some years. There are psychological effects of the liberation war but people who could assist us have fear of dealing directly with us. They cannot be seen (by the government to be) associating openly with us.

Some of the ex-detainees are working through non-governmental human rights organizations such as Breaking the Wall of Silence and the National Society for Human Rights, Namibia. These initiatives aim at clarifying the detention and alleged abuses that took place in SWAPO camps as a platform of assisting ex-detainees to effectively deal with the sad past.

549 Interview with Pauline Dempers, PLAN ex-combatant and National Coordinator, Breaking the Wall of Silence, Namibia, 8 April 2005, Pretoria
550 Interview with Pauline Dempers, PLAN ex-combatant and National Coordinator, Breaking the Wall of Silence, Namibia, 8 April 2005, Pretoria and Interview with Phil Ya Nangoloh, Executive Director,
4.6.3 *SWAPO Veterans Trust*

The dire situation of the ex-combatants was not helped much by the absence of a welfare representative organization. After independence, the SWAPO Veterans Trust was established. The Trust’s Secretary General, Frederick Mwala Matongo, mentioned its broad focus:

As you know that we have many people who were maimed; many widows and widowers; all different kinds of people and it was very difficult for the government to give employment to each and everyone who came from exile. And you should be aware that in any government there are a limited number of people who can be employed because of limited resources. At the same time the previous government made it a point that they live very little space for employment of those people. So SWAPO Veterans Trust was established as a spokesman to let the Party know how many people were wounded in the liberation and did not have assistance. In other words the SWAPO Veterans Trust is an instrument that can inform the government of the problems of those people.\(^{551}\)

In addition to its lack of specific war veteran assistance the Trust’s performance was negatively affected by limited funding. Frederick Mwala Matongo added:

SWAPO Veterans Trust is effective but the problem is you cannot operate without funds. So we advise the government through our Party what is going on the ground, for instance the number of people who need assistance. The donors, NGOs do not want to hear the name SWAPO. This is the obstacle that we meet because this is non-profitable organization. SWAPO Veterans Trust is there, it is existing, but we need resources.\(^{552}\)

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\(^{551}\) National Society for Human Rights (Namibia), 12 November 2004, Windhoek

\(^{552}\) Interview with Frederick Mwala Matongo, Secretary General SWAPO Veterans Trust, 11 November 2004, Windhoek
Against this backdrop the ex-fighters remained dependant on the incomprehensive and inconsistent MLLR assistance.

4.6.4 The DDR time bomb explodes

The high expectations for a comfortable post independence livelihood vanished amongst many disenchanted ex-PLAN members who failed to reintegrate fully into Namibian society. The euphoria of the return from exile, the elections and the excitement over independence were replaced by varied socio-economic hardships and vices including depression, alcoholism, suicide and, in certain instances recourse to violent behavior. The failure to fully reintegrate the former combatants “who put their bodies on the line for the liberation struggle”553 presented a potential threat to national security and stability.

In 1995, unemployed PLAN ex-fighters engaged in demonstrations for welfare support from the government such as cash payments, employment and recognition. In July 1997, unemployed ex-combatants staged much more serious protests to demand jobs from the government. During the protests they occupied the gardens at the president’s State House in Windhoek demanding to see President Nujoma before moving to the capital’s show grounds.554 It is instructive that the protests by Namibian veterans coincided with similar protests by Zimbabwe’s veterans. Against this backdrop it is hard to escape the conclusion that the explosive Zimbabwe war veteran situation had a contagion effect on

554 The Financial Gazette, 10 July 1997, “Namibian war veterans protest for jobs”
the erstwhile relatively passive Namibian war veteran.

Protests by Zimbabwe’s veterans coerced the government into implementing the compensatory second policy on demobilization and reintegration. Perhaps inspired by these developments the disillusioned Namibian ex-fighters staged further rolling protests in 1998. For instance, in July 1998, unemployed ex-PLAN fighters from Okahao and Outapi embarked on a ‘march for jobs’ to Ondangwa Airport calling on the government to help them secure employment. Having camped at the airport for more than three weeks the original protestors were joined by ex-fighters from the Oshikoto and Ohangwena regions who were employed by the Development Brigade Corporation, set up to provide jobs for former combatants, and who were now experiencing problems with their companies. The ex-combatants lamented their neglect by the government: “Some of our leaders are building big houses like castles for themselves while we are suffering. Why?” Some said:

We might be blind, disabled and old right now but we were useful and committed cadres of the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (Plan) when Swapo was fighting for the total liberation of this country. But now that that goal was achieved our contributions, no matter how small they might have been, are not appreciated anymore. All you hear today is the heroes of Ongulumbashe and the survivors of Cassinga.

In response to the widespread protests then Prime Minister Hage Geingob emphasized the government’s preference for a job-emplacement strategy over monetary pay-offs that some of the ex-fighters suggested. This consistently remained the premise of the government’s response to future such ex-fighter demonstrations. This showed that
Namibia had learnt some lessons from Zimbabwe’s fiscally imprudent ‘second policy on demobilization and reintegration.’

In what became known appropriately as the Peace Project the government expeditiously set up a Government Technical Committee institutional framework to deal with the restive unemployed ex-fighters’ economic reintegration. The committee appropriately comprised senior civil servants from ministries such as Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, Labour and Human Resources, Environment and Tourism and Youth and Sport. Niilo Taapopi, Chairman of the Government Technical Committee, highlighted its task as “to come up with a report as to how best to address the issue of ex-combatants.”

One of the committee’s first tasks was to define war veterans as people who joined PLAN, received military training and were deployed to the front or in other roles to facilitate the liberation struggle. This meant former SWATF and Koevoet members were excluded. The committee surmounted difficulties including lack of research and planning, lack of publicity campaigns, problematic ex-fighter vetting and validation, demands by ex-fighters for monetary compensation to register a total of 11,950 unemployed ex-fighters countrywide by December 1998. The ex-fighters were divided into three categories:

557 Interview with Niilo Taapopi, Government Technical Committee Chairman, Windhoek, 15 November 2004
558 Interview with Niilo Taapopi, Government Technical Committee Chairman, Windhoek, 15 November 2004
559 NSHR, Namibia Country Report. Victims of War, Torture and Organized Political Violence As Well As Issues of National Reconciliation and Justice, June 23, 2002
• those who trained and were deployed in combat formation until demobilization under resolution 435

• those who trained and were deployed in combat formation but were incapacitated because of war time injuries and old age and could not remain in combat formation until the implementation of resolution 435

• those under the leadership of SWAPO and served in other capacities in exile but were not military trained\textsuperscript{560}

The government would then contact the registrants with employment details.

The Government Technical Committee recommended to cabinet that the unemployed former combatants should be employed in government service to facilitate their socio-economic reintegration.\textsuperscript{561} The ex-fighters had a military background and the country’s security sector was a natural employment destination. In line with a subsequent cabinet directive of 1998 the defence and police forces recruited 2 000 of the registrants. These received standardization training before deployment with NDF.

Other promised jobs were with the special field force of NAMPOL; 2 000 with the Patriotic Construction, a work brigade which also did training; 400 in the ministries of works, transport and communications; and 740 in the ministry of environment and tourism.\textsuperscript{562} The cabinet relaxed the job entry requirements in order to accommodate the

\textsuperscript{560} Interview with Niilo Taapopi Government Technical Committee Chairman, Windhoek, 15 November 2004

\textsuperscript{561} Interview with Niilo Taapopi Government Technical Committee Chairman, Windhoek, 15 November 2004

\textsuperscript{562} The Financial Gazette, 10 July 1997, “Namibian war veterans protest for jobs”
ex-fighters. The private sector was encouraged to employ ex-fighters and together with the government absorbed other ex-fighters. The difficulties encountered during the registration process and job shortfalls meant that some of the ex-fighters remained unattached.

A Socio-Integration Fund (SIF) was also established to provide finance for ex-combatants with concrete and viable business proposals. The Minister of Higher Education and Vocational Training, Science and Technology was appointed to supervise the fund and the project committee that would assess the proposals.

The Peace Project’s initial focus was on unemployed PLAN ex-fighters. This was a serious oversight as Namibia’s unemployed ex-fighter problem was duplicated. Ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet members who were demobilized as part of the UNTAG peace process and were still unemployed demanded similar job assistance. The Government Technical Committee established their status by 15 December 1998, 1,980 former SWATF and Koevoet combatants had been registered. The committee recommended that genuine ex-combatants be given employment under the Peace Project.

The ex-combatant’s sustained claim for assistance invoked questions about whether ex-combatants were a perpetual special category and if provision of ex-fighters’ assistance would be predicated upon short-term political rather than longer-term economic imperatives. Asser Hango, the Councillor for Okahao, and SWAPO member of the National Council, alleged, lamely one may feel, that some of these ex-fighters mistakenly
thought that the SWAPO Government “must only look after them” when “Namibia is not a one-party state and the Government’s efforts to provide job opportunities are geared at all the people in this country”\textsuperscript{563} Robin Sherbourne, a Namibian economic analyst, commented:

The news that government has decided to offer employment or pensions to over 9,500 ex-fighters will have been greeted with a mixture of understanding and skepticism by many. The understanding will come from a sense of justice - that people who have risked their lives and sacrificed so much for what most would recognize to be a noble cause deserve some compensation from the state they did so much to help create. The skepticism will come from the many unanswered questions the recent announcement gives rise to. These extend from the political - why it has taken 8 years to reach this stage, why it will take place in an election year, whether it would have taken place without the demonstrations of the ex-fighters - to the economic.\textsuperscript{564}

The plans if implemented would jeopardize Namibia’s economic fabric, increase social capital expenditure and contradict the government’s twin commitments of bringing the deficit down to 3% of GDP by 2000 and reversing the tax increases of the last budget. Eventually the national budget announced in 1999 included public expenditure on the ex-combatants. This included employing an estimated 9 000 ex-fighters in the public service and providing pensions of N$500 a month for those incapable of work that would cost an estimated N$255 million a year and bring employment in the public sector up to 78 249.\textsuperscript{565}

This was a price that the Namibian government had to pay for botched earlier reintegration initiatives. Robin Sherbourne summed this up:

\textsuperscript{563} “Fighters must bite bullet” \texttt{<http://www.namibian.com.na>} Accessed on 15 July 2004
\textsuperscript{564} R. Sherbourne, “Biting the Wrong Bullets” \texttt{<http://www.namibian.com.na>} Accessed on 15 July 2004
The ex-fighters represent a serious political problem which to date has been dealt with by a series of short-term poorly conceived and implemented measures. The last resort of public employment in areas where unskilled workers are most easily absorbed (and do the least damage) has finally been grasped out of desperation.\textsuperscript{566}

This resonated with Prime Minister Hage Geingob’s earlier explanation of the security imperatives of absorbing the ex-fighters: “We know what our choices must be if we are to choose between continued peace or a smaller (civil) service.”\textsuperscript{567} From a long term structural viewpoint and the perspective of nation and peace building it made sense to accommodate many ex-fighters in the civil service. Niilo Taapopi summed up the impact of the Peace Project:

Close to 90 per cent (of registered unemployed ex-fighters) were catered for...It is not that each and everyone particularly those who were in this country, they also fought and they also suffered but such courtesy was not done to them...It was important to give real respect to those (ex-fighters) who suffered like that otherwise there was not going to be peace because of that situation. As a result of the Peace Project that situation has now stabilized but we are not claiming that each and everyone who is an ex-fighter was employed but we managed to tackle a big number.\textsuperscript{568}

However, the fact that this was largely crisis management by the government meant that “the training programmes were not well designed. They were mostly crush courses that were done very quickly. Re-skilling was not done thoroughly [and] many of these former fighters did not get multiple skills.”\textsuperscript{569}

\textsuperscript{567} “Namibia’s public sector: Continued peace or smaller service?” \textit{NAMIBIA Review}, March/April 1997, p.34
\textsuperscript{568} Interview with Niilo Taapopi, Government Technical Committee Chairman, Windhoek, 15 November 2004
\textsuperscript{569} Interview with Professor Andre du Pisani,10 November 2004, Windhoek
4.7 Resettlement of returnees

Besides the ex-combatants civilian returnees also expected tangible benefits to be delivered by the post-colonial state. Amongst the civilian returnees were thousands awaiting induction into PLAN or to go for military training and the fact that the struggle took a different turn, in their view, did not diminish the level of commitment that they had for the liberation process and therefore independence, for them, meant a translation into something tangible.

Among the majority black population who supported the liberation movement, the aspirations of most were grounded in the reality of the lives that they knew. Freedom to move and associate, the right to choose where to live and to work, …..access to secure employment regardless of level, were reasonable enough goals for a minimally educated, poorly skilled mass.570

The returnee population represented diverse education, skills and training backgrounds. Tapscott and Mulongeni divided the returnee population into four categories:

- the highly educated (degree/diploma)
- the skilled/semi-skilled (artisans/industrially skilled etc)
- the unskilled (labourers/farm workers etc)
- Members of the military (both skilled and unskilled)571

As with the ex-combatants, the reintegration of the repatriates was problematic. It was

not part of UNTAG’s mandate. The UNHCR stated that its official involvement in the Namibian post-return period would be confined to the immediate post-relocation needs of the returnees.

It is standard UNHCR practice to provide assistance to returnees to facilitate their reintegration into the local community. Activities under this sector may take various forms (construction of shelter, provision of agricultural tools and seeds, rehabilitation of social infrastructure, activities which could promote self-reliance, etc) depending on local conditions and bearing in mind the need to avoid creating a privileged group, particularly in this political context.572

Remarkably, no official long-term reintegration assistance was planned as the government took “the policy decision not to differentiate returnees from stayers”.573 The government stance, which was influenced by the policy of national reconciliation that deemed preferential treatment of specific groups inappropriate, conformed to the policies of the UNHCR and other international agencies that aimed to prevent tension between returnees and stay-at-homes. The latter might also have endured hardships while inside colonial Namibia. The policy was also partly based on the presumptions that resettlement would be largely self-facilitation through:

- the accommodation of those returning by those members of their families who had remained in Namibia
- the absorption of the exile-educated and economically active into the labour market shored by the anticipated emigration of non-reconciling skilled South

572 S. Brown, “The contribution of local and international agencies” in R Preston, The Integration of Returned Exiles, Former Combatants and Other War-Affected Namibians, (Windhoek, NISER, 1993), pp.4-16 to 17
The community at large and the socio-cultural factor of extended families facilitated the initial integration process as many returnees were accommodated by relatives when they left the reception centres. Immanuel Dumeni, coordinator of the RRR, noted:

The great majority have been integrated into their communities...It was the local communities and not the RRR committee, nor the UNHCR, that received the returnees. The communities were very eager to receive them. People formed committees that organized different activities. This means that some people collected food and some carried out distribution voluntarily. Whenever we needed their assistance and cooperation, they responded positively...some families were already of large size but they still opened their door to a number of returnees. Despite such problems, the community was gladly willing to share the burdens.

However, the absence of specific reintegration assistance essentially left expectant returnees long-term reintegration to their own devices.

There were no formal programmes for ensuring that people got integrated into society. They had to find their own ways to survive. I think that is one of the (programme’s) weaknesses. The problem was that we were not used to taking care of our lives...When we were in the camps we were used to being provided everything. When we came back we realized that we had to look for work. It took long and it was really hard for some people to get employment. The first common expectation that was prevalent among returnees was that SWAPO owed us jobs, and had to guarantee that all of us got good jobs, even those who never had a chance to go to school.

The result was that many returnees “encountered serious difficulties in finding work,

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575 Interview with Phanuel Kaapama, Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Namibia, 11 November 2004, Windhoek
577 Interview with Returnee Informant 1, 8 November 2004, Windhoek
becoming self-sufficient, and achieving economic integration\textsuperscript{578} Independent surveys confirmed this. According to a UNICEF nutritional survey carried out in 1990, 7 per cent of the returnees had found formal sector employment, 36 per cent were active in subsistence production while 57 per cent were economically inactive.\textsuperscript{579} Otto Benecke Stiftung reported that only 10 per cent of a sample of 270 informants had secured employment by the end of 1990.\textsuperscript{580} Generally, unemployment was higher among returnees than those who stayed at home.

### Table 4.2: Occupational Status of Returnees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men returnees</th>
<th>Men stayers</th>
<th>Women returnees</th>
<th>Women stayers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular Employment</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underemployed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uempl. With farm/business</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully employed</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Several socio-economic and institutional factors might have impeded the integration of repatriates into the labour market:\textsuperscript{581}

• Lack of knowledge of how to secure employment, partly due lack of access to job information through the media

• Lack of funds to foot the cost of travel to job interviews

• Non-recognition by employers of qualifications and experience obtained in foreign countries particularly in Eastern Europe, Cuba and Africa

• Employer discrimination against returnees in retaliation of their assumed support for SWAPO

• The effects of global recession reduced employment opportunities

White civil servants, inherited from the colonial bureaucracy, frustrated returnees’ chances of securing employment by, for instance, telling them, “As for you people, see what your government can do for you.”582 Returnees wrote protesting non-recognition of their qualifications and employer discrimination. “Returnees are mostly unemployed because their qualifications (papers) are invalid and disqualified and all their certificates are apparently good for nothing”583 and “What are we going to do now? If businessmen do not want to employ us (they say we must look for jobs with Swapo) then what can we do?”584 This was against a background of donor reluctance to fund assistance projects for specifically targeting Namibian returnees.

The situation was worse for those who returned to their rural homes where the slow progression of land redistribution meant restricted access to productive land. Hardships encountered in independent Namibia compounded the suffering and depression endured

582 Namibian, 9 May 1990 “Go to Swapo” (Letter to the Editor)
583 Namibian, 23 July 1990 “Still Suffering” (Letter to the Editor)
584 Namibian, 20 July 1990 “We are beggars” (Letter to the Editor)
Most returnees who chose to settle in urban areas faced additional problems in terms of accommodation. They could not afford the high property prices and rentals in Windhoek and ended up erecting makeshift residences in townships such as Katutura. The arrival of UNTAG and other external organizations compounded by a high demand for housing significantly pushed up the costs of housing. Ostensibly affordable residential units developed by the National Building and Investment Corporation were beyond the reach of ordinary Namibians. Violent crime was one of the manifestations of un-corresponding urban population growth with economic recession.

Against this background of restricted opportunities ‘returnees’ versus ‘stay-at-homes’ conflicts in some instances erupted replacing the post-repatriation camaraderie. The stay-at-homes resented the perception of returnees as a privileged class stemming form prominent roles that returnees assumed in the election process and their monopoly over top positions in government: “The returnees think they were the only ones in the struggle...But we were also in the struggle. We were the ones who suffered under the apartheid government while they studied in countries with governments which were friendly towards them.” Likewise, those returnees who came back with personal effects only lamented their incomparable status with an emergent affluent black Namibian middle-class among those who remained behind. However, the differences between the

585 N.J. Colleta, Beyond Repatriation: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Namibia, p.22
two groups did not seriously affect political stability.

4.7.1 Special Categories

About 1,500 vulnerable people— including unaccompanied minors, the elderly with no kith and kin and disabled people— were among the wider returnee population. The government designed tailor-made programmes for these special categories of the returnees such as refugee school children, orphaned children and the disabled. This assistance was, however, short-term in nature and was not accompanied by elaborate long-term sustainability measures. Rosemary Preston noted:

Emergency schools were opened for one year to enable refugee children to continue their education in English, with the(ir) peers, at the levels they had reached in exile. An adoption programme was set up to find homes for orphaned children, among whom several hundred returned from East Germany and other socialist countries...twenty-five retarded and 17 blind children were accommodated and provided with nursing and training at existing church medical aid facilities at Engele and Ovamboland. Up to 100 physically disabled, including war-wounded, were initially catered for at Nakayele, another church centre in Ovamboland.587

Fifty secondary reception centres were also established at church premises countrywide to provide temporary accommodation for about 1,200 returnees who had no homes to return to.588 The World Food Programme through the established RRR Committee structures provided these with food rations and a small monthly allowance. The

This did not translate to returnee-specific reintegration policies.
secondary reception centres were closed at the end of 1990 and the remaining 100 or so occupants were assumed by the MLRR.

Some Namibian refugees experienced gruesome atrocities at the hands of South African forces during the long and bitter liberation war. In his message to mark the commemoration of the Cassinga massacre in 1998, President Sam Nujoma said:

On this day, on May 4 1978, over 1000 innocent Namibians, many of them women and children, were mowed down in cold blood by the racist South African army. Several were maimed. However, others survived that carnage and have lived to tell of the brutality, and total lack of regard for humanity by the heartless racist colonial regime and its military apparatus.589

The survivors witnessed horrifying scenes including the ripping open of the wombs of pregnant women with bayonets and the slaughter of others. Reverend Hellao Jambeulu Hellao, who lost his wife and a son during the Cassinga slaughter, recounted: “Pregnant women were not spared and not a single baby survived the attack. I am a living soul, a survivor of that day.”590

However, the repatriation operation did not incorporate PTSD counselling and rehabilitation programmes for traumatized returnees. One respondent said “When we returned to Namibia most of us would dream(have nightmares) about planes, being bombed and fighting. I think that was some sort of trauma. No PTSD programmes that I am aware of where put in place. My trauma healed through passing of time.”591

591 Interview with Returnee Informant 1, 8 November 2004, Windhoek
In 1998 Health Minister Dr Libertina Amathila revealed a “dramatic increase” in the number of Namibians requesting treatment for mental illnesses.\(^{592}\) PEACE (People's Education, Assistance and Counselling for Empowerment) Center, a Namibian NGO and psycho-social healing centre for survivors of organized violence, whose clients included ex-PLAN fighters, ex-SWATF, ex-SADF, victims of torture in SWAPO detention camps and ex-refugees, attributed an increase in suicides and criminal violence due to unresolved traumas of the past.\(^{593}\) However, Namibia did not have a solid public mental health infrastructure. The private psychiatry providers were few, located in the major centres within reach of 15 percent of the population as late as 2002 and were expensive.\(^{594}\) This meant that most psycho-trauma victims could not receive expert assistance.

4.7.2 Resettlement and Reintegration Challenges

Landmines

One grim legacy of the Namibian war experience is landmines and unexploded ordnances. Landmine clearance was not part of UNTAG’s disarmament mandate.\(^{595}\) The independence government also did not embark on any national demining exercise in the

\(^{592}\) “Dramatic increase’ in mental illness” <http://www.namibian.com.na> Accessed on 15 July 2004
\(^{593}\) P. Curling, “Trauma Psychology in Namibia: Notes from the field” Traumatology, Vol. 7, No. 2, June 2002, p.90
\(^{594}\) P. Curling, “Trauma Psychology in Namibia: Notes from the field” Traumatology, Vol. 7, No. 2, June 2002, p90
immediate post-conflict period. It was not until 1995 that a US-backed extensive mine-clearing operation started in northern Namibia. The fatalities and injuries were significant. Between 1989-well after the cessation of hostilities- and April 1998, 107 people were killed and 250 people were injured by landmines, anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordinances countrywide.596 Most of these were recorded in the far northern regions namely Ohangwena, Oshana, Omusati and Oshikoto, and in Kunene Region. The continued existence of landmines and unexploded ordinances had negative effects on post-conflict human security, resettlement and peace building. In 1998, US Ambassador to Namibia George Ward noted: “Mines that remain in the ground some eight years after independence will continue to kill and maim people and destroy livestock until they are removed from the ground. Destroy a mine, save a life”597

Since the start of the demining exercise in 1995, 2 382 anti-personnel mines have been cleared and 1 107 unexploded ordinances have been destroyed by March 1998. This was matched with a corresponding drop in the landmine casualty rate from nine people reported killed and 24 injured in 1995 to only one person killed and two injured as a result of landmine accidents in 1997. Notwithstanding this, in 1999 the National Society for Human Rights expressed concern over the continued human security risks of the landmine problem:

We are, at the same time, extremely disturbed and surprised by the fact that no requisite safety measures have been put in place to prevent civilians (and) livestock from stepping on anti-personnel mines. In particular, the absence of

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warning signs and barriers - around both uncleared minefields and those fields where clearance is done halfway and the operation is abandoned for the next day or week - recklessly exposes civilians and livestock to the danger of anti-personnel mines.\(^{598}\)

Substantial demining progress has been recorded: in 2001 the US commercial demining firm RONCO observed that, on the whole, Namibia was mine-safe with the exception of the conflict ridden area on the northwest border in Kavango and Western Caprivi.\(^{599}\) The Caprivi region experienced a secession attempt by Caprivian separatists and the expansion of the Angolan war into Namibia.

Despite the resettlement challenges, some returnees also contributed positively to post-war peace building. Those who received tertiary education while in Eastern Europe and Cuba acquired expertise that was usefully expended in the post-independence peace building and development. Returnees staffed top government positions; returnees constituted about 80\% of the inaugural independence cabinet. As mentioned earlier this did not, however, translate to returnee-specific reintegration policies.

4.8 Conclusion

Namibia is a successful model of an international approach to DDRRR. The UN


described UNTAG as a demonstration of “how much the United Nations can achieve by making full use of all its resources, including the diverse skills, and the commitment, of its staff.”

UNTAG and the UNHCR implemented their military and repatriation tasks as part of Namibia’s successful transition to independence. This was at the end of the Cold War when the changing international context facilitated consensus about the success of the UNTAG operation that was clear on the key issues of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and initial resettlement of returnees. Namibia’s liberation movement had one armed formation, PLAN. This removed the complexities of a DDR process dealing with competing liberation armies. The SADF -PLAN’s adversary during the liberation struggle- was a foreign military establishment. The fact that the SADF were repatriated, complete with their military equipment, under UNTAG supervision had a positive impact on the DDR process.

In the reintegration context of ex-fighters, however, more could have been done by the Namibian government to deflate their long-term stability threats. The eventual resort to public disruption and rioting – within a decade since the end of the war – by ineffectively reintegrated and disenchanted former fighters demonstrated this. In a gratifying response to avert full-scale instability the government decided to implement the aptly named Peace Project aimed at affirmative job placements for the ex-fighters mainly in the public service. Instead of probable short-term mollification of the disgruntled and riotous former combatants with monetary pay-offs the Peace Project enhanced prospects of the long-term reintegration of the beneficiaries. Instructively, the Peace Project has for seven years

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managed to prevent new security threats of the ex-fighters.

The success of the UNHCR repatriation operation was not reinforced by similar accomplishments in the resettlement and reintegration of the returnees. In the interests of the nation building project that was influenced by the national policy of reconciliation the independence government took the policy decisions not to offer specific long-term reintegration assistance to returnees. The failure by the state to provide support to facilitate the long-term reintegration of returnees, besides the UNHCR’s immediate post-relocation aid, caused serious hardships on segments of this community. The broader community productively accommodated and cushioned some of the returnees. In the ultimate, despite the reintegration difficulties faced, the returnees did not engage in national protests.

Namibia’s successful transition to independence was bound to have a major impact on “the prospect of regional peace, as a new and rather surprisingly emerging key to (the) transformation of South Africa itself.” Indeed, from 1991 South Africa took fundamental steps towards abandoning apartheid and embracing democracy. DDRRR figured prominently in this transition process. The next chapter will look at the implementation and impacts of South Africa’s largely domestically managed DDRRR following a similar template to the preceding two case studies.