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Introduction: Research Aim and Rationale

1.1 Aim

The consolidation and sustainability of democracy in South Africa depends in part, on how the government deals with the legacy of 30 years of war and militarisation in the region. The successful disarmament and effective reintegration of demobilised soldiers into civilian society is a crucial aspect of this challenge. Disarmament and demobilisation are part of the establishment of a new pattern of civil-military relations. This involves the determination of the size and composition of the armed forces, their role and the implementation of mechanisms to assure civilian control, what Luckham (2003) terms "democratic control". The aim of this study is to analyse the demobilisation process in South Africa between 1994 and 2004. The key questions are: why and how was the demobilisation process conducted and what were its consequences? The study focuses on three areas – first, the planning and implementation of the demobilisation process; secondly, the planning and implementation of the reintegration programmes; and lastly, the intended and unintended consequences of the demobilisation and reintegration processes.

The term "demobilisation" has different meanings depending on the context in which it is used (BICC, 2001). In South Africa, the term means the disbanding of members of the former Non-Statutory Forces (NSFs) who did not enter into agreements for temporary or permanent appointment with the South African Defence Force

(*Demobilisation Act,* No. 99 of 1996). The United Nations (2000a: 2) defines demobilisation as "the process by which parties to a conflict begin to disband their military structures and combatants begin the transformation into civilian life". The concept can also be defined as "the process of converting a soldier to a civilian. A soldier is in the process of demobilising when he or she has reported to an assembly area or camp, has surrendered his or her weapons and uniform, but is awaiting final discharge" (Clark, 1995: 50). The definition of the concept as used in the *Demobilisation Act* (No. 99 of 1996) is narrow because it ignores the most important part of the process, which is the transformation of identity. For the purposes of this study demobilisation is a shorthand term for the multi-staged process of converting a soldier to a civilian. This encompasses the release of soldiers from a statutory force or guerrilla group and their reintegration into civilian society. This means that the demobilisation of soldiers is inextricably linked with their reintegration into civilian society. Reintegration is defined as "the process of facilitating the ex-soldiers' transition to civilian life" (Clark, 1995: 50).

The transition from apartheid to democracy was the result not of a miracle or the seizure of power, but of a negotiated settlement that inevitably involved many explicit and implicit compromises (Cock, 2004). Since the military played a pivotal role in maintaining the apartheid regime's power, reconstituted armed forces were deemed essential to demonstrating a commitment to a new political order and establishing the military's institutional legitimacy. The *Interim Constitution* (Act No. 200 of 1993)[1] made provision for three phases in the process of forming the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). First, there was the integration of different armed forces, followed by a process of consolidation, which included the completion of bridging training by all members of the NSFs. It was anticipated that the integration of the different armies would lead to an inflated defence force. Thus, rationalisation was to follow consolidation as the last phase in the formation of the SANDF. Rationalisation was defined as the "reduction of the Regular Force to approved force levels through, *inter alia*, the retrenchment of military personnel following integration" (*White Paper*

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[1] Schedule 6 Section 24(1) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Act 108 of 1996) provided that Sections 82(4)(b), 215, 218(1), 219(1), 224 to 228, 236(1), (2), (3), (6), (7)(b) and (8), 237(1) and (2)(a) and 239 (4) and (5) of the previous Constitution (*Interim Constitution,* Act 200 of 1993) continue in force as if the Act had not been repealed. Thus, in some cases where the provisions are not clearly spelled out in the final Constitution, reference will be to the *Interim Constitution* (1993), especially regarding Sections 224 to 228 which relate to the defence force.

for Defence, 1996: 23). The fact that rationalisation was envisaged as the last phase in the formation of the SANDF classified the process as postponed demobilisation. This refers to a demobilisation process that has been clearly announced although the actual implementation is not quite clear (Kingma, 2001). The Department of Defence had been considering efforts to downsize the SANDF from its establishment in 1994 until the end of 2004 when the final integration report was submitted.

The thesis of this study is that a reduction of the size of the SANDF was necessary for two reasons. First was the perceived and real improvement in the national and regional security environment. Second was the perceived economic and development impact of the reduction of defence expenditure. Those who were committed to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) argued that since there was no perceptible threat, there was little need for a strong defence force, and resources could instead be channelled to welfare and development areas (Cawthra, 1997a). “Given the absence of an external threat, South Africa’s security will rest primarily on meeting the needs of the population. This should imply a continual move away from investment in defence” (Cawthra, 1998: 36). However, while rationalisation was postponed, and anticipated as the final phase in the process of restructuring the armed forces, the presence of military “misfits” (the aged, the sick and those who lacked the necessary educational qualifications) among former APLA and MK soldiers led to the introduction of a process of excluding these categories from the process of integration. This process became known as demobilisation and was introduced without adequate planning. The lack of adequate planning for the demobilisation and reintegration of former APLA and MK soldiers has hindered their full social and economic reintegration into civilian society.

Based on an analysis of the socio-economic needs of a national sample of 395 former APLA and MK soldiers, it will be argued that they have not achieved economic reintegration in the sense of achieving a productive livelihood. Furthermore, it will be argued that while respondents have achieved social reintegration, some of them continue to see themselves as a distinct group different from other members of society. Thus, demobilised soldiers may potentially threaten the consolidation of democracy in South Africa and destabilise the region. The proliferation of light weapons throughout the region following the end of armed conflicts and the lack of effective disarmament at the end of the armed conflict in South Africa increases the potential not only for violent crime but also for serious political and social disruptions.

1.2 Rationale

The study of the demobilisation and reintegration of soldiers into civilian life is important for four reasons. First, demobilised soldiers may threaten the consolidation of democracy in South Africa and destabilise the region if their needs are not met. International experience shows that "[i]n the short term, the failure to disarm and demobilise former combatants effectively may contribute to an immediate relapse into war. In the medium and long term, incomplete or ineffective reintegration of ex-combatants into civil society may lead to armed criminality by those former soldiers who have no other means of earning a living" (United Nations, 2000b: 16). As Preston (1993b) argues, post-independence conflict in the Southern African region has in part been caused by the anger of people who, before the achievement of peace, had made a career of fighting. "Frustrated at the failure of leaders to ensure them the means to subsist, not to levels promised, but to standards of minimal decency, they return to doing what they know best" (Preston, 1993b: 10-2). Since 1994, there have been a number of media reports linking ex-combatants to criminal activities in South Africa. Apart from this, media reports have also implicated former soldiers in mercenary activities in the region and in other parts of the African continent.

Secondly, the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of soldiers are the most significant aspects of demilitarisation as a social process. The economic dimensions include reductions in defence expenditure and weapon holdings, and the transfer of resources such as land from defence to civilian purposes. A successful demobilisation programme can contribute to socio-economic development because it has the indirect potential to release funds previously earmarked for defence spending (Williams, 1998). In the short term demobilisation may produce additional costs; however, the long-term costs for society could become even larger if demobilised soldiers are unable to reintegrate into civilian life. Failure to support the reintegration process effectively may lead to increasing unemployment and social deprivation, which could result in increasing crime rates and political instability. Inadequate demobilisation packages might lead to prospects of either banditry or politically inspired violence or other forms of social disruption. Despite the costs involved in demilitarisation, "the transfer of resources for social and economic development will help tackle the real threats to collective security, which are: environmental deterioration, poverty and social instability" (Cock, 1998b: 3).

However, it is important to note that demobilisation does not always imply demilitarisation. In some countries the reduction of the number of people employed by the armed forces might actually be part of a modernisation effort, making the armed forces "leaner and meaner" (BICC, 1999; Kingma, 2000). It is possible that demobilised soldiers would still be available as part-time forces or reserves. "Reserves are not counted in the armed forces statistics when they are not under arms but they can be remobilised very easily" (BICC, 1999: 76; Kingma, 2000: 27). Furthermore, complexities arise when former soldiers are integrated into the police force (Kingma, 2000). "Very often this is important in post-war countries lacking a functioning law-and-order system. They are usually counted as demobilised; but are they really?" (Kingma, 2000: 27). Even when demobilisation reduces military expenditure, demilitarisation is not always guaranteed, especially if the ideology of militarism (the acceptance of violence as a means to solve conflict or to gain and maintain power) remains intact. Thus, it is argued that the demobilisation of soldiers is a necessary but not sufficient indicator of demilitarisation.

Thirdly, the demobilisation and reintegration of former APLA and MK soldiers in South Africa is a topic which has been largely neglected by scholars. The main concern of scholars has been the broader process of military transformation with little or no attention paid to the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers. To date there is not a single large-scale study which is dedicated to a detailed description and analysis of the processes of demobilisation and reintegration and it consequences.

Lastly, while disarmament and demobilisation have been studied extensively at an international level, the reintegration of ex-combatants has received less attention in terms of analysis and resources from the international community (International Peace Academy, 2002). The study of demobilisation in South Africa will help identify strengths and weaknesses of process, which might help in the design of future demobilisation processes.

1.3 Methodology

This section offers a brief overview of the methodology adopted; the Methodological Orientation and Research Design are discussed in detail in Appendix 1. The study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to answer the research questions. While the quantitative method enables us to identify patterns in social life, the qualitative method enables us to develop “explanations and generalizations that are close to concrete data and contexts but are more than simple generalizations” (Neuman, 2000: 419). This is because qualitative researchers “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 3). The qualitative and quantitative methods were used together because each provides a distinctive kind of evidence, and in combination they can offer a powerful resource to inform and illuminate policy or practice (Ritchie, 2003).

The combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods is based on three assumptions about social research. The first is that the quantification of social facts is possible and is an extremely useful tool in social research even though it is not applicable to all social settings, research problems and questions. Secondly, the aggregates generated by the quantitative method are an essential aspect of knowing about the social world, which helps us to generalise. However, these aggregates need to be supplemented by other methods, which allow us to explain why these aggregates take the form they do. The third assumption is that while social life has some regularity and discernable patterns, it is also fluid and, more importantly, contains a high degree of subjectivity, which is often too complex to be captured through a quantitative approach alone. “Unlike objects in nature, humans are self-aware beings who confer sense and purpose on what they do” (Giddens, 1998: 12). In order to describe social life more accurately, we first have to grasp the meanings which inform behaviour.

Three qualitative research methods were used for this study, the first being in-depth interviews with 26 key informants. These informants had been directly or indirectly involved in the demobilisation processes and included individuals from the Department of Defence and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which had been involved in the reintegration of demobilised soldiers into civilian society. The key informants were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. With purposive or judgemental sampling, a researcher selects sample units on the basis of his/her own knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study. In employing purposive sampling, it became clear that the author's knowledge of key informants was limited, and hence a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling was adopted. The latter technique involves asking people who have already been interviewed to identify other people they know who fit the selection criteria (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003).

The second qualitative data-gathering method that was used was participant observation. Participant observation is a qualitative research strategy in which the researcher joins the study population or its organisational or community setting in order to record actions, interactions or events that occur (Ritchie, 2003). The researcher usually observes and participates in small-scale social settings (Neuman, 2000). Through this method, a researcher has the advantage of direct experiential and observational access to the insiders' world of meaning. The method is appropriate when the research question involves learning about, understanding or describing a group of interacting people. Observing survival strategies at work, often through informal activities, which included criminal activities, contributed to this study. For example, some of the respondents were interviewed while busy preparing stolen cars for resale on the black market.

Thirdly, the study also drew on a number of archival and documentary sources. Neuman (2000) identifies four types of archival and documentary sources. Primary sources consist of letters, diaries, newspapers, movies, novels, articles of clothing, photos and so forth of those who lived in the past and have survived into the present.

Second, secondary sources consist of the writings of analysts who have spent some years studying primary sources. The chief advantages of secondary sources (records made or collected by others) are greater speed and lower cost of retrieval compared to primary data gathering (Hall and Hall, 1996). Third, there are running records, which include files or existing statistical documents maintained by organisations. The last form of documentary sources consists of recollections – words or writings of individuals about their past lives or experiences based on memory. This study was limited to the use of primary and secondary sources.

Apart from qualitative data-gathering methods, this study also used a quantitative data-gathering method. Information on the socio-economic conditions and needs of demobilised soldiers was obtained through a survey of 395 demobilised APLA and MK soldiers using a structured questionnaire. A national sample of demobilised APLA and MK soldiers was chosen using snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is appropriate when studying members of a special difficult-to-locate population. Examples include homeless individuals, migrant workers, undocumented immigrants, et cetera (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Further, snowball sampling is "particularly useful for dispersed and small populations and where the key selection criteria are characteristics which might not be widely disclosed by individuals or which are too sensitive for a screening interview" (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003: 94). A full description of the methodological approach is discussed in Appendix 1.

1.4 Limitations of this Study

The original aim of this study was to focus on both the demobilisation of former APLA and MK members and the voluntary retrenchment of former members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) through the voluntary severance package (VSP). However, after the initial interviews and the resultant conceptual clarification, a decision was taken to focus exclusively on the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers. This was first, because of the special South African usage of the concept of "demobilisation" (see section 1.1 above). Besides demobilisation and rationalisation, mechanisms to reduce the size of the SANDF included the VSP and natural attrition (deaths, dismissals, resignations and retirement). Natural attrition occurs in every defence force and, like the voluntary retirement of soldiers through processes such as the VSP, does not fit the definition of demobilisation. Thus, from a conceptual point of view, it made sense to focus on the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers. Second, it was not possible to focus on the VSP process because of the lack of co-operation from the Department of Defence. The study was completed before the author could obtain permission to conduct interviews in the Department of Defence (see Appendix 1 for details). Since the VSP remained undocumented, it became impossible to study it at this time.

1.5 The Structure of the Report

The rest of the report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical framework that underpins this study. This is followed by Chapter 3 which focuses on experiences of demobilisation and reintegration in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe. These four countries were chosen because they share a common history of the 30 years of armed conflict in the region. They were investigated to determine whether common patterns of success or failure could be distinguished. Chapter 4 outlines a brief history of the liberation struggle, the militarisation of South African society and the transition to democracy. This is followed by Chapter 5 which discusses the process of integration to form the SANDF. It will be argued that demobilisation was not initially part of the process but came as an afterthought. The reduction of the size of the SANDF known as rationalisation was indefinitely postponed; however, another process to release military "misfits" among former APLA and MK soldiers was instituted. Chapter 6 is an analysis of various statutory and non-statutory reintegration programmes that were instituted to facilitate the return of former soldiers to civilian life. These included cash benefits and vocational training through the Service Corps and other institutions. An analysis of the consequences of demobilisation-reintegration, more specifically the socio-economic activities, conditions and needs of former combatants, as well as their social reintegration is discussed Chapter 7. In the last chapter it will be argued that while the process of establishing democratic control over the armed forces was relatively successful, the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers was introduced without adequate planning and was badly executed. Furthermore, the lack of adequate planning has hindered their full social and economic reintegration into civilian society. Thus, demobilised soldiers may threaten the consolidation of democracy in South Africa and destabilise the region.