

Promoting national reconciliation and regional integration: The Namibian Defence Force from 1990–2005

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INTRODUCTION

The colonial experience in Namibia was brutal and harsh. For the purposes of this chapter—which seeks to document the post-colonial military history of Namibia—a brief discussion of events spanning the period circa 1884 to independence in 1990 is essential.

HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The geography of Namibia is unique in the Southern African region. With a total land mass of 825,418 km², Namibia's climate is hot and dry, measuring the lowest rainfall in the region, with large parts of the country being desert. Only 1% of the land area is arable, confined to the north, with 46% pastures and 22% forests and wood. The rest is harsh, rocky and dry.¹ Namibia has a 1,572 km Atlantic Ocean coastline along its western edge on which a number of harbours and ports have been established; these include Oranjemund, Ludertiz, Walvis Bay and Swakopmund. While the country lacks vegetation and is hilly and sparse, it contains a generous range of minerals from diamonds, copper, uranium and gold, to lead, tin, lithium, zinc, salt, vanadium, natural gas, suspected oil deposits, coal and iron.

The area first witnessed European interest from Portuguese explorers in the late 15th century, followed by Afrikaner traders during the 17th century, and German missionaries and traders dealing in ivory and cattle at the turn of the 19th century. Their presence was later followed by a

growing trade in diamonds and copper. During the Berlin Conference of 1884/85, the region was annexed by Germany; a little earlier, in 1872, Britain had annexed Walvis Bay as part of the Cape Colony.

German rule was particularly harsh on the local inhabitants. In 1904, a resistance to German occupation was led by the Herero Chief, Samuel Mattearero, and supported by the Nama and Damara ethnic groups. The African resistance attacked towns and the colonial headquarters and threatened the emerging outlying farms.

Using the ploy of a negotiated settlement, the German administrators between 1904–08 embarked upon a policy of extermination and genocide. Employing superior military organisation and equipment, including repeating rifles and machine guns, the Herero were mowed down, hanged, starved and brutally crushed. By 1908, the Herero population had dwindled to less than 90%, the majority dead, and the remaining 5–10% were forced to go into exile in the hinterland. Two-thirds of the deaths registered occurred in the concentration camps.

A downside for the colonialists in putting down the resistance was the immediate shortage of labour, forcing them to recruit persons further north from Ovambo and Kavango. This episode is deeply etched in the memories of Namibians and formed an important part in providing the inspiration and resolve to engage in a 23-year protracted armed struggle that began in 1966.²

The European arrangement was upset during the First World War when, in July 1915, troops from South Africa defeated the German contingent and occupied the territory. In December 1920, the League of Nations gave South Africa a mandate to administer the territory; this was renewed following the creation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945. Three years later, when the Afrikaner National Party (NP) of South Africa triumphed at the polls in that country, this benign colonial arrangement was set to change radically.

After 1948, with the NP in power, South Africa annexed South West Africa (SWA) as its fifth province. Pretoria from then on stopped submitting annual reports to the UN, as required under the trusteeship arrangement. In the same year, South Africa also granted whites in the territory direct representation in the South African Parliament while embarking on the deliberate exclusion—socially and economically—of the African majority. In order to maintain brevity, the South African government in 1960 commissioned the Odendaal Report that divided SWA into 12 regions, relocating 93% of the population into ‘homelands’ that covered 40% of the land, while leaving the minority white

community holding on to 60% of the most productive land available. The same apartheid laws practised in South Africa became the norm in SWA, drawing howls of protests from the victims. Conduct in commerce and industry—comprising commercial farming, fisheries, mining and emerging service industries—central to the economy became integrated with that of South Africa's. Despite these moves, however, the country remained severely underdeveloped, creating a permanent source of conflict within society.

In October 1966 the UN General Assembly voted to remove South Africa from administering SWA and to transfer responsibility to the UN.³ This did not materially affect the situation on the ground, forcing the African people to seek other avenues in order to effect the departure of South Africa.

In response to the various colonial impositions that continued ruthlessly to crush African voices of agitation, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) was established on 19 April 1960, following increasing agitation and the rise of several African political parties in the late 1950s. Three anti-colonial movements are important here. The first was the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO) led by Andimba Toivo ja Toivo, which organised strikes at the Luderitz port. Next was the South West Africa National Union (SWANU), and finally the Herero leader's organisation: Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, working with OPO and the youth organisation later created SWAPO.

Already in March 1960, Nujoma had fled into exile to then Tanganyika, following a demonstration in Katutura during 1959 in which 12 people were massacred and leaders threatened with arrest. In April 1960 SWAPO was established, and in June 1960 Nujoma stood before the 4th UN Decolonisation Committee making a presentation on behalf of his people.

Events were to move rapidly during the next five years with the SWAPO Congress of 1961 proposing the adoption of an armed struggle in order to secure independence. In July 1966 SWAPO established a military faction—the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN).

In October of the same year, the UN General Assembly voted to end South Africa's mandate. Implementation of this international resolution was ignored, and in 1971 the responsibility of negotiating with South Africa was moved to the UN Security Council. However, it was clear to SWAPO that in order to succeed, the intervention of the international community had to be supplemented with active military and political action by the Namibians themselves.⁴ In this decision and action,

SWAPO received the backing of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and through the OAU's Liberation Committee was accorded material assistance and training facilities for its cadres.

A brief description of SWAPO-PLAN's military capacity and civil-military relations is useful before discussing the ceasefire that was agreed to and effected in 1989.

PLAN guerrilla units established major bases in Angola after 1975, and by the end of the war had approximately 10,000 men and women under arms.⁵ Two military command posts were established: the PLAN Headquarters in Luanda; and the Defence Headquarters based in Lubango and manned by SWAPO's Secretary for Defence and the Military Council.⁶ The Military Council would meet every year to determine strategy and guide the war as part of the political process.

SWAPO's guerrilla military strategy was intertwined with its political strategy. The liberation movement's guiding principle was "it is politics which leads the gun" and that war was "an extension of politics by other means".⁷ Former SWAPO Secretary Andreas Shipanga noted:

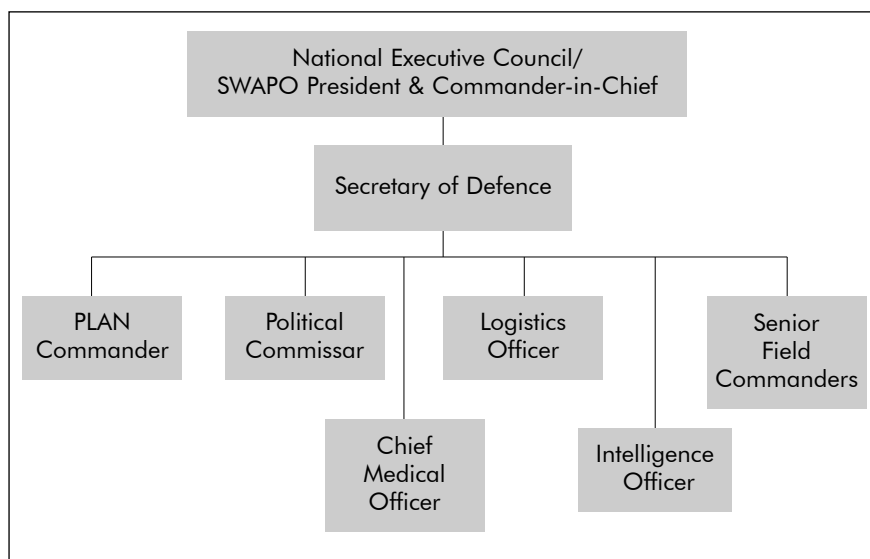
In SWAPO we don't divorce military from political matters—it is always politics which leads the gun. We have no purely military leaders; we are not militarists. Everybody in PLAN is politically motivated; our cadres are trained both politically and militarily, and the military is completely integrated into the overall structure of SWAPO.⁸

This was also reflected in the organisational structure of PLAN. The position of political commissar was included in PLAN's Military Council. The Council also included the commander of PLAN, chief medical, logistics and intelligence officers and senior field commanders. SWAPO's National Executive Committee, to which the Military Council reported via the secretary of defence and transport, controlled PLAN via the political commissar.

Levy Ngranjone, then Political Commissar, explained that his position meant he was "responsible for communicating and clarifying party policy, party decisions and military strategy ... [as well as] for the overall political development and morale of all SWAPO militants".⁹ These mechanisms enabled the political leadership to maintain political and administrative control over the military wing.

PLAN combatants received joint training and deployed together with the *Forces de Angola* (FAA), which was based on the Popular Movement

Figure 1: SWAPO-PLAN military structure



for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)—the liberation faction of the People’s Liberation Forces of Angola. Military assistance had also been made available from countries including Russia, China, Tanzania, Algeria and Egypt. By 1988, PLAN could muster units averaging 500 to 800 battalions. Many of these saw service against the South African Defence Force (SADF), which during the mid-1980s supported the opposition Ovambo-based Jonas Savimbi and his Movement for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Meanwhile, South Africa in its occupation of SWA was determined not to accord legitimacy to SWAPO and therefore strove throughout to marginalise the movement from direct or official engagement.

Only when the situation appeared untenable during the late 1980s, did the South African regime seek to influence the future political direction of Namibia. This was to be achieved through a dual political and military strategy. The first was to create an acquiescent political alternative within the country. This began soon after the seminal Armed Forces coup in Lisbon of April 1974 that changed the geo-strategic arrangement of Southern Africa. From 1975, through the Turnhalle Conference leading to elections in 1976, an internal political entity in SWA was given succour by South Africa.

The second string to this policy was the military option: from August 1980 South Africa created ethnic-based units within SWA. Within four years the South West African Territorial Force (SWATF) fielded a force just under 11,000 and was trained to undertake local defence tasks as well as counter-insurgency operations.

Starting from a few thousands, by the 1989 SWATF—supported by the South West Africa Police—had swelled to over 30,000 troops, or eight full-time battalions and specialised support units.¹⁰ Many of the units, including the notorious *Koevoet*, numbering some 3,000 troops, were capable of undertaking cross-border operations deep inside Angola. The locally raised units also had the advantage of reducing the burden on the SADF commitment outside its borders.

By the end of the war, the military capacity in SWA contributed some two-thirds or over 60% of the SADF deployment, even on external operations. In total, South Africa had over 100,000 troops in the country and on the northern border.

Insofar as SWA itself was concerned, the comprehensive strategy was to create an alternative political and military capacity that would displace the dominance of SWAPO and PLAN after independence in Namibia.

The turning point and departure of South Africa from SWA was the near defeat that the SADF experienced at Cuito Canavale following the increased commitment of Cuban forces and airpower in the Angolan war in 1987. After seven months of negotiations, a Tripartite Agreement was signed in New York on 13 December 1988. On the same day, South Africa signed an agreement with the UN agreeing to leave SWA. The actual withdrawal from SWA was part of a 'linkage concept' in which the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola became a precondition for the implementation of UN Resolution 453 of 1978.

CEASEFIRE AND FORMATION OF THE NDF

South Africa appointed Advocate Louis Pienaar, while the UN dispatched Special Representative Martti Ahtisaari as the joint outgoing/incoming administrators. Implementation¹¹ of the agreement provided for the following:

- Date of implementation from 1 April 1989.
- Evacuation of Cuban forces by July 1991.
- SADF to leave SWA one week before the scheduled elections.

- PLAN fighters to report to designated Assembly Areas—generally 150 km north of the border with Angola in Ovambo.
- Refugees to be allowed to return.
- The UN Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) troop contingent of 7,500 was to be deployed with effect from February 1989 (later, only 4,650 troops were deployed).

UNTAG's role was to:

- monitor the ceasefire;
- ensure both SWAPO-PLAN and SADF/SWATF were confined to bases;
- supervise the rapid reduction and eventual departure of the SADF envisaged as:
 - six weeks after D-Day, to reduce to 12,000 and after 12 weeks to 1,500; and
 - confined to two bases in northern SWA;
- accept the need to embrace the SWA police for maintaining law and order; and
- facilitate the demobilisation of *Koevoet* and other undesirables under the 'ethnic and para-military' units umbrella.

As is evident, UNTAG was largely a political exercise designed to create conditions for holding elections, while cajoling the traditionally intransigent and obdurate South Africa to continue withdrawing without stalling the unfolding operation.

In practice, UNTAG was a UN mission that executed roles and functions well beyond any traditional peacekeeping operation before 1989. By the end of the mission, UNTAG had been involved in police action, monitoring, military activity, supervising elections, refugees, constitution drafting, demobilisation and disarmament, training the integrated force, arbitration and mediation between adversaries, and a host of other functions previously unforeseen when it was deployed.

Two events stand out in the run-up to the elections and independence that had a particular impact on the perceived nucleus of the future Namibian defence force, namely PLAN. The first, which has now come to be accepted as a fabrication, was the persistent claim that SWAPO-PLAN was violating the conditions of the ceasefire. The UN itself has now admitted to having been under constant pressure from South African Foreign Minister at the time, Pik Botha, resulting in the UN

agreeing that SADF units could be partly deployed to enforce the ceasefire after 1 April 1989. What followed was the deliberate massacre of assembled PLAN combatants, with over 375 killed before the urgent Joint Commission meeting at Mount Etjo, called under the auspices of the UN Security Council.

The second event was the insistence by South Africa not to disband SWATF units, including *Koevoet*, and integrating the latter into the local police structures. Before the elections of November 1989, *Koevoet*'s task was to hunt down and eliminate PLAN combatants in the villages and to deny SWAPO the opportunity to establish liberated zones inside SWA that would result in instant popularity with the masses.¹²

Furthermore, after several months into the run-up to supervised elections (and even beyond) a few officers and resources were left behind to cater for and pay the *Koevoet* operatives, until the UN Special Representative raised serious concerns about the practice. Again—as we have pointed out, but it is worth repeating—this was part of a wider strategy designed on the one hand to benefit the internal settlement actors who were pliant and favoured South Africa, and on the other to obstruct the incoming Marxist guerrilla and nationalist movement. Both these developments severely damaged the capacity of SWAPO and PLAN to assert themselves during the run-up to the elections.

SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma returned to the country in September 1989 and, working together with UNTAG, proceeded to contest the November elections. Interest in the elections proved high with 98% of the electorate casting their votes—many for the first time.

SWAPO secured 57% of the vote, while the internal group, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), achieved a poll of 29%—enough to dilute the political dominance of the former. The remaining 14% of the vote was shared among the smaller parties. While this partly diluted SWAPO's political dominance, winning as it did less than a two-thirds majority, the liberation movement was given legitimate authority to form the government.

For our purposes, this led to the adoption of the Namibian Constitution, the appointment of President elect Sam Nujomo to office by the UN Secretary-General in March 1990 and the urgent establishment of the defence force.¹³ However, given the above discussion, it is clear that PLAN embarked upon its new transformation as the national force, mortally wounded by the departing SADF and SWATF. It is against this background—charged with an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust—that the local forces were now expected to integrate.

FORMATION OF THE NAMIBIAN DEFENCE FORCE, MARCH 1990

The formation of the new 10,000-strong Namibian Defence Force (NDF) was envisaged to draw recruits on an equal 50-50 basis from both PLAN and SWATF. Its operational mandate was contained in Defence Act Chapter 20, articles 118–120 of the Namibian Constitution, providing for the establishment of the defence force, the police and the prison service.¹⁴

A state's published security and defence policies normally do not provide indications of a state's real threats, interests and even intentions. One has to look elsewhere for how these facets are addressed in order to influence policy and related structures practically.

Against this background it is safe to argue that the real security and defence threats facing the new SWAPO government included, among others, the fact that a severely weak state had come to power in a country where 'fifth column' activities of SWATF and SADF counter-revolutionary elements could easily derail the new independence national project.

In point of fact, this fear was to be confirmed during the first five years of independence following numerous explosions and sabotage acts in Windhoek and around the country generally by these fifth column elements.

The assassination of the country's visionary liberation leadership was a real possibility at this stage. Namibia's independence occurred at the height of South Africa's Conference on Democracy in South Africa; Nelson Mandela had just come out of prison in February 1990, and the difference in opinion between President De Klerk and other right-wing formations was still at a peak.

Part of the manifestation of this struggle was military units acting almost outside the ambit of Pretoria's political control, with devastating consequences for the liberation project—as noted by the massacre of PLAN combatants during April 1989.

A further motivation for counter-reaction to the new regime in Namibia by apartheid South Africa was the resolute actions of SWAPO, which continued to support moves for majority rule in South Africa. Soon after coming to power, the Namibian government gave a R1 million donation to the African National Congress (ANC) to assist the party with resources as it engaged in crucial independence talks.

Yet another factor posing a serious threat to the fledgling Namibian independence was the continuing military activities of South African elements—official and unofficial—against UNITA across the border in

the southern Angolan Ovambo province. This raised serious concern about the territorial integrity of Namibia. The new state did not have the capacity to monitor or stop flights from South Africa to and from UNITA-held territories. In reality, until late 1999 UNITA was better equipped, militarily, compared to Namibia. Furthermore, UNITA and PLAN combatants had traditionally been at each other's throats, even when the latter was based in Angola.

The nexus of supporting the ANC on the one hand and being prepared to fight UNITA on the other, reflected the unfinished business of the liberation of Southern Africa, creating yet a further dimension that had to be dealt with now that SWAPO was in power. Stated differently, now that the intentions of Resolution 435 had been secured, the struggle for full emancipation continued in a different form.

Among the host of undeclared defence and security challenges, the two final ones were also related to the internal situation. In this regard, on the one hand, there was urgent need to establish a credible conventional regular army that was loyal and steeped in the revolutionary ethos of SWAPO, while on the other hand the new government had to manage the level of expectations of the African majority in terms of delivery now that independence through armed struggle and the ballot had been achieved. To this end, the creation of a new army meant demobilising more than 50,000 combatants of its forces under PLAN.¹⁵

A policy to recruit Namibians aged between 18 and 25 years was adopted in order to bring new blood into the NDF. This allowed for natural attrition whereby the older former SWATF and PLAN members could be gracefully replaced.¹⁶ The publicly stated roles and functions of the NDF were to:

- maintain the sovereignty of Namibia and the territorial integrity of the country;
- provide support to the civil authorities and the community;
- undertake ceremonial functions; and
- assist with the process of reconciliation.

The fifth role of the NDF—to serve as the vehicle and mechanism for national reconciliation—is unique in Southern African post-colonial and liberation history. Given the military strategy by South Africa that was designed to forcefully influence the political direction of independent Namibia, as well as the notorious activities of *Koevoet*, for SWAPO to

then turn around and reach out in this manner is unprecedented. This is an important lesson for other nations coming out of a protracted conflict to emulate.

With the success of the integration project assured, President Sam Nujoma revealed during the NDF's 12th anniversary celebrations why this factor had been provided for at the early stages of the new nation:

The NDF's primary task was to promote the implementation of the Policy of National Reconciliation. By integrating former warring foes, those from ex-SWATF, *Koevoet* and PLAN Combatants into one united national army, [the Policy] paid off well, leading to the [early] consolidation of a unified and strong nation.¹⁷

The actual formation of the new NDF started soon after March 1990 when part of UNTAG—comprising the Kenyan contingent led by UNTAG's Deputy, Lt Gen Daniel Opande—was requested to extend its stay for another three months (until May 1990) in order to assist with the military integration process.¹⁸ Lt Gen Opande explained that the Kenyan battalion—which included former instructors from the Kenyan Training Institution for the Armed Forces—was chosen for the practical reason that its troops were based closest to the training grounds.¹⁹ The battalion assisted the establishment of a military nucleus comprising members of the two formerly warring armies that provided a ceremonial guard of honour during the independence celebrations.

The Kenyan contingent was later assisted with a 57-strong British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) led by Brig Tony Ling who, working with the government, formulated an integration plan that would bring together equal volunteers from SWATF and PLAN to constitute a 10,000-strong force.²⁰ This force would have a small headquarters and five infantry battalions with a number of supporting units. Command-and-control of the new armed force would, however, be shared due to the overwhelming win by SWAPO at the polls. Almost by default important posts, especially in the military, went to former PLAN cadres while SWATF dominated the police service. The President appointed guerrilla chief of PLAN, Jerobeam Dimo Hamaambo, to lieutenant general and made him the first chief of staff of the NDF.

The numbers coming forward also reflected the political impact of the new dispensation. Most senior officers from SWATF simply resigned, with many having been conscripted anyway, and eventually the ratio was 1:2 in favour of former PLAN members. Furthermore, most of the

former *Koevoet* members elected to relocate to South Africa, to where they were airlifted. They soon saw further service in southern Angola assisting UNITA, until 1994 when power in South Africa was handed over to the ANC in April of that year.

The integration process required military re-orientation and not necessarily basic military training as combatants from both sides had been prosecuting the war under different political leaderships. As a result, an eight-week leadership cadre course was developed to train officers on conventional army administration and weapons training/conversion (from the popular liberation AK47 to FNs or G3s), preparing graduates for command positions in the new army. The new army consists of:

- five motorised infantry battalions;
- a Presidential Guard battalion;
- a combat support battalion;
- a reconnaissance company;
- an engineering company;
- an artillery group; and
- a logistics support brigade.²¹

An air wing and a maritime element were established later. Part of the motivation for these components was the continued violation of Namibian air space and territorial waters by foreign craft, creating the need to build internal capacity to respond. The maritime wing, for example, had its first ship donated by the Ministry of Tourism and Fisheries, and this was converted to carry suitable armament.

NDF DEFENCE POLICY AND COMMAND-AND-CONTROL FRAMEWORK

Once thoughts on the integration of the military and security forces had been clarified into policy and practice, attention turned to creating oversight and command-and-control structures that have survived to this day. At the apex of the new government, in the area of defence, is the Defence Staff Council, chaired by the president and commander-in-chief. Members of the Defence Staff Council include the ministers of defence, foreign affairs, finance and home affairs. The chief of defence forces (CDF) and the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) also sit in the same body, the Defence Staff Council. The MoD was established at independence in 1990 and is responsible for setting

up the organisational and administrative structures to manage the NDF. The MoD's main tasks are to:

- formulate and execute defence policies for the government; and
- provide central operational and administrative headquarters for the NDF and to procure its equipment.

A minister, who also sits in the presidential Defence Staff Council, chairs the second tier Senior Management Committee (SMC). As part of the SMC, the minister is supported by the CDF and MoD permanent secretary. The CDF is the NDF's professional head and is responsible for its military effectiveness. This includes supervising administration and operations of the NDF while advising the minister on all aspects of the NDF. Meanwhile, the permanent secretary is responsible for the financial, administrative and political aspects of the defence policy and its execution. The permanent secretary chairs the last rung in the hierarchy, the Military Steering Committee (MSC), which is directly managed by the chief of staff operations, and which falls directly under the permanent secretary.

The MoD combines the following functional components: policy and operations; personnel; logistics; medical services; military intelligence; and finance. These constitute six directorates:

- The Directorate Policy and Operations formulates operational concepts, organisation, deployment, planning of force structure, policy for support arms, management of day-to-day military co-operation, and combat support services of the NDF. The chief of staff: operations (who also sits in the MoD's SMC and MSC) is the head of this directorate.
- The management of human resources, including selection, recruitment and career development of all NDF personnel and MoD civilian staff is the function of the Directorate Personnel. This directorate co-ordinates training of officers, soldiers and civilians. It also presides over discipline and welfare, terms and conditions of service, pay policy, pensions and allowances, promotion and commissioning policy, leave and dress code. The chief of staff: personnel (who is also a member of the SMC and MSC) heads the directorate.

- The provision of combat supplies and materials that the ministry needs to discharge its functions effectively and efficiently is the responsibility of the Directorate Logistics. This directorate also prepares logistics policies, plans and their implementation, records acquisition of new materials and equipment in line with the defence procurement policy, and manages all vehicles and transport-related issues through an efficient, cost-effective management practice. The chief of staff: logistics (who is also a member of the SMC and MSC) heads the directorate.
- Health matters are catered for by the Directorate Medical Services. This directorate formulates health policy, oversees medical supply services and ensures the general well-being of NDF personnel. The chief of staff: medical services (who is also a member of the SMC and MSC) heads the directorate.
- The MoD also has the Directorate Military Intelligence, which deals with all issues regarding military and security. These include ensuring security of all military installations, personnel and equipment, the collection and dissemination of security information, production and management of the ministry's communication policy, and managing media relations. The minister and permanent secretary's directives bind the directorate. The chief of staff: military intelligence (who is also a member of the SMC and MSC) heads the directorate.
- The Directorate Finance manages financial matters of the MoD. It manages and prepares the defence budget, accounting of defence expenditure, internal financial administration, and management of the financial system of the ministry through efficient financial accounting practices. It is bound by directives issued by the Ministry of Finance and the Auditor-General's Office. The directorate is headed by the director of finance who is the financial advisor to the permanent secretary in his capacity as accounting officer of the ministry. The director of finance is also the chairperson of the Financial Advisory Group and is a member of the SMC.

In addition to the directorates there is provision for two divisions: central staff; and procurement, research and development:

- The Central Staff Division is an independent division established to

provide a mechanism for co-ordinating the work of the ministry on the instructions of the minister and the permanent secretary. It is the principal agency for processing submissions from the directorates to the permanent secretary and the minister. The division is responsible for the co-ordination of all policy matters and the preparation of all policy papers in conjunction with heads of directorates for endorsement by the Defence Staff Council and SMC. It is also responsible for the preparation of meetings and regional conferences regarding defence and security, the production of agendas for these meetings and preparing minutes thereof, as well as protocol and policy on VIP visits. The division ensures effective production and presentation of the MoD's development plans, creates a good public image of the ministry through the media, executes strategies and plans for the development of information systems, and oversees the ministry's internal auditing function. A deputy director (who is also the secretary to SMC) heads the division.

- The Procurement, Research and Development Division is also an independent division and is responsible for co-ordinating capital procurement for the NDF, which includes acquisition of all major military equipment, ammunitions and materials, contract negotiations with suppliers, inspections and reviewing conditions of sale as per purchase terms, attending military exhibitions to ensure effective sourcing, and liaising with military equipment manufacturers to establish contacts and supply channels. The division is also responsible for researching, designing and developing military materials to keep abreast of the fast-changing technology in the military industry.

In a bid to provide clarity and division of labour, the MoD has broken down the tasks and functions and has allocated these to a specific arm or service. The arrangement is as follows:

THE ARMY

The main roles of the army are to:

- ensure the maintenance of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country;
- provide assistance to civil authorities and civil communities when required;

- undertake ceremonial functions; and
- assist the process of reconciliation.

THE AIR WING

Namibia developed an air wing which is responsible for air-based military operations in support of the army and maritime wing. The NDF air wing's peacetime and war roles are:

- surveillance;
- transportation of personnel; and
- transportation of supplies/equipment.

In addition, the air wing has two purely peacetime roles, namely:

- rendering support to civil authorities or communities; and
- training.

The small air wing consists of a fixed squadron and a helicopter squadron.

THE MARITIME WING

The maritime wing was introduced to defend Namibia's maritime domain and coastline against external attack. The maritime wing's headquarters was naturally earmarked for Walvis Bay. The wing was not a priority and was only established in 1998 following the graduation of naval personnel in Brazil.

Equipping the navy was an expensive and complex undertaking and the NDF adopted a policy of first developing the necessary human resources:

The navy has not been commissioned because we don't have a naval ship yet, but as soon as we get the proper facilities, the navy will start its operations ... At least our human resources will be well prepared by the time we purchase one [a naval ship] to be able to maintain and operate effectively and efficiently.²²

In 1994, the Namibian government entered into a co-operation agreement with Brazil whereby the two ministries responsible for

defence agreed that Namibian naval cadets would be trained in Brazil. The agreement also included that Brazil would assist Namibia to construct and develop a naval base, that it would assist Namibia in acquiring naval facilities such as patrol boats and other facilities, and that it would provide general consultation services on naval matters to the young Namibian cadets.

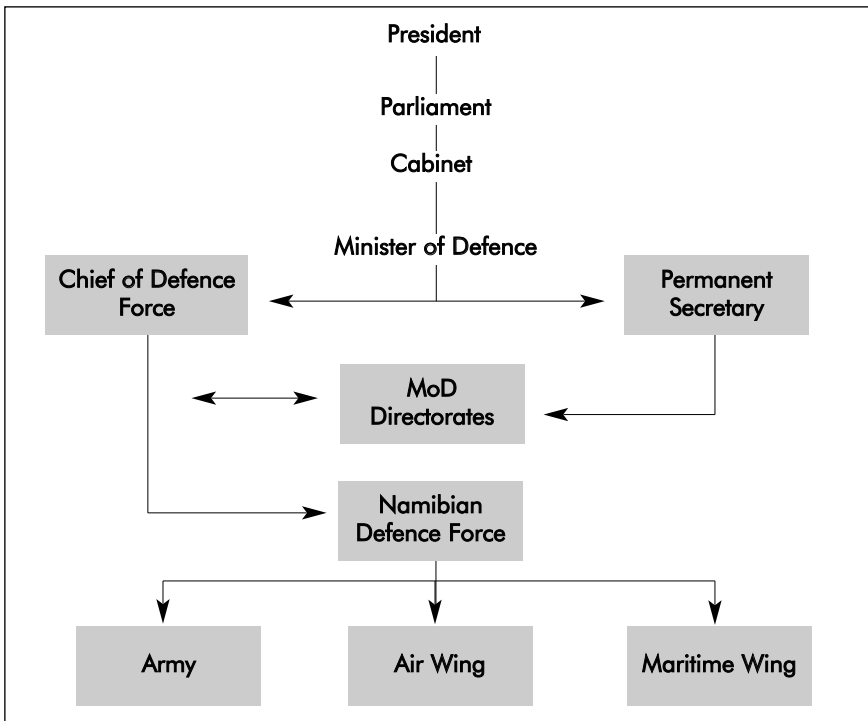
Then MoD Permanent Secretary, Erastus Negonga, explained that Namibia chose Brazil because the two countries share the same waters, are geographically situated on the same latitude, and because “Brazil is also one of the traditional leaders in naval science throughout the world, and it has one of the oldest navies in the world with highly technological equipment and facilities”.²³ Brazil offered 80% of the required naval training, South Africa 10% and other countries—including India, the US and Germany—the remaining 10%.²⁴ By August 2004 (ten years later), 168 naval officers and cadets had graduated from Brazil, among them the command and staff units.

Negonga noted that since its inception in 1998 and due to lack of equipment, the NDF’s maritime wing could not properly perform its duties of safeguarding the country’s territorial waters and defending it from external attack.²⁵ To surmount these inadequacies the MoD and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources established a strategic partnership. One outcome of this was the transfer of a patrol vessel from the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources to the MoD. This galvanised the maritime wing’s implementation of its security roles, including training and conducting patrols along the country’s exclusive economic zone to combat illegal fishing, immigration, piracy and drug trafficking.

In 2004 the NDF maritime wing finally acquired its first warship—named after the late first Chief of the NDF, Lt Gen Jerobeam Dimo Hamaambo—which was donated by the Brazilian government. This, together with the existence of trained naval personnel, enabled the commissioning of the maritime wing in 2004.

CIVIL–MILITARY RELATIONS

The Constitution of Namibia provides for a sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary state founded on the principles of democracy and rule of law. Furthermore, it lays down the principle of separation of powers and recognises the inherent dignity, equal and inalienable human rights of all members of Namibian society.

Figure 2: Structure: Political control of defence

Source: Political control of the Namibian Defence Force, <<http://www.mod.gov.na/>>

The Namibian Constitution that has been largely upheld since independence is regarded as one of the most liberal and progressive constitutions worldwide. Institutionalised checks and balances have enabled Namibia to preserve stable civil–military relations since independence. Democratic values and respect for civilian institutions by the NDF are evident.

The president is the commander-in-chief of the NDF. The Constitution entitles the president to single-handedly deploy the NDF to protect national security interests. The president appoints the chief of the defence force who is the professional head of the NDF. The chief of the defence force is authorised to:

- make provision for a balanced structuring of the defence force;
- make suitable appointments to the defence force;

- cause charges of indiscipline among members of the defence force to be investigated and prosecuted; and
- ensure the efficient administration of the defence force.

The chief of defence is answerable to the president. The president may remove the chief of the defence force from office for good cause and in the public interest, and in accordance with the provisions of any act of Parliament which may prescribe procedures considered to be expedient for this purpose. This is an important mechanism for ensuring civilian supremacy over the military.

The civilian-led and -dominated MoD supervises the NDF. The minister directs the chief of the defence force in executing his peace-time roles. The civilian authorities maintain effective control over the security forces. Parliamentary oversight is reflected in the National Assembly's scrutiny and approval of the military budget. These are important mechanisms for ensuring checks and balances. The NDF is supposed to embody political neutrality, and serving members are prohibited from holding political office. Its personnel are encouraged not to be influenced by political party affiliations in discharging their constitutional roles. This would be made possible by the creation of a professional, disciplined and highly trained NDF. Addressing new NDF recruits in 2001, Defence Deputy Minister Victor Simunja said:

For you to be able to effectively carry out these noble duties, you should be disciplined and well trained. Without discipline, you cannot be entrusted with the safety and security of the nation, as you would be seen like a band of armed criminals.²⁶

The defence institutional framework and insistence on a professional and disciplined force has served Namibia well, as the military has yet to intervene in political matters. Remarkably, Namibia's stable civil-military relations are also a product of the nature of the preceding liberation struggle. SWAPO's political leadership had to implement control measures to manage an increasingly assertive PLAN section during the liberation war. Guy Lamb noted that:

The South West African People's Organisation's liberation experience, and in particular the mechanisms of civilian control that were instituted as a result of the tensions between the armed wing and the political leadership, strengthened this tradition of civil supremacy.²⁷

NAMIBIA'S DEFENCE POLICY (WHITE PAPER)

In March 1992 the National Assembly approved the defence policy that incorporated policy guidelines for the development of the MoD. In 1993 the MoD unveiled the Defence Policy White Paper. It was a comprehensive security policy framework that clarifies the envisaged and most effective posture of the NDF, the conditions under which it should operate and the roles it should discharge.

According to the defence policy the major aim was to maintain a “minimal, unified” and affordable defence force that would be highly mobile and mainly defensive.²⁸ In line with the defence policy the strength of the NDF has never scaled the 10,000 mark.²⁹ The size of the army in 2000 was 9,000.³⁰

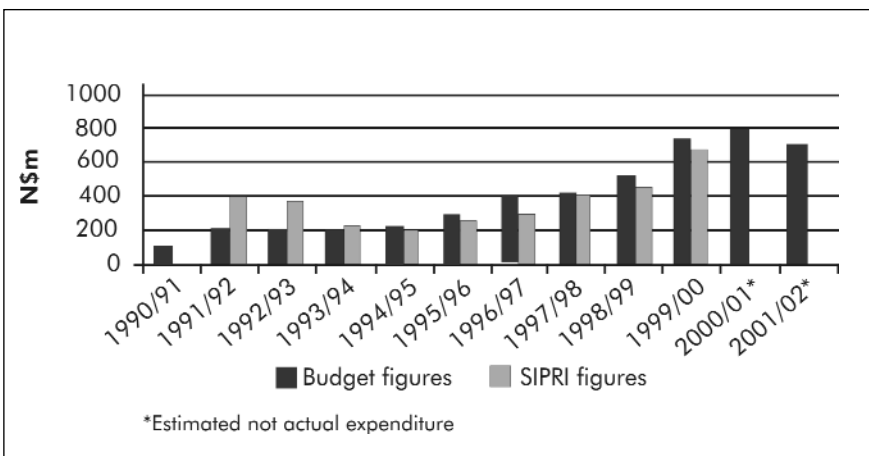
DEFENCE BUDGET

Allocations to defence since independence have increased in terms of the size of the economy (*see Figure 3*).

Defence expenditure in terms of the percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) has also risen significantly since 1993/94 (*see Figure 4*).

Economist Robin Sherbourne attributed the rise in defence expenditure to:

Figure 3: Expenditure of Ministry of Defence in current prices



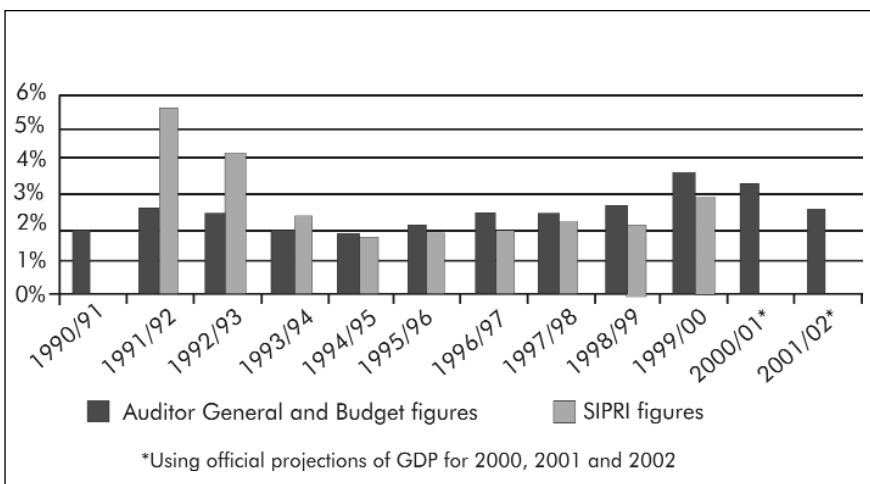
Source: R Sherbourne, *Defending the indefensible? Namibian defence expenditure since 1990*, IPPR Briefing Paper No. 1, April 2001

- the implementation of the 1993 Defence White Paper and its provision for the creation of the new air and maritime wings, in addition to upgrading existing military bases;
- the Cabinet directive of 1998 leading to the employment of 2,000 ex-PLAN fighters into the NDF; and
- the need to finance the deployment of NDF troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).³¹

Taking the average percentage of military expenditure over 12 years, Namibian investment in its security policy stands at about 2.358% of GDP a year. From all accounts, the country has been able to 'afford' its military expenditure, and if one takes the view that benefits from investment in security are located in other spheres that require predictable peace and stability, then the argument that this has been money well spent is persuasive.

It was argued in the section dealing with Namibia's initial security and defence policy that one of the challenges facing the new government in 1990 was the UNITA threat in the northern Ovambo region. At the time, UNITA's capacity far exceeded that of the Namibian government.

Figure 4: Expenditure on Ministry of Defence as percentage of GDP



Source: R Sherbourne, op cit

However, from 1999, through commitment to regional security considerations and assistance to the government of Angola, the actions of both the FAA and NDF soon triumphed, allowing greater peace and stability to return on Namibia's northern borders.

Also, the cited military expenditure includes responding to Southern African Development Community (SADC) military obligations. Namibia deployed forces in response to the DRC's formal request for military assistance from the SADC Organ, of which Namibia is a member. Membership of SADC places certain obligations on member states in the security area and this was one instance when Namibia was required to react through the provision of military assets.

Operating under the regional mandate, Namibia deployed forces in the DRC from August 1998 to September 2002 when the UN took over through its Peacekeeping Mission in the Congo (MONUC). Namibia's military participation has translated into increased stature, and it is well respected among SADC member states as a dependable nation.

Internally, defence expenditure has been targeted not only at establishing a credible conventional force but, as we have seen, demobilisation had to be revisited in late 1999 when the thousands of unemployed former combatants threatened to disrupt civil peace. To this end, the action taken was timely.

It has become an accepted phenomenon that most demobilisation exercises unravel within ten years for a number of reasons. Partly, this is due to the limited focus of initial strategies in terms of time and lack of civil re-employment of the thousands of ex-combatants who then become social and economic outcasts.

It is also true, however, that part of the current internal stability in Namibia is a result of the deliberate use of military integration as a tool to unite society and create stability. This facet of the policy has been successful.

Finally, military expenditure has been used to finance the four standing permanent commissions with neighbouring countries, which underpin the preventative diplomacy and security policy of Namibia. The country has established defence protocols with Angola, Zambia, Botswana and South Africa that are serviced through standing and permanent commissions which meet almost every quarter, if not every month, to address any security concerns along the common border areas. This has effectively translated into improved border security with minimal deployment of NDF forces along the international borders, drawing maximum benefits from the permanent defence commission's

strategy for the country. This is a feature that many SADC states and beyond may well find useful to emulate. In sum then, it can be concluded that Namibia's military expenditure in support of the NDF's foreign and domestic policy tools has been money well spent.

NDF MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS: 1990–2004 PURPOSE AND IMPACT

Namibia gained independence in the context of a UN peacekeeping operation—UNTAG. Its participation in UN peacekeeping operations, mainly the dispatch of NDF units, began relatively early in its independence. So far Namibia has dispatched NDF personnel to participate in four UN peacekeeping operations, thus contributing to international peace and security.

The multilateral security institutions to which Namibia belongs—such as the UN, African Union (AU) and SADC—have influenced Namibia's participation and contribution to international peace and stability. Its military contribution to international peace and security is thus premised upon its membership of the UN, other continental and regional institutions and coalitions, as well as the need to preserve secure and stable frameworks for national peace and development.

One of the principles guiding NDF participation in international peace and security operations, such as peacekeeping, is that intervention should comply with regional security resolutions and, more pertinently, with the UN Charter. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tuliameni Kalomoh, said that Namibia supports humanitarian intervention to stop gross and systematic violations of human rights, but that this should be done through and under the authority of the UN, or through regional organisations acting in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter.³² Commenting on Namibia's participation in the DRC war, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hidipo Hamutenya, noted that “the SADC allies' checking of the aggressors' advance [on Kinshasa] is the triumph of justice and the upholding of the UN Charter”.³³

National security considerations also influence Namibia's contribution to regional peace and security. As President Sam Nujoma said:

Our country continues to enjoy socio-political peace and stability. However, my Government is concerned about the civil war in Angola and its spill-over effects into the north-eastern parts of our country, especially in the Kavango Region.³⁴

As shall be discussed later, the NDF launched incursions into Angola against UNITA in order to secure the country's northern border areas.

NAMIBIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO UN PEACEKEEPING

Namibia's first engagement in UN peacekeeping operations was the dispatch of a contingent of 43 soldiers and equipment to work as part of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). UNTAC was established by UN Security Council Resolution 745 of 28 February 1992, to ensure the implementation of the Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, signed in Paris on 23 October 1991. UNTAC's mandate included aspects relating to human rights, the organisation and conduct of free and fair general elections, military arrangements, civil administration, the maintenance of law and order, the repatriation and resettlement of Cambodian refugees and displaced persons, and the rehabilitation of essential Cambodian infrastructure during the transition period. Its mandate, and by extension NDF participation, ended in September 1993 with the promulgation of the Constitution for the Kingdom of Cambodia and the formation of the new government.

The NDF also contributed personnel to serve on the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) III in 1996. UN Security Council Resolution 976 of 8 February 1995 established the multi-dimensional UNAVEM III to assist the government and UNITA in restoring peace and achieving national reconciliation against a fragile politico-military background. Initially assigned road verification and VIP escort duties, the UNAVEM Namibian contingent was later asked to act as a Rapid Reaction Force. The NDF contingent continued to serve with the smaller United Nations Observer Mission for Angola (MONUA), which replaced UNAVEM III on 30 June 1997.³⁵

Namibia responded to a UN appeal and pledged forces for Liberia in 2003 whose "purpose [was] not to fight, but to keep the peace".³⁶ An NDF contingent of 855 personnel served with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). These included 844 troops, six civilian police, four staff officers and three military observers.³⁷ These were drawn from the 26th Brigade, 12th Brigade, 4th Artillery Brigade and Engineering Regiment. The battalion's responsibility was to secure and safeguard Liberia's western corridor (between Liberia and Sierra Leone), where it deployed on 22 February 2004. Two-thirds of the battalion had previously served in different foreign missions in Cambodia, Angola,

Ethiopia and Eritrea, including the regional peacekeeping missions in the DRC.

In January 2004 a shipload of 800 tonnes of military equipment, sourced from NDF stock, was dispatched to Liberia for use by the NDF contingent. The equipment included about 100 vehicles, mainly armoured trucks, as well as ambulances and sporting gear. The equipment took approximately three months to prepare and cost the NDF between N\$5–8 million.³⁸ Care was reportedly taken to ensure that this contribution to UN peacekeeping would not compromise local NDF activities. However, contributing to the debate on the Additional Appropriation Bill (Vote Eight of the Namibian Defence Force), Bartholomeus Shangheta, a SWAPO councillor for the Otavi Constituency, questioned the allocation of N\$36 million to deploy an NDF contingent to Liberia as part of the UN peacekeeping mission in that country.³⁹

THE NDF AND THE DRC WAR

In 1998, under the auspices of the SADC alliance with Angola and Zimbabwe, Namibia committed troops and equipment to the DRC. Namibia's involvement in the DRC war aroused debate on the constitutional issues regarding deployment of the NDF, in particular the President and Commander of the NDF's prior consultation with Parliament.

President Nujoma argued that Namibia's involvement was in accordance with peacekeeping efforts enshrined in both the OAU and SADC charters. In 2002 Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hidipo Hamutenya, explained the basis of Namibia's intervention:

Proceeding from the standpoint of Pan-African solidarity and commitment to regional peace and stability, the three (Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe) countries responded to the Congolese request in the affirmative and acted resolutely to blunt the advance of the aggressors' forces on Kinshasa and the other major Congolese economic and population centres, such as, Mbuji-Mayi, Lubumbashi, Matadi, etc.⁴⁰

Namibia deployed nearly a third of its armed forces, comprising all services, and at any one time averaging 2,000 troops who were rotated.⁴¹ The exact statistics of Namibia's total casualties are hard to come by. By

December 1999 at least 18 Namibian soldiers were reported to have died in the DRC while the International Committee of the Red Cross reported a further 11 soldiers held as prisoners-of-war in the Rwandan capital, Kigali.⁴² These figures included five Namibians—two pilots and three technicians—deployed in the DRC who died instantly when two NDF helicopters collided in the war-torn central African country in mid-January 2003.

Also in January 2003, the High Court issued an order that seven Namibian soldiers who had been missing in the DRC for more than three years were legally presumed dead.⁴³ This was in response to an application by the NDF.

Namibia commemorated NDF personnel who lost their lives during the DRC war. For instance, in June 2001 President Sam Nujoma said:

We solemnly pay homage to our fallen heroes and heroines who sacrificed their precious lives and shed their blood to achieve and restore peace and stability in the DRC.⁴⁴

Namibia incurred financial and material costs in addition to human casualties. Motivating the N\$172 million allocated to the MoD under the Additional Budget in 2000, Defence Minister, Erkki Nghimtina, explained that N\$74.5 million would cover “conditions of service” for soldiers deployed in the DRC, while more than N\$36.8 million would be spent on the acquisition of various types of ammunition and pyrotechnics.⁴⁵

The international donor community—including Germany, Finland and Britain—opposed Namibia’s involvement in the DRC war and announced cutbacks in development aid to the country.⁴⁶ Finance Minister, Nangolo Mbumba, once claimed that Namibia’s military involvement in the DRC would not have any bearing on the country’s finances: “No expenditure item, programme or project of the Namibian Government will suffer as a result of our military involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.”⁴⁷ However, the timing of the withdrawal of Namibian troops became a contentious issue.

The Summit of the Heads of State of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe held in Kinshasa on 24 October 2002 issued a communiqué that formally announced the definitive withdrawal of allied troops from the DRC in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement of 10 July 1999. Rwanda and Uganda were similarly completing their military pullouts from the DRC. The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement had required that all

foreign countries involved in the DRC conflict withdraw their troops from that country by the end of August 2001, although in practice this deadline had been ignored by the belligerent parties.

The SADC allies' intervention had created an enabling framework for peace talks. According to Namibian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hidipo Hamutenya:

And with the Rwanda and Uganda aggression blunted and their hegemonic ambitions checked, it was now possible for other parties, such as the UN and South Africa, to step forth with proposals for peacekeeping and national reconciliation. The deployment of the UN Peacekeeping Forces is now being stepped up. Also, talks are going on between the government of the DRC and the various groups in that country in an effort to find a formula for the setting up of a transitional government of national reconciliation. These talks are taking place on the basis of the Pretoria Agreement, which is the latest attempt aimed at achieving national reconciliation in that country.⁴⁸

The Namibian government categorised its DRC operation as a success. Welcoming the return of some 150 NDF troops in June 2001, President Sam Nujoma said:

The Namibian Defence Force soldiers have played a major role in preventing Kinshasa from being captured by Ugandan and Rwandese forces and their rebel elements. The landing of NDF soldiers in Kinshasa changed the balance of forces and ensured that the legitimate government of the DRC was not overthrown by force of arms.⁴⁹

Defence Ministry Spokesman, Frans Nghitila, confirmed that all Namibian troops and equipment were withdrawn from the DRC under the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement,⁵⁰ following the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops in that country.

The UN Security Council Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the DRC established that some countries which had troops in the DRC benefited from the DRC's minerals and other resources. This report, which was released to the UN Security Council on 16 October 2002, concluded that Namibia was not involved in any form of illegal exploitation of the DRC's resources. Namibian Foreign Affairs Minister Hamutenya stated that this was:

... a clear testimony that our sole interest there was and still is the protection of the sovereignty of and territorial integrity of the DRC, including the protection of its natural resources. And, while we have achieved our military objectives in that country, it is in our interest to remain politically engaged in the Congo. A peaceful and stable Congo will further strengthen the process of economic development in the SADC region and Africa as a whole. Thus, we continue to closely monitor the peace process until peace and stability is fully established in that great country.⁵¹

Namibia, however, aimed to build on its military involvement to strengthen bilateral relations with the DRC for mutual economic and social benefit. Remarkably, the assassinated DRC President Laurent Kabila reportedly offered diamond concessions to Namibia as payment for military assistance.

A mine—consisting of two blocks of about 25 km² along the Kasai River, 40 km from Tshikapa—was granted as a five-year concession. Namibia's diamond mining interest was meant to offset the escalating military expenses of Namibia's participation in the DRC war, estimated by the UN Panel to have drained Namibia's coffers of more than N\$700 million.⁵²

A feasibility study on the mine recommended negotiations with the DRC government, but the continued tenuous security situation and peace negotiations meant that by 2002 no prospecting had begun. The gift was then converted to a five-year business transaction, at no cost, and exploration activities were embarked upon by the Namibian company on 26 August. SWAPO has established a company with this name in recognition of the first attack mounted in the war in South West Africa during the 1970s.

Participation in peacekeeping operations and the DRC war was crucial for the combat experience and fighting capacity of the NDF. In 2000 Maj Gen Solomom Hwala, then Army Commander, could assert:

Today I am proud to announce that the army has grown into a disciplined, professional and battle-tested force, capable of fulfilling its national obligations of defending and safeguarding our sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁵³

MoD Permanent Secretary, Peter Shivute, also stressed that the NDF now has the:

necessary experience and references to take from Cambodia, Angola, DRC and now from Liberia. I think those things make us stronger and more accepted by the international community; that if the Namibian contingent is there you should be comfortable. That international acceptance alone also puts [the] country at a good ranking.⁵⁴

THE NDF AND INTERNAL ENGAGEMENTS

The NDF also has experience of operational deployment inside Namibia. In 1998/99 NDF troops and the police crushed a Caprivi Liberation Army secessionist attempt. There were, however, reports in 1998 that government forces—particularly the paramilitary police Special Field Force troops—had beaten civilians, looted property, and shot and wounded civilians fleeing arrest.⁵⁵ Over 2,000 Caprivians sought refuge in Botswana by the year's end. The government in 1999 confirmed revelations of human rights abuses against presumed secessionists by security forces.

From December 1999 the Namibian army launched pursuit operations against UNITA forces that threatened the security of the Kavango and Caprivi regions. President Nujoma elaborated:

The Army launched hot pursuit operations that minimised UNITA atrocities in Namibia. In the process, these hot pursuit operations into Angola destroyed UNITA bases and many tons of war materiel were captured. The Army contributed greatly to the reduction of UNITA terrorists' morale and subsequently their effectiveness, which resulted in their annihilation, and the elimination of Jonas Savimbi on 22 February 2002.

The NDF routinely provides support to the police to discharge its law enforcement functions. The army jointly mounts roadblocks and patrols with the Namibian police to minimise criminal activity during holiday seasons.

The NDF also conducted de-mining operations in the country's northern regions of Kunene, Omusati and Oshana, where hundreds of unexploded ordinances were destroyed. One of the army's main roles is to provide assistance to civil communities when required. The NDF has also carried out emergency relief operations and has provided assistance to civil communities affected by natural disasters, including floods and *veld* fires.

CO-OPERATION WITH REGIONAL DEFENCE FORCES

The Namibian government considers multilateral and bilateral contacts as a productive means to enhance stability and build confidence. President Nujoma summarised the point: “Participating in joint exercises and sports activities bilaterally, regionally and internationally remains one method of building confidence and trust.”⁵⁶

In 2001 Namibia and South Africa agreed to establish a Joint Permanent Commission on Defence and Security and to access each other’s arsenals during wartime in order to strengthen their military allegiance.⁵⁷ The proposed Commission would empower the two countries to set up technical teams, which would study and agree on exchange of military equipment, as well as on joint training for the two defence forces’ personnel. Namibia, as mentioned, already has similar commissions with Botswana, Zambia and Angola.

As part of its co-operative approach to SADC security, Namibia has actively participated in regional military exercises aimed at enhancing the inter-operability of regional militaries. The NDF has participated in SADC initiatives to build sub-regional capacity for peacekeeping. These include: Exercise Morning Star, a map exercise hosted by South Africa in 1996; Exercise Blue Hungwe at battalion level, hosted by Zimbabwe in 1997; and a follow-up exercise, Blue Crane, at brigade level in South Africa in 1999. Participation in regional military exercises has presented an important arena to enhance the capabilities of the NDF.

The NDF was also part of the 16 African countries that participated in a French-led military exercise, Tanzanite Recamp 3, in Dar es Salaam and Tanga in Tanzania in February 2002. The 13 SADC countries were joined by Kenya and Madagascar in the Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capabilities (RECAMP) exercise. France’s RECAMP, conducted under the aegis of the UN and in agreement with the OAU, aimed to improve co-ordination between the continent’s armies in the fields of peacekeeping, and humanitarian or natural disasters. The exercise was thus part of an initiative to find a common approach among the armies of SADC countries in cases of natural or humanitarian disasters.

NDF AND HIV/AIDS

MoD officials acknowledged the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the NDF. Noting how the nature of the military profession—in particular deployment away from the normal domicile—makes soldiers susceptible, Deputy Defence Minister, Victor Simunja, in July 2002 said:

The implications of HIV/AIDS are enormous. Not only is the readiness of soldiers for deployment and active duty likely to be severely impaired, but the cost of health and social care of the military personnel affected and infected with HIV/AIDS related diseases is likely to increase significantly in the coming years.⁵⁸

A group of NDF personnel received training as part of the HIV/AIDS Third Cycle Counsellors Training Programme, and were encouraged

to promote an understanding among all military members of how sexually transmitted diseases are spread ... to advise fellow soldiers on a variety of symptoms of infectious diseases and sicknesses to enable them to look for proper medical attention⁵⁹

On 7 September 2002, President Nujoma also urged military health practitioners

to design intensive HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and counselling programmes as ways of informing and educating the military community about the dangers and effects of this disease and to teach them how to deal with it once they become infected.⁶⁰

Given the unconstitutionality of excluding people with HIV from joining the NDF, the MoD is struggling to design an appropriate HIV/AIDS strategy. MoD Permanent Secretary Peter Shivute explained that the current NDF

policy at recruitment is that somebody has to be medically fit and that includes voluntary testing for HIV/AIDS, we are not forcing anybody. We are saying we are going to recruit and we are inviting youngsters from this age up to this age, and these are the criteria—education, willingness to serve and voluntary HIV/AIDS testing. They will only apply if they are medically fit.⁶¹

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

A number of challenges still face the NDF, including the following:

- A review of the Defence Policy White Paper of 1993 is needed in the context of the evolving and dynamic multilateral security environment.

Namibia will need to develop a vision and strategy for the NDF that can succeed in the light of new global, continental and regional defence and security developments, such as the African Heads of State and Government declaration to enable a Common African Defence and Security Policy, and the SADC Defence Pact.

- A comprehensive and progressive military HIV/AIDS prevention and care policy has been put in place, and recently received positive comments from the US military.
- An effective exit strategy for NDF personnel to facilitate productive and sustainable post-military livelihoods needs to be designed.

CONCLUSION

The military history of Namibia and the NDF is a remarkable story. In just over a decade, SWAPO and the NDF have succeeded in overturning centuries of brutality and injustice, first perpetrated on the Herero, Nama and Damara by German traders from the 15th to the 19th centuries, and which continued throughout most of the 20th century even after South Africa had replaced Germany as 'rulers' of the territory in 1915.

Before South Africa's withdrawal from Namibia, beginning in April/May 1989, Pretoria had pursued options that would 'determine the political direction' of independent Namibia, including a last ditch attempt to destroy PLAN. Despite these machinations, Namibia's first free and democratic elections held in November 1989 provided the initial steps for restoring the African majority to political power.

When majority rule was confirmed at the March 1990 inauguration, the new government set about using the integrated military as a tool for national reconciliation, and also as a foreign policy tool for regional integration. Consistently living up to its liberation credentials, the Namibian government:

- collaborated with the ANC in South Africa during the crucial period of the 1990s;
- spurned the military option and agreed to the International Court of Justice arbitration in a potentially explosive incident with Botswana;
- continued to offer its political and military support to Angola;

- was capable of dealing with a potentially divisive internal security situation in the Caprivi Strip through military and active diplomatic engagement with its neighbours;
- discharged its regional security obligations under SADC by deploying forces in the DRC; and
- created a network of security and defence protocols with all its neighbours while continuing to train, equip and consolidate professionalism in the NDF.

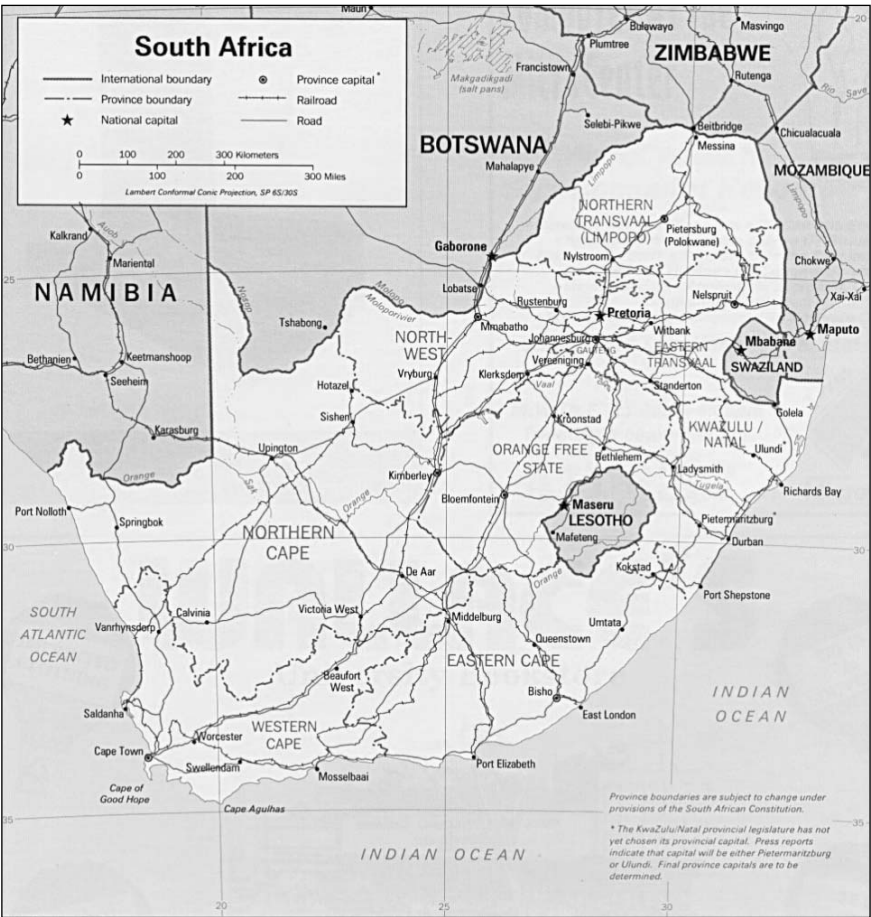
Through Namibia's judicious use of the military, Southern Africa is host to a unique experience, the relevance of which is worth sharing with other regions of the world that are struggling to emerge from protracted conflict.

NOTES

- 1 *Namibia Fact File* 2003.
- 2 To this day, the communities conduct commemorative marches, while demands for apologies and compensation have been lodged by the surviving offspring.
- 3 UN Resolution 2145 (XXI).
- 4 S Brown, Diplomacy by other means—SWAPO's liberation war, in C Leys & J S Saul, *Namibia's liberation struggle*, James Currey, London, 1995, p 31.
- 5 An interesting aspect that has not been investigated is the lack of air power and naval capacity within PLAN during the armed struggle era compared to other liberation movements elsewhere.
- 6 Brown, op cit.
- 7 SWAPO, *To be born a nation. The liberation struggle for Namibia*, Zed Press, London, 1981, p 262.
- 8 P H Katjavivi, *The rise of nationalism in Namibia and its international dimensions*, DPhil thesis, St Antony's College, Oxford University, 1986, p 282.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Brown, op cit.
- 11 The 28 December tripartite New York Accords (signed by Angola, Cuba and South Africa) capped complex mediation by Chester Crocker, US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, which elaborately linked the phased withdrawal of Cuban troops and departure of South African forces from Angola with implementation from 1 April 1989 of the hitherto stillborn UN Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) on Namibia's independence.
- 12 This is a popular tactic with liberation movements: that is, to establish liberated zones from where they can practise their particular choice of law and order while showing up the weaknesses of the incumbent regime.
- 13 Namibian Constitution, 1990.

- 14 In the case of each service, the act also provides powers of dismissal of the commanders where appropriate.
- 15 As discussed below, the problem of unemployed former combatants was to haunt the nation until January 1999 when the final demobilisation and induction of yet another 10,000 former combatants was undertaken; See also A du Pisani, *Rumours of rain: Namibia's post-independence experience*, SAIIA, Johannesburg, 1991, p 5.
- 16 Recruitment of youth aimed at strengthening army, <<http://www.grnnet.gov.na/htm>> (9 September 2004).
- 17 G Shelton, D Monyue, A Pullinger, M Simmonds & R Williams, *Demobilization and its aftermath II*, ISS, Pretoria, 2001.
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- 22 Defence working hard for navy, <http://www.grnnet.gov.na/Nav_frames/News_launch.htm> (9 September 2004).
- 23 Ibid.
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- 25 Defence receives vessel from Fisheries Ministry, <http://www.grnnet.gov.na/Nav_frames/News_launch.htm> (9 September 2004).
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- 27 G Lamb, *Civil supremacy of the military in Namibia: A retrospective case study*, <<http://www.namibweb.com/article2.htm>> (10 September 2004).
- 28 J Cock, op cit, p 110.
- 29 Interview with MoD Permanent Secretary Peter Shivute, Windhoek, 12 November 2004.
- 30 IISS, *The military balance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p 277.
- 31 R Sherbourne, *Defending the indefensible? Namibian defence expenditure since 1990*, IPPR Briefing Paper No. 1, April 2001.
- 32 Intervention only under the UN, <http://www.grnnet.gov.na/Nav_frames/News_launch.htm> (9 September 2004).
- 33 Statement to Parliament by Minister of Foreign Affairs Hidipo Hamutenya, MP, Windhoek, 6 November 2002, <http://www.grnnet.gov.na/Nav_frames/News_launch.htm> (9 September 2004).
- 34 Statement by His Excellency President Sam Nujoma on the occasion of Namibia's 11th independence anniversary, Windhoek, 21 March 2001, <http://www.grnnet.gov.na/Nav_frames/News_launch.htm> (9 September 2004).
- 35 Ministry of Defence, <http://www.op.gov.na/Decade_peace/mod.htm> (9 September 2004).
- 36 Ministry of Defence, Chief of Staff, Major General Peter Nambundunga quoted

- in, Namibia awaits word from UN on troops for Liberia, <<http://www.namibian.com.na/2003/october/national/03FB3DF3E9.html>> (17 September 2004).
- 37 Namibian troops receive UN medals, urged to remain committed, <<http://www.geocities.com/athens/4795/Namibia.htm>> (9 September 2004).
- 38 Military equipment leaves for Liberia, <<http://www.namibian.com.na/2004/january/national/041EBD7E17.html>> (17 September 2004).
- 39 Emergency fund call, <<http://www.namibian.com.na/2003/december/national/0311C48C03.html>> (17 September 2004).
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