

Militarization's long shadow: Namibia's legacy of armed violence

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Post-conflict reconstruction is a difficult process for any country, one fraught with dangers. A major factor determining its nature lies in the trajectory of what has gone on before the guns stopped firing. It is important to learn from the experience of countries that have seen post-conflict reconstruction success or failure. Namibia is an interesting case study. Having achieved independence from South Africa in 1990, following more than a century of armed violence, repression, and colonization, its government and citizens subsequently embarked on an urgent journey to construct a nation to be characterized by peace and democracy. Sixteen years later, Namibia has become a democracy in the legal and political sense, and levels of armed violence are relatively low compared to other African countries, but the achievement of comprehensive and deep-rooted peace and democracy has been frustrated by authoritarian governance tendencies as well as by militaristic approaches to nation-building.

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Reviewing how the legacy of Namibia's armed conflict has influenced its path of post-conflict reconstruction, the article reflects on the limitations and failures of efforts geared toward the fostering of sustainable peace and the consolidation of democracy. It begins with a short history of the Namibian conflict, then details the immediate post-independence period, focusing on peace-building and democratic consolidation (or the lack thereof), and concludes by considering the militaristic dimensions of governance and nation-building in Namibia, emphasizing the links between the legacy of armed violence and contemporary life and politics in this southern African country.

Namibia's history of armed conflict and militarization

The country's colonial and post-colonial history provides important pointers to the influences that were to shape its post-conflict reconstruction. From the late-1800s until 1915, Namibian territory was subject to German colonial rule, a particularly

cruel one as compared to other colonial regimes in Africa.¹ Following its invasion of German-held Namibia during World War I, South Africa became the territory's next colonial master and likewise oppressed indigenous populations with racially discriminatory policies. In 1960, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) mounted an anti-occupation campaign. Until 1974, SWAPO's primary strategy was the petitioning and lobbying of international organizations, such as the United Nations. While increasing South Africa's international isolation, this did not directly contribute to SWAPO's goal of national liberation and independence for Namibia.² As its vehicle of armed struggle, SWAPO then created the South West African Liberation Army (SWALA) in Tanzania and greater emphasis was placed on military strategies and action.³ SWAPO's armed wing was reorganized in 1973 and renamed the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). When, two years later, neighboring Angola gained its independence from Portugal, SWAPO was allowed to use Angola as a base for its military actions, leading to a significant escalation of its military campaign.⁴

By 1980, PLAN operational structure had changed, reflecting combatants' regular incorporation into Angolan military units and almost total reliance on Soviet financial and material support. PLAN began to adopt more conventional military structures and tactics and developed mechanized brigades. In response, an increased SADF presence in the operational area then diminished PLAN's military advantage as from 1982. Forward-command posts, from which guerrillas operated into Namibia, became increasingly insecure with their lines of supply constantly disrupted. As a result, PLAN combatants, previously based within a few kilometers of the Namibian border, were forced back into the Angolan interior. PLAN's position was further diminished with increased counterinsurgency activity within northern Namibia.⁵

Challenging the leaders

In addition to organizational changes and military campaign failures, important challenges to SWAPO leadership also had some impact on its attitudes to and the nature of its eventual conduct of governing. First, in the late 1960s, a group returning from military training in China to military headquarters in Kongwa, Tanzania, criticized SWAPO leaders' understanding of military strategy and tactics. They argued that military inactivity and lack of weapons were signs of mismanagement and corruption.⁶ In response, the SWAPO leadership arranged for the "China-men" to be arrested and imprisoned by Tanzanian authorities.⁷ Second, toward the end of 1975, SWAPO's Youth League began to demand more effective democratic governance from the Executive and insisted that a Congress be held.⁸ When these demands were ignored, the Youth League declared in 1976 that the SWAPO Executive was unconstitutional and invited it to resign.⁹ Third, sections

of PLAN, including some senior military officers supported the demands of the Youth league.¹⁰ When the grievances were not effectively addressed, a group of “anti-corruption fighters” emerged and, in early 1976, seized control of SWAPO’s main base and a few satellite camps in Zambia. Fearing the unrest may spill over, the Zambian government supported SWAPO’s leadership, sending in several army battalions to defeat the rebels.¹¹ Along with the rebels, Zambian authorities also arrested dissident Youth League leaders and their sympathizers. As a warning to anyone seeking to challenge the SWAPO Executive’s authority, “revolutionary decrees” identified “crimes against the Namibian People’s Revolution” and stipulated requisite punishments.¹²

In the early 1980s, SWAPO began to suffer major military setbacks. Rather than face the painful truth that the SADF was gaining the upper hand due to superior military prowess, the leadership blamed South African “spies” and established a military security organization in 1981.¹³ This rapidly became an institution of organized terror that embarked on a seemingly irrational witch-hunt.¹⁴ With many SWAPO members being arrested on a random, if regular, basis, and in the absence of accurate information, intense paranoia began to take root within the movement. By the late 1980s, the situation had become critical.¹⁵ Only external developments, in the form of the 1988 agreement to end Angolan’s civil war and pave the way for Namibian independence, prevented the security clique from taking complete control.¹⁶

The “spy drama” of the 1980s resulted in the purge of many intellectuals and democratically-minded people and groups from within SWAPO. Meanwhile, SWAPO structures within Namibia faced severe harassment from South African security forces during the 1970s and 1980s. Starved of funds, this left very few democratically-oriented leaders inside Namibia that could have balanced out its autocratic leadership in exile.¹⁷

Militarization

Another important process at work was the militarization of significant aspects of political life. In the context of the 1970s and 1980s Cold War, South Africa and Namibia saw themselves as targets of a “total communist onslaught.” For South Africa, this justified involvement of its security forces in almost every aspect of society, and an elaborate network of security committees, the National Security Management System (NSMS), was established as a sort of shadow or clandestine administration. Namibia’s state machinery – still under South African control – came to support SADF’s occupation of the North and South African war effort in Angola.¹⁸ Private-sector companies (especially in the mining sector), many of which were foreign-owned, either actively supported South Africa’s war effort or quietly complied. After all, they generated extensive wealth in Namibia, and some

of this was directly derived from military contracts.¹⁹

The influence of the South African military was extensive. Between 1972 and 1989, virtually the entire northern segment of Namibia was placed under a state of emergency that included the imposition of a dusk-to-dawn curfew. By the mid-1980s, over 100,000 troops under South African command were deployed in Namibia. Approximately eighty percent of the population lived under martial law, close to fifty percent of the population was directly governed by SADF, and all infrastructure developments in the North, including the construction of roads, were determined by military necessity.²⁰ Military bases became the centers of economic activity, and with them much of the economy of the North.²¹ A comprehensive counter-insurgency program to significantly reduce the support provided to PLAN insurgents saw SADF introduce a variety of socio-economic programs. It deployed teachers, medical personnel, and agricultural specialists in an attempt to “win the hearts and minds” of Namibians and generate some legitimacy for SADF’s presence in the North, but also to gather intelligence.²² All this was undermined by the programs’ violent aspects.²³ As the war intensified, the security forces became more reliant on terror tactics to control Namibians in the North.²⁴ Democratic, community-based organizations were discouraged. Instead, traditional authority structures and churches – both hierarchical in nature – became the other dominant political forces in the North.²⁵

As Namibia moved toward independence in 1990, it was clear that both its colonial history and its anti-colonial struggle would make building a peaceful and democratic post-conflict society more difficult. Legacies of violence, exploitation, racial discrimination, and armed liberation struggle, were common

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to most ex-colonies, but what differentiated Namibia’s experience was the conflict within SWAPO and the way its leadership dealt with it. In addition to South Africa’s influence and the militarization of Namibia’s economy and society, this internal conflict formed particular attitudes within the organization’s leadership and created particular challenges for post-conflict reconstruction.

Namibia’s post-independence transition to democracy

With independence, the political elite and civil society undertook immediate concerted efforts to establish democratic state structures, systems, and processes. A new constitution was drafted (which included a Bill of Rights), apartheid policy

and practice was abolished, a system of multiparty democratic elections was established, and the armed forces became accountable to civilian rule.

As with any post-conflict society, issues of demilitarization presented particular challenges to the consolidation of democracy and peace. First, demobilization and successful reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian society, if not effectively managed, may lead soldiers to return to arms for survival and destabilize the country or region in question. The disarming and repatriation of PLAN cadres in Angola and of South West African Territorial Force (SWATF) personnel (which had been a part of SADF) in Namibia, was already completed by June 1989. But it was naively assumed that demobilized soldiers would simply reintegrate into civilian life on their own, and no assistance was made available.²⁶ Ex-combatants expressed grievances through demonstrations and, realizing the potential security hazard that a significant group of unemployed and dissatisfied individuals with military training represented, government devised a cash payment scheme, created vocational training programs in the form of development brigades, and included ex-combatants in the general refugee resettlement program.²⁷

This met with only limited success. The problem of dissatisfied ex-combatants persisted, leading to further protests.²⁸ In response, government established the Special Field Force in 1996, a paramilitary entity administratively located within the Department of Home Affairs, but structurally part of the Namibian Police. While SFF incorporated a significant number of unemployed ex-combatants, this was far from a long-run solution to the problem and, if anything, created impediments to demilitarization.

A second important issue was how to deal with reconciliation. The SWAPO-led government decided to “forgive and forget” past human rights abuses and injustices, both by the South African security forces and the liberation movement. It argued that a peaceful transition to democracy required cooperation among former adversaries, and that dredging up past human rights abuses would impact negatively on national unity and nation-building, only resulting in calls for retribution and revenge.²⁹ Thus, those who had occupied important positions within SWAPO during the liberation struggle period, and then acquired high political office, and who were allegedly responsible for the misuse of power and for committing human rights abuses, were not held to account for their actions, not even symbolically. In fact, among its leadership a conspiracy of denial emerged over the occurrence of human rights abuses in SWAPO camps in exile. This state of affairs contributed to a consolidation of a tradition of impunity within the SWAPO circles of power.³⁰

A third issue SWAPO had to deal with upon assuming government in 1990, was how to transform a militarized state and society.³¹ A transformation occurred, but with mixed results. Military conscription was abolished, despite SWAPO's desire to maintain it for nation-building reasons.³² Many government departments

were demilitarized, but police and prison services still subscribe to military values and a militaristic ethos.³³ The legacy of SADF informers and spies still haunts Namibia: spying accusations were regularly employed by members of the political elite to discredit critical voices and undermine political rivals.

In the immediate post-conflict environment, insecurity, uncertainty, and colonial legacy worked against the development of policies to constructively demilitarize the state and address the entrenched heritage of armed conflict. In addition, accounting and atoning for past human rights abuses were precluded by SWAPO's concern that the fragility of peace in Namibia, and the party's grip on power, would be undermined. And so the legacy of war continued to permeate many post-independence structures and processes. The short-term peace-building measures addressed some of the more serious security concerns but long-term and widespread conflict transformation and demilitarization processes were not considered.

The new, post-independence struggle

SWAPO's hierarchical and autocratic structure at independence was not confronted in the immediate post-conflict reconstruction period. Following its conversion from liberation movement to political party, the former leadership-in-exile retained the organization's reigns of power. Many senior members, particularly President Sam Nujoma, had a high degree of moral prestige, being seen as liberators, particularly since during the liberation struggle the U.N. had declared SWAPO as the “sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people.” Party purges and the success of South African oppression reduced the abilities of SWAPO's rank-and-file to press for reform, while the decisive election victory (57 percent of the popular vote) precluded any major electoral rivals. These factors combined and contributed to SWAPO becoming, over the next years, an increasingly dominant, authoritarian, cantankerous, and intolerant organization.

Dealing with criticism and competition

It's authoritarian culture began to pervade state structures and processes. The divide between Party and State became blurred. Institutions established to hold the state accountable were undermined, and powerful SWAPO figures, especially President Nujoma, were increasingly able to compel the state to pursue personal policies, often militaristic in nature. The problems became most apparent after Namibia's second national election in 1994 in which SWAPO won 74 percent of the popular vote, an increase of 17 percentage points. In stark contrast to glowing reviews it had received in the early 1990s, a number of severe public criticisms were leveled at the ruling party early into its second term of office. It was accused

of failing to deliver much needed socio-economic reforms and of tolerating an arrogation of power by the newly emergent political elite.³⁴ According to Melber, this overwhelming electoral support “encouraged the misperception that the state is the property of government.”³⁵ SWAPO’s leadership started to perceive itself as untouchable, and in 1998 Namibia’s constitution was amended (duly endorsed by both houses of Parliament) to allow Sam Nujoma to stand for a third term as President, an issue had previously been muscled through a special SWAPO Congress. This was almost immediately followed by Nujoma’s unilateral decision to deploy troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the 1999 elections, SWAPO increased its popular support base to over 76 percent of the electorate.

Post-independence, SWAPO’s antagonistic intolerance has become commonplace. Critics are defined as unpatriotic, racist, tribalist, or imperialist, and when the judiciary issued rulings unfavorable to government, its independence was challenged.

tribalist, or imperialist, and when the judiciary has made rulings in cases that are not favorable to government, its independence has been challenged.³⁶ Criticism within SWAPO has become taboo, and dissenters of the official line are dealt with severely. As a result, “the circle of political office-bearers tends to be restricted to those comrades who gained a reputation within and respected the display of personality structures in a command-and-obey system, not for their democratic convictions as independent-minded, autonomous individuals.”³⁷

SWAPO’s response to the publication of Siegfried Groth’s 1995 book *The Wall of Silence: The Dark Days of Liberation Struggle*, which detailed alleged SWAPO human rights abuses in exile, elicited a bruising party response. Denouncing the book, it demonized the author and those associated with the book in the media. Senior SWAPO members called for the book to be banned and destroyed. Saul and Leys comment that “[t]he highly personalised outbursts ... were characteristic of SWAPO’s use of character assassination and intimidation in exile, providing further evidence of some of the negative attributes of the political culture that has pervaded the movement since its early history.”³⁸ Similarly, an almost frenzied SWAPO reaction took place when just prior to the 1999 national election former party members created the Congress of Democrats (CoD). In the run-up to the election, SWAPO’s press accused CoD leaders of treason, and a program of violence and intimidation was unleashed upon its supporters and perceived

sympathizers.

Dealing with youth unemployment

The hangover from the militaristic attitudes of SWAPO is no more apparent than in its response to the problem of youth unemployment. Under the Ministry of Youth and Sport, a National Youth Service Scheme was launched in October 1999. Consisting of a fifteen-months training program, it is designed to assist recruits in securing employment or setting-up their own businesses.³⁹ Its headquarters was established at Berg Aukas at the premises of a failed employment scheme for ex-combatants devised by the Development Brigade Corporation. Recruits were required to wear Namibian Defence Force uniforms and undergo military-style training, including military drills either at bases in Katutura or Walvis Bay.⁴⁰

By early 2001, however, the scheme was in crisis. Much of the promised skills training and employment opportunities had not materialized. So, in April 2001, 52 recruits traveled from Mariental to Windhoek, the capital. They presented their grievances to little effect.⁴¹ Then, in mid-2002, 300 of the 400 recruits at the Grootfontein training center staged a protest and marched 400 km to State House to hand President Nujoma a petition in which they claimed that they were not provided with adequate skills training and were spending most of their time bush-clearing. They were treated with disdain, accused of ill discipline, and threatened with dismissal by Nujoma who ordered them to walk back to Grootfontein.⁴² The militaristic roots of the program were exposed in 2004 when the Youth Service was transferred to the Ministry of Defence, with the Office of the President being responsible for its budget, so that the Youth Service Scheme could be “effectively and efficiently administered.”⁴³ In early-2005, a bill to regulate the Youth Service was tabled in the National Assembly which then legislated its explicit militarization as well as its executive control. This resulted in the opposition CoD expressing concern that the Youth Service was becoming “akin to a youth militia” and that it could be used for “party political purposes.”⁴⁴

Heroes’ Day

To recognize individuals who have made important contributions to Namibia’s liberation, 26 August – Heroes’ Day – is one of post-independence Namibia’s most celebrated public holidays. Yet the “heroes” who tend to garner the most praise in political speeches, as well as in government and SWAPO media, are those who engaged in armed resistance. The date of the holiday is significant as well: it marks SWAPO’s first military encounter with South African security forces.

Heroes’ Acre was inaugurated on 26 August 2002. A major national monument located on the slope of a hill on the outskirts of Windhoek, it is predominantly

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constructed of white marble and black granite. Its main features include: a large white obelisk; an eight meter-tall statue of the “Unknown Soldier” (in full combat gear, an assault rifle in one hand and a stick-grenade in the other); a curved relief which

depicts a romanticized version of the armed resistance dimension of Namibia's history; an eternal flame; and designated areas for graves. Only a small acknowledgment is made of the international diplomacy aspect of the struggle for liberation. This is a significant departure from the analysis of mainstream historians and political analysts who have argued that SWAPO's diplomatic efforts resulted in substantially greater tangible results to secure Namibia's independence than did its armed struggle.⁴⁵ Namibia's violent inheritance has fostered increased levels of authoritarianism within SWAPO and overt intolerance by elements within the ruling party toward more discerning and critical voices. Militarized solutions to development challenges have gained currency in Namibia, and national history is officially reconstructed through martial lenses.

Conclusion

Post-conflict reconstruction is extremely difficult to undertake successfully, and it is only through studying the experiences of countries that have gone through the process that proper policy advice can be developed. Namibia provides a valuable case study, illustrating the dangers of underestimating the impact of the political, economic, and social legacy of conflict. Post-independence Namibia represents an explicit case where a legacy of sustained armed conflict, and the related experience of militarization, noticeably shapes contemporary life and politics. Specifically, militaristic approaches to the exercise of state power by the ruling party, even if motivated by a desire to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness of government services, have generally been severe and at times vulgar in their delivery. To “instill discipline,” Namibian youth have been militarized in ill-conceived vocational training and job creation programs. Critical voices are dismissed as unpatriotic. History has been publicly renovated according to a martial model.

However, the manner in which state power is exercised and nation-building pursued is not entirely the result of the bequest of a century of colonial occupation and three decades of war. At independence, had key decision-makers had the knowledge of the long-term impact of the legacy of armed conflict, as well as the political and popular will to constructively address it, then Namibia may currently be governed in a more tolerant and egalitarian manner. This is a key lesson for

other countries that have recently emerged from a sustained period of war and are seeking to achieve sustainable peace with justice.

Notes

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1. For example, in 1904 the German colonial administration sought to exterminate the Herero and Nama people following an armed rebellion. Approximately 74,000 Herero and Namas lost their lives.
2. South Africa did not ban SWAPO in Namibia. Nonetheless, repressive actions prevented any significant, coherent, or sustained resistance other, than strike action and election boycotts, from developing inside Namibia.
3. Following the creation of a training and recruitment camp at Omgulumbashe by SWAPO guerrillas, the first armed confrontation between SWAPO and South African security forces took place on 26 August 1966. Two guerrillas were killed, and nine were captured together with the forty recruits. Following this incident there were further guerrilla attacks in central Ovamboland against pro-South African chiefs and white farmers near Grootfontein. The escalation of these actions was prevented by South African police who sealed off SWAPO infiltration routes through Angola and Kavango (Brown, 1995, p. 21).
4. The South African Defence Force (SADF) estimated that by 1978 there were a total of 462 “contacts” between its personnel and PLAN in Namibia, increasing to 1,175 contacts in 1980 (Seegers, 1996, p. 230). SADF also reported that, at any given time, approximately 300 insurgents were in Namibia, with some 2,000 grouped in Angola for deployment into Ovamboland, and another 1,400 in Zambia ready to target the Caprivi region (Steenkamp, 1989, pp. 70-71). Due to PLAN activities, as well as to the presence of land mines planted by PLAN operatives, certain regions within Ovamboland became “no-go” areas for SADF. Conversely, due to SADF air support and the nature of the terrain, SWAPO was unable to convert these areas to liberated zones (Brown, 1995, p. 29).
5. Seegers (1996, p. 230); Brown (1995, p. 32); Jaster (1990, p. 12).
6. These observations and critiques were summed-up in a memorandum that was read to officials in the camp. This was direct challenge to SWAPO's leadership, who feared that these “China-men” could foment internal dissent, or even a coup d'état.
7. Saul and Leys (1995, p. 44).
8. Katjavivi (1988, p. 106).
9. Leys and Saul (1994, pp. 130-133).
10. Because of relative inactivity on the military front and weaknesses in PLAN's general logistics, they expressed lack of confidence in the political leadership's ability to direct the liberation struggle. See Cliffe (1994, p. 22); Leys and Saul (1994, p. 133).

11. Leys and Saul (1994, pp. 137-138).
12. With the crisis brought to an end, Sam Nujoma announced in a press statement that, "The agents of the South African Region and imperialists have been routed out of our movement and the Central Committee carried out a systematic purge of all traitors" (*Windhoek Advertiser*, 3 August 1976). To name but a few, crimes included espionage, treason, conspiracy, and military disobedience. Penalties ranged from monetary fine, to imprisonment and capital punishment.
13. This security organization was headed by the Deputy Army Commander, Solomon Hawala, who had extensive powers and was answerable only to the SWAPO President. It consisted of 250 personnel, the majority of which had received security training in the Soviet Union and East Germany. Its sole aim was to identify potential spies, arrest and interrogate them, and detain those suspected of espionage. It could even recall SWAPO cadres who were studying abroad to Lubango, Angola, for questioning.
14. Those accused of being spies were imprisoned in covered pits in the ground, where they had to endure harsh conditions such as poor food, bad sanitation, and inadequate medical care. An unknown number died as a result.
15. Almost 1,000 SWAPO members had been arrested and taken to Lubango. Nujoma's wife was interrogated in 1988, and his brother-in-law, Aaron Muchimba, a Central Committee member, was arrested the following year (Saul and Leys, 1995, pp. 56-57).
16. The agreement was signed by the governments of South Africa, Angola, and Cuba (the main protagonists in the Angolan civil war), as well as by the United States.
17. Saul and Leys (1995, p. 198).
18. White Namibian males over the age of 18 were conscripted into the military, and cadet programs were introduced at white schools. The objectives of the cadet programs were to "ensure that white youth are able to adjust to the rigour of military life immediately on beginning their national service ... [and] create an ethos whereby white youth accept the military's goals without challenge" (Evans, 1989, p. 284). Black Namibian males were encouraged to volunteer for military service with surrogate SADF forces.
19. For example, in the 1940s an alliance of South African-owned companies, supported and protected by South Africa's government, established the fish-processing industry in Namibia's Walvis Bay (Tapscott, 1995, p. 156).
20. Seegers (1996, p. 222).
21. By 1988, in excess of 400,000 people had become reliant on the military for employment, income, and security (du Pisani, 1988, p. 9). According to Tapscott (1995, p. 159), many local traders "expanded their businesses into multi-million rand ventures and emerged from the war as full-blooded capitalists."
22. Evans and Philips (1988, p. 118); Grundy (1988, p. 61). In the Kavango region, schools were built, boreholes were sunk, and roads were built by soldiers to "prove to the rural Kavangos that we had more to offer them than SWAPO" (the words of Col. Dion Ferreira, a senior SADF military officer who headed 32 Battalion). SADF also sought to discredit SWAPO through propaganda and smear campaigns using print, radio, and television media. For example, pamphlets were distributed that depicted Sam Nujoma, the SWAPO president, as a "puppet of the USSR" (Herbstein and Evenson, 1989, p. 112).
23. For example, to create a buffer zone in the Angola border regions, communities in the Ovambo and Kavango regions were forcibly removed from their land. Disrupting agriculture in these areas, this seriously impoverishing the affected communities (Weaver, 1989, pp. 90-102).
24. Seegers (1996, p. 227). Indigenous "cultural" groups were created by South African security forces, such as Etango (in Ovamboland) and Ezuva (in Kavango) "to motivate the Ovambo people to resist SWAPO and any form of communist infiltration." However, in essence they acted like vigilante groups (Herbstein and Evenson, 1989, pp. 113-115).
25. Tapscott (1995, p. 160). Money from South African security forces was used to prop-up artificially created political parties, such as the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), in an attempt to create a South African-friendly alternative to SWAPO (Saul and Leys, 1995, p. 199). SADF also became relatively effective in developing networks of informers in the North (Seegers, 1996, p. 186), and SADF spies were able to infiltrate SWAPO and those organizations that were sympathetic to SWAPO's cause. Hence, mistrust and paranoia pervaded these organizations.
26. The Namibian Ministry of Defence estimated that a total of 57,000 former combatants had been demobilized (Colletta, *et al.*, 1996, p. 131).
27. Colletta, *et al.* (1996, p. 129).
28. Between 1997 and 1998, there were at least two significant protests by ex-combatants. Dissatisfied former PLAN combatants staged a sit-in at parliamentary gardens, while ex-soldiers from the South African-aligned security forces protested the lack of equity in the distribution of war veterans benefits and threatened to destabilize the country if their demands were not met (*The Namibian*, 1997-1998, various issues).
29. Dobell (1997).
30. In the words of Lombard (1999): "SWAPO was let off the hook, and allowed to continue its authoritarian and uncompromising culture."
31. In particular, Article 141(i) of the Namibian Constitution guaranteed the job security of civil servants who had worked for the South African occupation administration (du Pisani, 1994, p. 201).
32. In its *Election Manifesto*, SWAPO wanted an armed force that would be based on national conscription where all Namibians between the ages of 17 and 45 would undergo a period of military service for at least two years. The conscription issue was derived from SWAPO's romanticized belief that all Namibians (male and female) should make a contribution to nation-building. The political realities directly following independence, as well as funding constraints, prevented SWAPO from realizing this vision.
33. A clear indication of this was the creation of the Special Field Force, bearing some of the hallmarks of South Africa's counterinsurgency forces that had operated in Namibia (the latter were disbanded at independence).

34. Critics argued that Namibia was starting to exhibit patterns that typically characterize autocratic, neo-colonial states elsewhere in Africa, and in the face of ineffective political opposition, was drifting toward becoming a *de facto* one party state (Saul and Leys, 1995, p. 203; Tapscott, 1997, p. 3; Melber, 2003a, p. 18; Melber, 2003b, p. 134).

35. Melber (2003b, p. 142).

36. Melber (2003a, p. 19).

37. Melber (2003a, p. 20).

38. Saul and Leys (2003, p. 78).

39. It was envisaged that recruits would be able to take classes in areas such as agriculture, aquaculture, animal husbandry, civic education, first aid, fire fighting, career guidance, HIV-AIDS awareness, computer skills, and human rights, as well as one year of voluntary community service, and would be eligible to receive study bursaries on completion of the program.

40. According to President Nujoma, the patron of the scheme: “[The National Youth Service Scheme] will provide a long-term and effective means of nation-building while developing the abilities of young people through service, learning and training” (*The Namibian*, 12 October 1999). At launch, Steve Hoveka, the Deputy Director for Training and Employment, was quoted as saying: “It’s self-discipline and self-esteem that we want to instil in our youth, because that [discipline] is the main problem” (*The Namibian*, 8 October 1999).

41. Meetings were held with officials from the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation, which had taken responsibility for the political management of the Youth Service Scheme (*The Namibian*, 9 April 2001).

42. In fact, twenty-four of the recruits were arrested for malicious damage to property (and subsequently expelled from the scheme). Nujoma accused them of being “saboteurs” and “enemies of the country.” In a speech to recruits he threatened: “We are not going to allow chaos in this country. We have the capacity to destroy you all. Don’t make a mistake” (*The Namibian*, 9 September 2002; 10 September 2002; 16 September 2002). Twelve of the 24 that were arrested were charged, but the charges were eventually dropped.

43. *The Namibian*, 6 September 2004.

44. *The Namibian*, 10 March 2005.

45. Cliffe (1994); Saul and Leys (1995); du Pisani (2004).

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